

Strategies for College Success

An Open Educational Resources Publication by Coastline Community College

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Acknowledgements

We would like to extend appreciation to the following people and organizations for allowing this textbook to be created:

Vanessa Bonilla, Tyffany Dowd, Jackeline Felix, Dyana Valentine, Olivia Vallejo, and Daniella Washington at Santa Monica College for their adaptation of Student Success and have it licensed under CC BY 4.0

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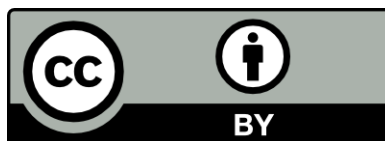
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CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING HIGHER EDUCATION AND EXPECTATIONS

CHAPTER 1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify higher education student expectations.
2. Examine the different educational goals you can achieve at Coastline College
3. Describe the resources that you can use to assist you in transfer
4. Locate the types of courses required for your degree, transfer or certificate program

1.1 COLLEGE CULTURE AND EXPECTATIONS

In college, academic expectations change from what you may have experienced previously. These changes in expectations include increased student ownership over the learning process, the quantity and quality of the work that you will create as well as the type of learning that you will engage in. During high school years, you were expected to read and memorize information. You most likely needed to complete homework on a daily or weekly basis and, exams required you to demonstrate your memory of the items taught in class, and teachers tracked your learning and worked with you and your parents if additional help was needed.

In college, you are expected to take your learning to the next level. You will need to be an active learner who also engages in proactive outreach when you need assistance. Professors will want to see you engage critically with the materials, analyze, critique, draw correlations, and find new ways of understanding the material presented. This is where you can take your unique background and experience and apply who you are across the disciplines you will be studying.

Higher education has its own way of doing things. For example, you may be familiar with what a teacher did when you were in high school, but do you know what a professor does? It certainly seems like they fulfill a very similar role as teachers in high school, but in college, professors' roles are often much more diverse. In addition to teaching, they may also conduct research, mentor students, write and review research articles, serve on and lead campus committees, serve in regional and national organizations in their disciplines, apply for and administer grants, advise students in their major, and serve as sponsors for student organizations. You can be assured that their days are far from routine.

The relationships you build with your professors will be some of the most important ones you create during your college career. You will rely on them to write letters of recommendation, nominate you for honors or awards, and serve as references for future jobs. You can develop those relationships by participating in class, connecting with them routinely, asking for assistance with coursework, requesting recommendations for courses and majors, and getting to know the professor's own academic interests. One way to think about the change in how your professors will relate to you is to think about the nature of relationships you have had growing up. In Figure 1.1: You and Your Relationships Before College, you will see a representation of what

your relationships probably looked like. Your family may have been the greatest influencer on you and your development.

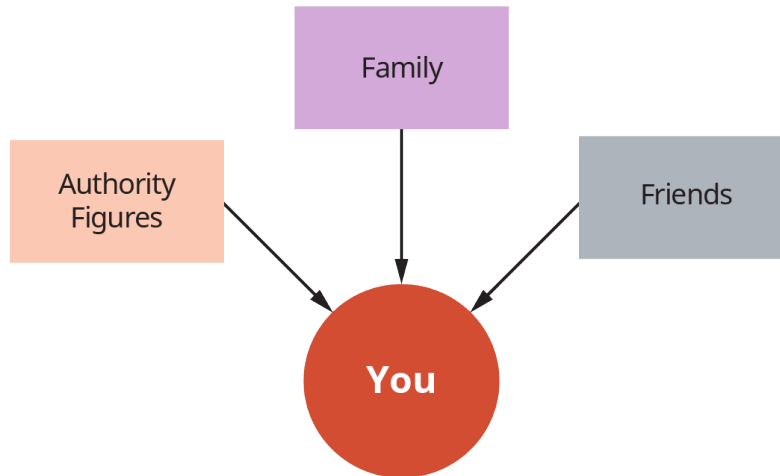


Figure 1.1 You are your relationships before college.

In college, your networks are going to expand in ways that will help you develop other aspects of yourself. As described above, the relationships you will have with your professors will be some of the most important. But they won't be the only relationships you will be cultivating while in college. Consider Figure 1.2 You and Your Relationships during College and think about how you will go about expanding your network while you are completing your degree.

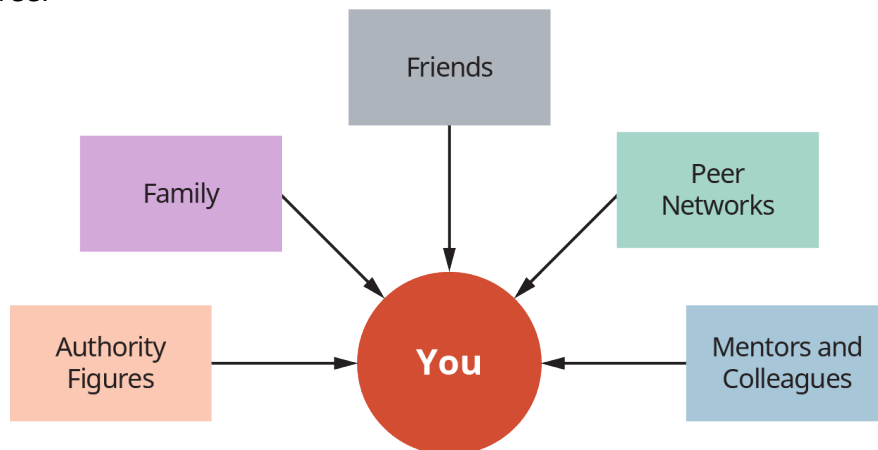


Figure 1.2 You are your relationships during college.

Your relationships with authority figures, family, and friends may change while you are in college, and at the very least, your relationships will expand to peer networks—not friends, but near-age peers or situational peers (e.g., a first-year college student who is going back to school after being out for 20 years)—and to faculty and staff who may work alongside you, mentor you, or supervise your studies. These relationships are important because they will allow you to expand your network, especially as it relates to your career or overall goal. As stated earlier, developing relationships with faculty can provide you with more than just the benefits of a mentor. Faculty often review applications for on-campus jobs or university scholarships and awards; they also have connections with graduate programs, companies, and organizations. They may recommend you to colleagues or former classmates for various opportunities.

LEARNING IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

As you may now realize by reviewing the differences between high school and college, learning in college is your responsibility. Before you read about the how and why of being responsible for your own learning, complete the Activity below.

Activity

For each statement, circle the number that best represents you, with 1 indicating that the statement is least like you, and 5 indicating that the statement is most like you:

Most of the time, I can motivate myself to complete tasks even if they are boring or challenging.

1 2 3 4 5

I regularly work hard when I need to complete a task no matter how small or big the task may be.

1 2 3 4 5

I use different strategies to manage my time effectively and minimize procrastination to complete tasks.

1 2 3 4 5

I regularly track my progress completing work and the quality of work I do produce.

1 2 3 4 5

I believe how much I learn and how well I learn is my responsibility.

1 2 3 4 5

Were you able to mark mostly 4s and 5s? If you were even able to mark at least one 4 or 5, then you are well on your way to taking responsibility for your own learning. Let's break down each statement in the components of the ownership of learning:

- **Motivation.** Being able to stay motivated while studying and balancing all you must do in your classes will be important for meeting the rest of the components.
- **Deliberate, focused effort.** Taking ownership of learning will hinge on the effort that you put into the work. Because most learning in college will take place on your own away from the instructor, you will need determination to get the work done. And there will be times that the work will be challenging and maybe even boring, but finding a way to get through it when it is not exciting will pay in the long run.
- **Time and task management.** You will learn more about strategies for managing your time and the tasks of college in a later chapter, but without the ability to control your calendar, it will be difficult to block out the time to study.
- **Progress tracking.** A commitment to learning must include monitoring your learning, knowing not only what you have completed (*this is where a good time management strategy can help you track your tasks*), but also the quality of the work you have done.

COMMON CHALLENGES IN THE FIRST YEAR

It seems fitting to follow up the expectations for the first year with a list of common challenges that college students encounter along the way to a degree. If you experience any—or even all—of these, the important

point here is that you are not alone and that you can overcome them by using your resources. Many college students have felt like this before, and they have survived—even thrived—despite them because they were able to identify a strategy or resource that they could use to help themselves. At some point in your academic career, you may do one or more of the following:

1. **Feel like an imposter.** There is actually a name for this condition: imposter syndrome. Students who feel like an imposter are worried that they don't belong, that someone will "expose them for being a fake." This feeling is pretty common for anyone who finds themselves in a new environment and is not sure if they have what it takes to succeed. Trust the professionals who work with first-year college students: you *do* have what it takes, and you *will* succeed. Just give yourself time to get adjusted to everything.
2. **Worry about making a mistake.** This concern often goes with imposter syndrome. Students who worry about making a mistake don't like to answer questions, volunteer for a challenging assignment, and even ask for help from others. Instead of avoiding situations where you may fail, embrace the process of learning, which includes—is even dependent on—making mistakes. The more you practice courage in these situations and focus on what you are going to learn from failing, the more confident you become about your abilities.
3. **Try to manage everything yourself.** Even superheroes need help from sidekicks and mere mortals. Trying to handle everything on your own every time an issue arises is a recipe for getting stressed out. There will be times when you are overwhelmed by all you have to do. This is when you will need to ask for and allow others to help you.
4. **Ignore your mental and physical health needs.** If you feel you are on an emotional rollercoaster and you cannot find time to take care of yourself, then you have most likely ignored some part of your mental and physical well-being. What you need to do to stay healthy should be non-negotiable. In other words, your sleep, eating habits, exercise, and stress-reducing activities should be your highest priorities.
5. **Forget to enjoy the experience.** No matter your age or where you are in the educational process, be sure to take the time to remind yourself of the joy that learning can bring.

1.2 CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

CLASSROOM MODALITIES

As a systems-impacted college student, you may be limited in the options as to how you complete your courses. Most commonly, courses offered within facilities are provided through one of the following modalities:

- On-ground: this format is the traditional face-to-face environment where you will go to class 1-3 times a week for instruction during a scheduled time.
- Correspondence: this format provides education at a distance utilizing mail as the primary method for instruction and communication. Students are provided the instructional materials via mail and guidance on when to submit assignments and complete coursework.
- Correspondence via Canvas: This newer format is beginning to take effect throughout many facilities with the availability of laptops. While the class is not technically an online class, students utilize a platform called Canvas to view and submit their course materials digitally as well as correspond with the instructor via the Canvas class. Proctors may still be used for exams. There is no correspondence between students within the Canvas Correspondence course.

If you will be released and continuing your education, you will have access to other course modalities at that time such as fully online, Live Zoom, and Hybrid (part online, part in-person/Live Zoom). The courses and programs available to you through these modalities will expand as well, creating an environment that allows for flexibility while you pursue your education and balance your additional responsibilities (work, family, community commitments, etc).

*Note, if you will be released during the middle of a semester, you may finish your correspondence course(s) you are enrolled in at that time with Coastline. You do not need to drop your courses. Please connect with the Distance Learning Department if you anticipate release in the middle of a semester so they may work with you accordingly.

1.3 EDUCATIONAL GOALS

EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

Planning for your education can be a bit of a backwards process! What we mean by that is student's typically start with a career or end-goal in mind and work backwards from there to identify an academic path that best aligns with where they want to end up. For example, if a student wants to own their own business, they may decide to pursue a Certificate in Business and possibly follow up with this by earning an associate's degree in the same area. In other instances, your goal may not require you to earn a specific major, but rather a required level of education. For example, if a student's goal is to go to law school, they need to earn a Bachelor's degree first. However, law schools don't require a specific major to be considered for admission. Students can enter law school from a variety of majors, including Business, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, History, etc!

As you start or continue with your educational journey, it is important that you take a moment to think about what you want your education to do for you. If you haven't yet, spend some time thinking about your ultimate career goal and from there discovering the academic path you will need to follow. The subsequent details on certificates and degrees may also be helpful. If you are unsure of your path, you may also connect with the Counseling Department to discuss what you would like to achieve and the best educational path to help you reach this goal.

Once you have explored possible career options and majors, it is time to look at the specific educational training required to help you pursue your career goal. The career you are considering may require specialized industry certification or licensing, an associate degree, bachelor's degree or a more advanced degree.

CERTIFICATES

Certificates are short term training programs that are industry specific. These programs are typically designed to prepare students for employment, job enhancement and/or job advancement. Certificate programs vary in length and generally require less than two years of fulltime study. The required coursework allows students to gain specialized entry level skills and training to prepare for industry certification and licensing.

Through Coastline's Hope Scholars program, we offer one certificate program, the Certificate of Achievement in Business.

ASSOCIATE DEGREE

The associate degree is a program that requires 60 units. These units are comprised of freshman and sophomore level general education courses, major courses and electives if appropriate. The AA/AS degree is designed to help students gain employment and or job advancement. Through the Hope Scholars program, Coastline offers several AA/AS degrees including: AA-American Studies, AA-Arts and Humanities, AS-Business, AA-Science and Math, AA-Social and Behavioral Sciences, and AA-Sociology.

What's the difference between an AA and an AS you may wonder? First, AA stands for an Associate in Arts while an AS stands for an Associate in Science. One is not better than another, rather, it signifies the type of focus the courses within the program take on. For example, within an AA, courses are typically more centered around liberal arts type studies. An AS program may take more of a science and math focus within the courses that are offered for that program. Colleges and Universities typically offer a program as either an AA or an AS, but not both. The same goes at the four-year level when you pursue a BA (Bachelor in Art) or a BS (Bachelor in Science) program.

ASSOCIATE DEGREE FOR TRANSFER (AA-T/AS-T)

The AA-T/AS-T degrees are designed to help facilitate the transfer process for California Community College students to the CSU System. However, many UC's also prefer for students to have earned an AA-T/AS-T as well. If you will be transferring to a CSU or UC it is recommended that you complete an AA-T or AS-T program. These are 60-unit programs comprised of at least 18 units in a specific major and either the CSU GE breadth or the IGETC GE pattern. It is recommended you complete an AA-T/AS-T program that will align with your future major at the CSU or UC level. For example, if you plan to earn a bachelor's degree in psychology, you would want to complete an AA-T or AS-T in Psychology.

If you will be pursuing a bachelor's degree at a CSU after release, your AA-T/AS-T degree may provide you with additional benefits in the admission process such as guaranteed admission into a CSU (a non-impacted campus), a GPA boost in the admission review process, and a guarantee of only 60 units needed to complete your remaining bachelor degree requirements. These potential admissions benefits do not apply to students transferring into a bachelor's program at a facility while incarcerated.

Many UC schools prefer an AA-T/AS-T degree, however the same benefits listed above for transfer into a CSU do not apply.

Please note, to qualify for transfer into a CSU or UC, it is not required that you have an AA-T or AS-T degree completed. Students who have an AA or AS degree may also qualify for transfer. If you are interested in transfer but are completing an AA/AS degree, please work with your Coastline Counselor to determine any additional requirements you will need to meet for transfer.

BACHELOR'S DEGREE

The bachelor's degree is a program that requires a minimum of 120 units. These units are comprised of general education courses and major courses to include the courses taken at the upper-division (junior/senior) level. A bachelor's degree prepares students for their career and/or to continue their education at the post-bachelor level.

1.4 TYPES OF CLASSES IN YOUR DEGREE PLAN

Just as you have choices about your educational goals, you also have choices about where specific courses fit academically into your chosen degree program. For example, you can choose to take various combinations of major, general education and elective courses in each term. Typical college degree programs include both required and elective courses.

- **General education** are courses required by your institution and every student must take them in order to obtain a degree such as English and Math. General education courses are sometimes also called core courses. General education courses are always essential to an academic degree, but they are not necessarily foundational to your major. You have three General Education Options at Coastline:
 - Option 1 Local GE Pattern: this pattern is designed for students pursuing an Associate of Arts (AA) or an Associate of Science (AS) degree and who may or may not be planning to transfer to a four-year institution. If a student later decides they would like to go on and earn a bachelor's degree, most of the coursework in this option is applicable towards transfer. Other colleges and universities may also accept this degree for transfer. Students pursuing an Associate's Degree for Transfer (ADT) are not able to select the Option 1 GE pattern. If you are pursuing an ADT, you will need to select from our Option 2 or Option 3 GE Patterns.
 - Option 2 CSU GE Pattern: This pattern is designed for students who are planning to transfer to a university in the CSU system. If you know you will be applying to a CSU, this is the GE pattern for you! This GE pattern may be appropriate for transfer to some independent colleges as well. This GE pattern may be followed by those pursuing an AA, AS, AAT, or AST degree program.
 - Option 3 IGETC GE Pattern: This pattern is designed for students who are planning to transfer to a university in the CSU or UC system. It may also be appropriate for transfer to some independent colleges as well. This GE pattern may be followed by those pursuing an AA, AS, AAT, or AST degree program.
- **Major courses** on the other hand, are a series of courses essential to your specific field of study.
 - For example, within the Business major, there are several required business-related courses as well as a few business concentration courses you select that must be completed to meet the requirements for the program.
- An **elective course**, in contrast to both general education courses and major courses, may be a variable component of your degree. College-level classes that do not satisfy a major or general education requirement apply as an elective. You choose your electives from a number of optional subjects. Students sometimes need to take electives to reach the 60 total units needed to graduate. For students who need several elective units to reach 60 total units for graduation, we recommend you consider adding on an additional major. Please connect with your counselor if this is something you would like to do.

Most educational programs prefer that students take a combination of general education and major preparation courses during the same term. This is a good way to meet the demands of your program and take interesting courses outside your focus area at the same time. Since your major courses will be clearly specified, you may not have many options about which ones to take or when to take them.

It is important to track and plan your major and general education courses from the outset. Follow up with a counselor to help you make sure you are on the best route to graduation and help plan out your courses to

balance your schedule. If you have not done so already, it is highly recommended that you submit a Request for a Student Education Plan (SEP) to receive an education plan specific to your goals. More details on this in section 1.6!

1.5 TRANSFER TO A FOUR-YEAR UNIVERSITY



Image by Claudia Wolff on Unsplash

TRANSFER PROGRAMS

Coastline has transfer agreements with four-year institutions that allow students to complete their freshman and sophomore general education courses and major preparation work at Coastline and transfer as a junior.

If you are considering transferring to a four-year university or college, be sure to follow these steps:

- Learn more about the transfer process. Coastline College has different transfer agreements with the UC/CSU and some private, and out-of-state institutions. Understanding the transfer requirements will make for a smooth transition. When you submit a Request for a Student Education Plan, the form asks if you are interested in transfer, and if so to where. Please be sure to include these details. If you didn't provide these details on your SEP request and are interested in transfer, please connect with the Counseling Department to let us know of your transfer goals so we can provide you with additional information.
- If you are considering transfer to a CSU school, you may wish to consider the AA-T/AS-T programs offered through Coastline College. These degrees are designed to help facilitate the transfer process for California Community College students to the CSU System.
- If you are considering transfer to a CSU school, learn more about the CSU GE breadth. The CSU GE breadth is the GE pattern all CSU schools will accept as satisfying the lower division GE coursework. You may follow the CSU GE pattern if you are pursuing an AA, AS, AA-T, or AS-T degree program.
- IGETC is the GE pattern accepted by all UC and CSU schools as satisfying the lower division GE requirements. You may follow the IGETC GE pattern if you are pursuing an AA, AS, AA-T, or AS-T degree program.

NOTE: The CSU GE and IGETC GE patterns are generally safe for most majors but there are exceptions as in the case of some high unit majors, especially in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) majors.

- Depending on the major you wish to pursue and the specific UC or CSU campus, there may be additional major preparation coursework that will be needed of you to qualify for transfer.

- There may also be additional factors to think about depending on whether you will be completing a bachelor's degree through a CSU or UC at a facility while incarcerated or after release.
- Connect with a counselor to learn more about the transfer process and create an educational plan based on your major and transfer institution location.

1.6 EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

Regardless of your goal at Coastline College, you will benefit from developing your education plan!

Once you determine the goal you wish to pursue at Coastline, you are ready to declare your program of study and develop your education plan. To do this, you will need to submit a request for a Student Education Plan (SEP). This request form will be provided to a counselor who will document your desired program of study and create an education plan specific to your goals. The materials you receive back will allow you to better understand your requirements and to track your progress towards degree completion and or transfer.

If you already submitted a request for an SEP and your program or transfer goals have changed, this is ok! You may connect with a counselor at any time to discuss your change in goals and to make changes to your plan.

If you are not yet certain about your major that's ok too. Consider what program may best suite you: certificate, associate degree and/or transfer. If you have a general idea of what program you wish to pursue, you can start focusing on your general education courses (if required) and consider taking some exploratory classes next semester to allow you to explore areas of interest. Also, in your correspondence with a counselor, provide these details! Let them know the areas you are considering and they may be able to provide you with course recommendations that will allow you to explore your options while still satisfying general education requirements.

Take a moment and review the "Counseling Roadmap" illustration below to reflect on where you currently area in your educational journey.



Where do you see yourself on this roadmap? Are you at the start? Are you midway through your journey? Are you at the end? Your SEP will help you determine how far along you are on your journey and how much

further you have to go. Consider connecting with resources and services as recommended below based on where you are in your journey.

If you are at the **START** you will want to:



- Turn in transcripts to Admissions and Records from other colleges/universities you attended or from your high school (if using for math competency or to satisfy language requirement that is part of IGETC). Once your transcripts are submitted, connect with the Counseling Department to request they be evaluated.
- Declare your major
- If you are undecided, you should connect with a counselor to help you choose your major.
- Apply for the California College Promise Grant. If you qualify, this grant will waive your enrollment fee (tuition).
- Determine your Math and English placement if you have not yet done so.
- Connect with a counselor to develop an abbreviated plan focused on your classes for your first few semesters.

If you have **Up to 15 units** you will want to:



- Familiarize yourself with the resources available at Coastline College such as Counseling and Career Services, the Library, Special Programs and Services for Students with Disabilities, UMOJA, and the Veterans Resource Center.
- Connect with a counselor to discuss academic major and goals leading to the development of a comprehensive educational plan (includes all classes needed for graduation and/or transfer).

If you have **15 Units or more** you will want to:



- Continue to build relationships with faculty, staff and peers
- Connect with the Career Center
- Obtain a comprehensive education plan if you have not already done so.

If you have **30 units or more** you will want to:



- Review Coastline College progress with a counselor and readiness for transfer if that is your goal.
- Connect with your counselor to see when you should apply to transfer if earning a Bachelor's degree is your goal.
- Update your educational plan with a counselor

If you are at the **FINISH LINE** you will want to:



- Petition for graduation at the beginning of your final term – this is not an automatic process!

- Receive your associate degree and/or certificate
- Enter the workforce, move up in your field, transition to another field or transfer to a four-year institution

Coastline offers a lot of support to help you each step of the way. Take advantage of the resources available to you and ask for help when necessary. Remember, you are not alone on this journey. There are many folks here at Coastline to support your efforts. Do your part and get to know them!

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Pursuing a higher education provides many options such as certificates, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees.
- Typically, college degree programs include major, general education and elective courses.
- If you plan on transferring to a university, Coastline College has many resources to assist you.
- To ensure you are on the right path, make sure to create a Student Education Plan (SEP) with a counselor.

Chapter 1 Sources

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CHAPTER 2: LEARNING HOW TO LEARN

CHAPTER 2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the four stages involved in the learning process.
2. Define and identify the learning benefits of a growth mindset.
3. Distinguish between the VARK learning styles and examine your preferred learning style(s).
4. Summarize multimodal learning and how it applies to the classroom.
5. Differentiate between active reading, note taking, and test taking strategies that apply to your preferred learning in the classroom.
6. Utilize strategies to reduce test anxiety and examine how academic integrity relates to learning.

2.1 THE LEARNING PROCESS

STAGES OF THE LEARNING PROCESS

To begin with, it is important to recognize that learning is work. Sometimes it is easy and sometimes it is difficult, but there is always work involved. It is an actual process that physically changes our brain's alteration of neurons and the creation of new paths to receptors. These new electrochemical pathways are formed and strengthened as we utilize, practice, or remember what we have learned. In essence, it can be said that every time we learn something new, we are no longer the same. Consider experiences you have had with learning something new, such as learning to tie your shoes or drive a car. You probably began by showing interest in the process and after some struggling it became second nature. These experiences were all part of the learning process, which can be described in four stages:

Stage 1. Unconscious incompetence: Remove assumptions you do not know what you do not know yet. During this stage, a learner mainly shows interest in something or prepares for learning. For example, if you wanted to learn how to dance, you might watch a video, talk to an instructor, or sign up for class.

Stage 2. Conscious incompetence: You begin to register how much you need to learn—you know what you do not know. Think about the saying, "It's easier said than done." In Stage 1 the learner only has to discuss or show interest in a new experience, but in Stage 2, he or she begins to apply new skills that contribute to reaching the learning goal. In the dance example above, you would now be learning basic dance steps. Successful completion of this stage relies on practice.

Stage 3. Conscious competence: You are beginning to master some parts of the learning goal and building on prior knowledge about what you do know. For example, you might now be able to complete basic dance steps with few mistakes and without your instructor reminding you how to do them. Stage 3 requires skill repetition.

Stage 4. Unconscious competence: This is the final stage in which learners have successfully practiced and repeated the process they learned so many times, they can do it almost without thinking. At this point in your dancing, you might be able to apply your dance skills

to a freestyle dance routine you create yourself. However, you still need to practice constantly and reevaluate which stage you are in so you can keep learning. For example, if you now felt confident in basic dance skills and could perform your own dance routine, perhaps you would want to explore other kinds of dance, such as tango or swing. That would return you to Stage 1 or 2.

HOW WE LEARN: FIXED VS GROWTH MINDSET

In Dr. Carl Dweck's work of 1988, she determined that a student's perception about their own learning accompanied by a broader goal of learning had a significant influence on their ability to overcome challenges and grow in knowledge and ability. This has become known as the Fixed vs. Growth Mindset model. In this model, the *learning-goal-oriented* student is represented by the *growth* mindset, who readily accepts learning challenges and persists despite early failures.

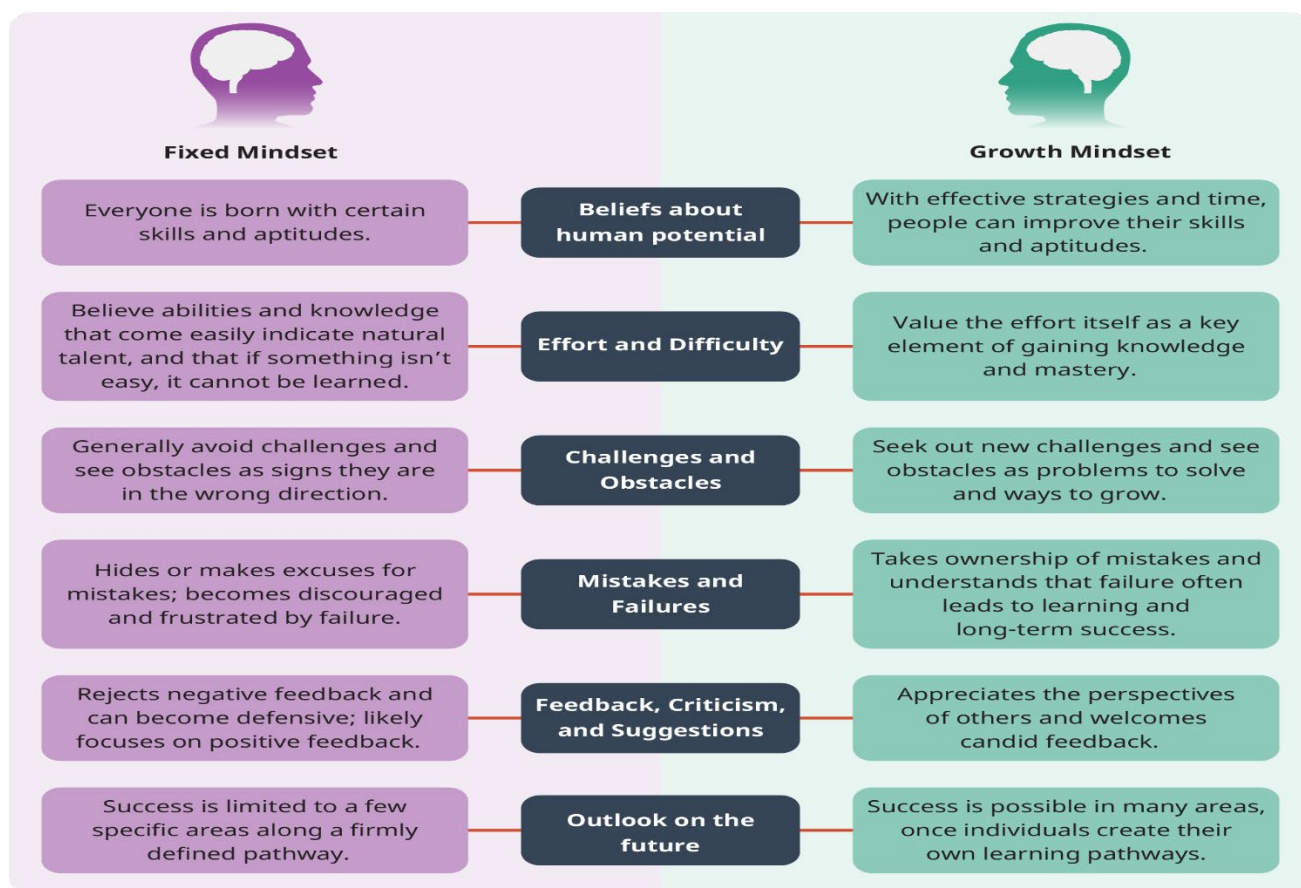


Figure 2.1 The differences between fixed and growth mindset are clear when aligned to key elements of learning and personality. (Credit: Based on work by Dr. Carol Dweck) Image by OpenStax CC-BY 2.0

When discussing how we learn best, it is important to reflect on our belief of Fixed vs Growth mindset and how our previous or current environments may affect our belief in this regard. For example, did you grow up with the belief that with hard work, you could learn a difficult concept? Or, were you raised to believe that if you didn't understand something right away, it may just not be for you and to focus on items that you were naturally more gifted at? We will learn more about Fixed vs. Growth mindset in chapter 4, however, for the purposes of this chapter, we encourage you to take a moment and think about what belief you have; I can achieve something difficult if I work hard at it (growth) vs. my abilities are fixed and if I do not understand

something, I will not be able to overcome this with hard work (fixed). As you progress in this chapter and learn about the various learning styles, think about how the Growth vs Fixed Mindset relates to these concepts.

IDENTIFYING LEARNING STYLES

Many of us are accustomed to very traditional learning styles as a result of our experience as K–12 students. For instance, we can all remember listening to a teacher talk, and copying notes off the chalkboard/whiteboard and PowerPoints. However, when it comes to learning, one size does not fit all. People have different learning styles and preferences, and these can vary from subject to subject. From the previous example, while Kyle might prefer listening to recordings to help him learn Spanish, he might prefer hands-on activities like labs to master the concepts in his biology course. What are learning styles, and where does the idea come from?

Learning styles are also called *learning modalities*. Walter Burke Barbe and his colleagues proposed the following three learning modalities (often identified by the acronym VAK):

1. Visual
2. Auditory
3. Kinesthetic

Examples of these modalities are shown in the following table.

Visual	Kinesthetic	Auditory
Picture	Gestures	Listening
Shape	Body Movements	Rhythms
Sculpture	Object Manipulation	Tone
Paintings	Positioning	Chants

Table 2.2

Neil Fleming’s VARK model expanded on the modalities described above and added “Read/Write Learning” as a fourth.

The four sensory modalities in Fleming’s VARK model are:

1. Visual learning
2. Auditory learning
3. Read/Write learning
4. Kinesthetic learning

Fleming claimed that visual learners have a preference for seeing (visual aids that represent ideas using methods other than words, such as graphs, charts, diagrams, symbols, etc.). Auditory learners best learn through listening (lectures, discussions, cd’s/audio recordings, etc.). Read/write learners have a preference for written words (readings, dictionaries, reference works, research, etc.) Tactile/kinesthetic learners prefer to learn through experience—moving, touching, and doing (active exploration of the world, science projects, experiments, etc.). The VAK/VARK models can be a helpful way of thinking about different learning styles and preferences.

In the college setting, you will probably discover instructors teach their course materials according to the method they think will be most effective for all students. Thus, regardless of your individual learning

preference, you will probably be asked to engage in all types of learning formats. For instance, even though you may consider yourself to be a “visual learner,” you will still probably have to write papers in some of your classes. Research suggests that it is good for the brain to learn in new ways and that learning in different modalities can help learners become more well-rounded. Consider the following statistics on how much content students absorb through different learning methods:

- 10 percent of content they *read*
- 20 percent of content they *hear*
- 30 percent of content they *visualize*
- 50 percent of what they both *visualize & hear*
- 70 percent of what they *say*
- 90 percent of what they *say and do*

The range of these results underscores the importance of mixing up the ways in which you study and engage with learning materials.

DEFINING MULTIMODAL LEARNING

In reflecting on the VAK and VARK models, you may have noticed that you prefer more than one learning style. Applying more than one learning style is known as **multimodal learning**. This strategy is useful not only for students who prefer to combine learning styles but also for those who may not know which learning style works best for them. Rather than being constrained by a single learning style, or limiting your activities to a certain kind of media, you may choose media that best fit your needs for what you are trying to learn at a particular time. It is also a good way to mix things up and keep learning fun. Consider how you might combine visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles to a biology class. For visual learning, you could create flash cards containing images of individual animals and the species name. For auditory learning, you could have a friend quiz you on the flash cards. For kinesthetic learning, you could move the flash cards around on a board to show a food web (food chain).

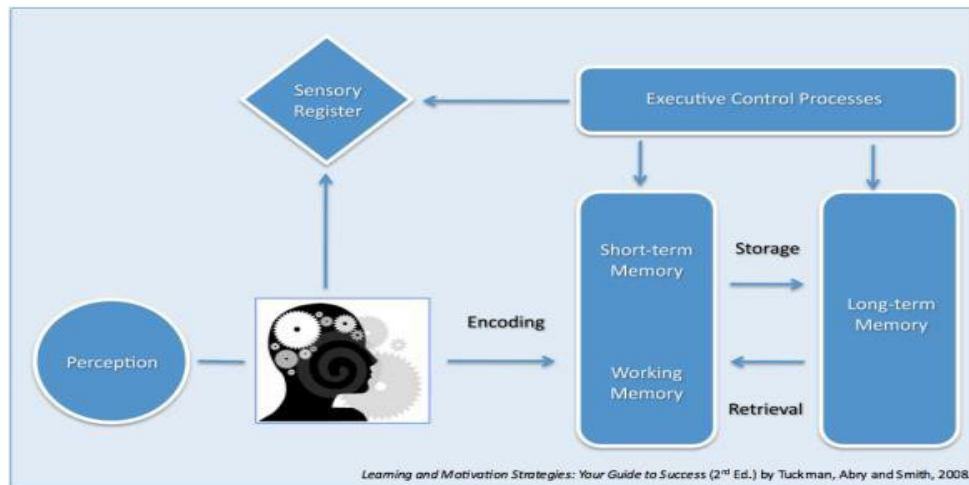
Once you understand what different learning styles have to offer, you can use the techniques that are best suited for you and that work best under the circumstances of the moment. Using learning styles in an informed way can improve both the speed and the quality of your learning.

In k-12 education, children come to expect their teachers will tell them what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. College learners, on the other hand, seem to work better when they begin to think of their instructors as respected experts that are partners in their education. The way to develop learning partnerships is through direct communication with your instructors. When you have ideas about how you can personalize assignments or explore areas of the subject that interest you or better fit your needs, ask them about it. Ask your instructors for guidance and recommendations, and above all, demonstrate to them that you are taking a direct interest in your own learning.

2.2 THE INFORMATION PROCESSING SYSTEM

Whenever we are exposed to new information, we have two options: disregard the information or keep it. If the brain decides to keep it, the information will be encoded and placed into the short-term memory (STM). After it arrives to the STM it must be transformed and manipulated if we want to keep it in the long-term memory (LTM).

Once in the LTM, we should be able to retrieve it when necessary. This is, in a nutshell, what educational psychologists call “the information processing system”. The following graphic (from the book *Learning and Motivation Strategies: Your Guide to Success* by Tuckman, Abry and Smith) is a representation of the IPS:



There are multiple factors that affect learning such as inadequate study strategies, in most cases, could be one of the main reasons behind your difficulties recalling information during exams. In my experience students spend a lot of time in activities that reinforce storage but not quick retrieval. In this text, we discuss effective learning strategies that help with both storage and retrieval.

2.3 MEMORY

LEARNING, REMEMBERING, AND RETRIEVING INFORMATION IS IMPORTANT FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The first thing our brains do is to take in information from our senses (what we see, hear, taste, touch, and smell). Information we perceive from our senses is stored in what we call the **short-term memory** in which we want to: 1) decide if that information is important; 2) for the information that is important, be able to save the information in our brain on a longer-term basis—this storage is called the **long-term memory**; 3) retrieve that information when we need to. Exams often measure how effectively the student can retrieve “important information.” Your instructor can be a valuable resource to assist with determining the information that needs to be memorized. Once the important information is identified, it is helpful to organize it in a way that will help you best understand.

MOVING INFORMATION FROM THE SHORT-TERM MEMORY TO THE LONG-TERM MEMORY

This is something that takes a lot of time: there is no shortcut for it. Students who skip putting in the time and work often end up cramming at the end. Preview the information you are trying to memorize. The more familiar you are with what you are learning, the better.

1. Create **acronyms** like SCUBA for memorizing “self-contained underwater breathing apparatus.” Organizing information in this way can be helpful because it is not as difficult to memorize the acronym, and with practice and repetition, the acronym can trigger the brain to recall the entire piece of information.

2. **Flash cards** are a valuable tool for memorization because they allow students to be able to test themselves. They are convenient to bring with you anywhere and can be used whether a student has one minute or an hour.
3. Once information is memorized, regardless of when the exam is, the last step is to **apply the information**.
4. For mastery, try to teach the information to someone else.

2.4 READING STRATEGIES



Image by Jazmin Quaynor on Unsplash

Good writing begins with good reading. Every time you read, you're exposed to someone else's ideas and to their way of writing: their word choice, vocabulary, knowledge base, use of language, and so forth.

How do you become a reader, or a better reader?

First, read every day. And vary the materials you read: a book, a magazine article, an online blog, etc. Try readings things that are a little challenging. In other words, don't just vary the subject matter—vary the difficulty, too. Stretch!

Second, learn and practice the skills of effective reading (which are explained below in this section).

Third, keep reading. Every day. And use good effective reading skills.

Fourth, learn and practice the skill of reading critically.

Fifth, keep reading. Yes, every day, putting your skills to work. (Practice makes perfect!)

Sixth, well, you know.

Reading effectively means reading in a way that helps you understand, evaluate, and reflect on a written text. As you might guess, these skills are very important to college students, no matter what field you're going into: you'll be doing a lot of reading. The more effectively you read, the easier it'll be, the less time it will take, and the more you'll enjoy the experience.

People who read effectively use a variety of skills and techniques:

- They start by creating an optimal setting for reading. They pick the best time, place, and conditions.

- They engage in pre-reading strategies before starting to read (see pre-reading strategies later in this section)
- They read material efficiently: they pick up a piece of material, engage actively with it, and finish.
- They create a reading environment that helps decrease distraction.
- They annotate written texts (in other words, they write directly *on* the texts) or take notes as they read. By doing this, they enter into a discussion with the text, interacting with it.
- They research or investigate content they don't fully understand.
- They work to discover the central meaning of the piece. They ask themselves:
 - What is the author's point?
 - What is the text trying to say?
 - What story is the author telling?
 - How does the author create and build this meaning?
- They reflect on what the text means to them, internalizing the meaning:
 - How am I responding to this text?
 - Why am I responding that way?
 - What does the text make me think about?
 - What does this information mean to me?

PRE-READING STRATEGIES

When you're ready to settle in with a text, it's a good idea to begin with "pre-reading." With pre-reading, you'll turn into a temporary sleuth, examining the text for visual clues as to its meaning. Here's how it's done:

First, start by reading and considering the title. A good title will inform you about the text's content. It's always nice if titles are also interesting, catchy, or even clever, but the most important job of a title is to let the reader know what's coming and what the text will be about.

For instance, imagine you're reading a magazine article entitled "Three Hundred Sixty-five Properly Poofy Days." Reading that, do you have any idea what this article is going to be about?

- It could be written by a meteorologist, reporting on a year of observing cloud formations.
- It might be a biopic (a biographical story) about an eccentric salon that specializes in "big hair" dos, retro-style.
- Or perhaps it's a set of guidelines for using poofy cotton balls to apply cosmetics.

Would you be surprised to discover it's a story about a dog groomer who does show grooms for poodles, the poofiest of dogs?

See my point? The title should, hopefully, give you clues to the article content. (Keep this in mind when you're writing your own titles.)

- **Look at the author's name** Have you heard of the author? Do you know anything about them? Sometimes you'll find a short bio about the author at the beginning or end of a text. Ideally, the author should be an acknowledged expert on the subject or should have degrees, training, or credentials that make them an expert.

- **Skim through the article, looking for headings or “pull-outs”** (content that is pulled off to one side or highlighted in a box). Headings, if present, will often give you clues as to the text’s content as well as showing you how the subject has been divided into sections.
- **Look for any images: photographs, charts, graphs, maps, or other illustrations.** Images—and their captions—will often give you valuable information about the topic.
- **If working with an e-text, you may also find embedded web links.** Follow these: they’ll often lead you to resources that will help you better understand the article.
- **Here’s a seriously expert level suggestion:** most academic texts and essays follow a fairly similar structure—including beginning every paragraph with a strong, focused topic sentence—you can often get a quick summary or understanding of a written text by simply reading the first sentence in every paragraph. Some authors may use the second sentence as their topic sentence, and if you notice this pattern, reading all of the second sentences in each paragraph will help you follow the text.

After working through the above suggestions, see if you can figure out the main purpose of the text simply by pre-reading. In other words, look for the global or central idea or argument.

Now, you’re ready to dive in and actually read the text completely. Your pre-reading has given you an overall picture of what to expect and helped you build a schema of what the author wants you to know at the end of the reading. If the pre-reading has worked well, giving you clues to the text’s content, your actual in-depth reading will be easier and more effective. And, you’ll begin reading with your curiosity already aroused, which is a great way to start!

WHY, WHAT, HOW?

Improving your reading comprehension will save you time and frustration when you work on your assignments. You will be able to understand your course subject matter better, and your performance on your quizzes and exams will improve. Another form of pre-reading can include asking yourself “Why, What, How?”.

Consider the “**Why, What, and How**” of reading comprehension:

1. **Why?** – *Why am I being asked to read this passage?* In other words, what are the instructions my professor has given me?
2. **What?** – *What am I supposed to get out of this passage?* That is, what are the main concerns, questions, and points of the text? *What do you need to remember for class?*
3. **How?** – *How will I remember what I just read?* Usually, this means taking notes & defining key terms.

When you keep the “**Why, What, and How**” of reading comprehension in the forefront of your mind while reading, your understanding of the material will improve drastically. It will only take a few minutes. Doing so will not only help you remember what you have read, but also structure any notes that you might want to take.

ACTIVE VS PASSIVE READING

Successful students approach reading with a strategy that helps them get the most out of their reading. These students read actively. They look for the main idea of the material, themes, and for words they do not understand. You will find that active reading is more enjoyable, lets you understand more of what you have read, and leads to better test scores. However, passive readers simply skip over things they do not understand and have difficulty understanding the material as a result. In this unit, we are going to practice active reading.

The first part of active reading is to read through the material once while making notes about anything you find interesting or important. It is okay to not understand everything the first time through. Make a note next to any words you may need to look up later. When you finish, stop for a few minutes, and think about what you just read. What is your first impression? Did you enjoy it? Why or why not? What was the most memorable part of the reading? Take a few minutes to add these thoughts to the notes you took while reading.

Now, take a break and go do something else. Allow yourself to absorb what you read without thinking too much about it or worrying about what you did not understand. When you come back, use a dictionary to look up the definitions of the words you marked earlier, review any sections you did not understand, and briefly read the material a second time. If the material is still unclear, reach out to your instructor, or ask a peer if possible to help you grasp the concept.

ACTIVE READING STRATEGY: SQ3R

Active reading strategies can significantly increase learning new information. **SQ3R** is one of the most popular active reading strategies designed to help retain information into long term memory. The title stands for **S**urvey, **Q**uestion, **R**ead, **R**ecite, **R**eview Designed by Francis Pleasant Robinson in his 1961 book *Effective Study*.

S Q 3R		
SURVEY Skim through the text to identify the subject matter and find the main ideas.	QUESTION Ask yourself a couple questions about the passage. For example, what is this text about or what question is the text trying to answer?	READ Start ACTIVELY reading
		RECITE Summarize what you just read using your own words
		RECALL Think about what the point of the text is using your own words

The five-steps involved in the **SQ3R** include:

STEP 1. SURVEY – WHAT CAN I LEARN FROM THE TEXT?

Before reading, skim the material:

- Pay attention to table of contents, Headings, Subheading Captions under images, tables, and diagrams
- Pay attention to the introductory and final paragraphs, which often contain a summary of the text.

STEP 2. QUESTION – WHAT DO I HOPE TO LEARN FROM THE TEXT?

Before reading a section, formulate questions and do the following:

- Rephrase headings into questions.
- Look whether the author has formulated questions at the beginning or end of the section.

- Recall what you already know about the topic and what you still want to learn about it. These questions could very well serve as potential test questions for upcoming quizzes, midterms, and/or the final.

STEP 3. READ – WHAT ARE THE ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS?

- Read and study captions under images and diagrams, tables, charts, and graphs
- Be open-minded by paying attention to new ideas and differing opinions.
- Stop and reread difficult and unclear parts.
- Answer the questions you created in Step 2.
- Note all the underlined, italicized, bold printed words or phrases.
- Read only a section at a time and recite after each section.

Step 4. Recite – What Do You Want To Remember From The Information Obtained?

- Think about what you have read and summarize the main ideas expressed in the text.
- If you do not understand something, reread that section.
- Take notes, expressing ideas in your own words.
- Reciting: the more senses you use, the more likely you are to remember what you read.

STEP 5. RECALL – HOW CAN YOU LINK THE INFORMATION TO YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE?

- After reading the whole text, reread your notes, pay attention to the main ideas, and make connections to your own experience as well as other sources of information.
- This step is an ongoing process. For example:

Day 1:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After you have read and recited the entire chapter, write questions in the left margins for those points you have highlighted or underlined.
Day 2:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page through the text and/or your notebook to re-acquaint yourself with the important points. • Cover the right-hand column of your text/notebook and orally ask yourself the questions in the left-hand margins. • Orally recite or write the answers from memory by developing mnemonic devices and flash cards for those questions which give you difficulty.
Day 3, 4, 5:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternate between your flashcards and notes and test yourself (orally or in writing) on the questions you formulated. • Make additional flash cards if necessary.
Weekend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the text and notebook, make a Table of Contents - list all the topics and subtopics you need to know from the chapter and make a Study Sheet. • Recite the information orally and in your own words as you put the Study Sheet together. • As you have consolidated all the information you need for this chapter, periodically review the Sheet/Map so that at test time you will not have to cram.

2.5 NOTE-TAKING STRATEGIES

Taking effective notes while reading a text or listening to a lecture is an important part of active reading. Notetaking may not be the most glamorous aspect of your higher-education journey, but it is a study practice you will carry throughout college and into your professional life. Setting yourself up for successful notetaking

is almost as important as the actual taking of notes, and what you do after your notetaking session is equally significant. Research on this topic concludes that without active engagement after taking notes, most students forget 60–75 percent of material over which they took the notes—within two days! This information about memory loss was first brought to light by 19th-century German psychologist Hermann as the Forgetting Curve by reinforcing what you learned through review at intervals shortly after you take in the material and frequently.

If you are a musician, you will understand this phenomenon well. When you first attempt a difficult piece of music, you may not remember the chords and notes well at all, but after frequent practice and review, you generate a certain muscle memory and cognitive recall that allows you to play the music more easily.

The skill and art of notetaking is not automatic for anyone; it takes a great deal of practice, patience, and continuous attention to detail. You probably will need to adopt different notetaking strategies for different subjects.

CORNELL NOTE-TAKING SYSTEM

One strategy for effective note taking is called the Cornell Note-taking System devised in the 1950s by Walter Pauk, an education professor at Cornell University. The Cornell Note-taking System is used in universities all over the world. This is an example how to set up your notes.

View Figure 2.3 - The Cornell Method provides a straightforward, organized, and flexible approach.

Topic/Objective:		Name:
		Class/Period:
		Date:
Essential Question:		
Questions:	Notes:	
Summary:		

Figure 2.3 Image by OpenStax CC-BY 2.0

The Cornell Note-taking System has Five Steps which begin with R:

STEP 1: RECORD NOTES

During a lecture, stay focused, listen attentively to the lecture, and take notes. Do not just listen! Try to write down as many meaningful ideas and facts as possible on the right-hand side of the page. If something the instructor says is confusing, put an * next to it so you know to ask for clarification about the point later. Taking notes keeps the mind focused so the information is received by the brain and registers in short-term memory instead of just passing through.

STEP 2: REDUCE NOTES TO QUESTIONS AND KEYWORD

After class, write questions in the left-hand column that go along with the notes on the right. Think of What, Who, Where, When, How, and Why, questions. When it is time to study your notes, cover up the note section of the page and quiz yourself using the questions you wrote in the left column. You may also write key words for important concepts on the left-hand side of the page.

STEP 3: RECITE

Now cover the notes and use the keywords and questions as cues to help you recall the different points in the notes. Recite the answers to the questions and explain the key words. Then, uncover your notes to check if the information you recalled is correct. This strategy is a rehearsal strategy that helps you work with the information in your short-term working memory. The longer and more frequently you work with the information, the longer the information stays in working memory.

STEP 4: REFLECT AND SUMMARIZE

At the bottom of the page, write 3 to 7 sentences summarizing in your own words. Explain the main point or points as if you had to teach someone else. Assign meaning to the information by stating how it is of value to you, why you need to know this, and if this information reminds you of any prior learning. These elaboration strategies help to transfer information in the brain from short-term to long-term memory.

STEP 5: REVIEW

Review your Cornell notes frequently to help you work with the information and retain it. The more frequently you work with information the longer the information will remain in store so you can retrieve it on the day of a test.

In addition to using Cornell Notes for lecture, you may also apply this style of notetaking while reading text materials for each of your classes.

MORE ABOUT NOTE-TAKING ...

To store information long-term in the brain, you can use additional elaboration strategies that make you **THINK** about the information. You can expand your knowledge and understanding of the material presented in a lecture or in a textbook by asking and answering further critical thinking questions:

- What is the relation between _____ and _____?
- How does _____ impact _____?
- What if _____?
- What is the importance of _____?
- Compare _____ and _____?
- Contrast _____ and _____?

Thinking about information will help you store information in long-term memory so that you can retrieve it not just on the day of a test but at the end of the semester or for the next level of the course.

2.6 TEST-TAKING STRATEGIES

Testing is a part of life. Have you ever participated in an athletic event? Taken a driver’s license test? Taken a Math or English placement test? All of these common life situations are forms of tests. Academic tests are similar to real-life tests in the following ways:

- They help us measure our progress toward mastery of a skill.
- They are not a representation of how smart, talented, or skilled we are but rather are a measurement only of what we know about a specific subject at a specific point in time.
- They are extraordinary learning opportunities. We can learn from how we have performed, and we can think about how to apply what we have learned to do even better next time.

Academic tests in college are different from those you took in high school. College professors expect to see much more of you in an exam: your opinions, interpretations, thought processes, and conclusions. Success on high school tests relies much more on memorization than on understanding the material. Therefore, you need to modify your study habits and your strategies for taking exams in college.

TYPES OF TESTS

You should be aware of differences in types of tests because this will help you prepare. Tests can be grouped into various categories based on how they are delivered. Depending upon the type of test you have, your strategies will vary.

Paper tests	require students to write answers on the test pages or in a separate test booklet. They are typically used for in-class tests. Neatness and good grammar count, even if it is not an English exam. Remember that the instructor will be reading dozens of test papers so make sure you write neatly.
Open-book tests	allow students to use their notes, textbook, or both while taking the exam. College professors often give this type of test when they are more interested in seeing your thoughts and critical thinking than your memory power. When preparing, know where key material is present in your book and notes, and use sticky notes to flag key pages of your textbook before the exam.
Take-home tests	The professor will expect more detail because you are not under a strict time limit and because you have access to reference materials. Make sure you submit the exam on time and clarify the due date. Also, find out if the professor allows or expects you to collaborate with classmates.
Online tests	are becoming more common. Since these tests are computer-graded, be aware that the professor’s judgment is not involved in the grading. Your answers will be either right or wrong; there is no room for partially correct responses. With online tests, be sure you understand the testing format. Are there practice questions? If so, make sure you use them. Find out if you will be allowed to move freely between test sections to go back and check your work. Some online tests do not allow you to return to sections once they are “submitted.” Unless your exam needs to be taken at a specific time, do not wait until the last minute to take the test. Should you have technical problems, you want to have time to resolve the issues. To minimize problems during the test, close all other applications before

	beginning the test.
Presentations and oral tests	are highly interactive. The professor can (and likely will) probe you on certain points, question your assumptions, or ask you to defend your point of view. Make sure you practice your presentation many times with and without an audience (your study group is good for this). Have a clear and concise point of view and keep to the allotted time. You do not want to miss some key points if your professor cuts you off because you have run out of time.

PRE, MID AND POST TEST-TAKING STRATEGIES

PRE-TEST STRATEGIES

Q: *When should you start preparing for the first test?* (Select one)

1. The night before
2. The week prior
3. The first day of classes

If you answered, “The first day of classes,” you are correct. If you selected all three, you are also correct. Preparing to pass tests is something that begins when learning begins and continues all the way through to the final exam.

Many students, however, do not start thinking about test taking, whether weekly exams, mid-terms, or finals, until the day before when they engage in an all-nighter, or cramming. Additionally, a lot of students are unaware of the many strategies available to help with the test-taking experience before, during, and after. Let us look at what has helped.

PRE-TEST TAKING STRATEGIES

PART A

Put a checkmark next to the pre-test strategies you already employ.

- Organize your notebook and other class materials the first week of class.
- Keep your materials organized throughout the term.
- Take notes on key points from lectures and other materials.
- Make sure you understand the information as you go along.
- Ask for your professor’s or a study group member’s help if needed.
- Organize a study group.
- Create study tools, such as flash cards and graphic organizers.
- Complete all homework assignments on time.
- Review possible test items several times beforehand.
- Ask your instructor what items are likely to be covered on the test.
- Ask your instructor if she or he can provide a study guide or practice questions.
- Ask your instructor if he/she gives partial credit for test items.
- Maintain an active learner attitude.
- Schedule extra study time prior to the test.
- Gather all notes, handouts, and other materials needed before studying.
- Review all notes, handouts, and other materials.
- Organize your study area for maximum concentration and efficiency.
- Create and use mnemonic devices to help master the material.
- Put key terms and formulas on a single study sheet that can be quickly reviewed.
- Schedule study times short enough (1-2 hours) so you do not get burnt out.

PRE-TEST TAKING STRATEGIES

- _____ Get plenty of sleep the night before.
- _____ Set a back-up alarm in case the first alarm doesn't sound, or you sleep through it.
- _____ Have a good breakfast with complex carbs and protein to help you through the day.
- _____ Show up 10 minutes early to get completely settled before the test begins.
- _____ Use the restroom beforehand to minimize distractions.

PART B

By reviewing the pre-test strategies above, you have likely discovered new ideas to add to what you already use. Make a list of them.

HOW TO CREATE A STUDY SCHEDULE TO PREPARE FOR FINAL EXAMS

Studying for exams at any point in the semester can be stressful but studying for finals can be extra stressful. Collecting all the materials you need to create a schedule and assessing how much time you have to study before your finals start can help you create a study schedule. Carefully considering the restrictions on your time and sticking to your study schedule can help you create a useful schedule and be more productive when you study. Consider the two parts:

PART 1: ASSESSING YOUR STUDY NEEDS

Pick a Calendar	for keeping track of your schedule. Before you can create a study schedule for finals week, you need to decide what exactly you will use for scheduling. You might prefer paper calendars or planners, or you might want to use the calendar app on your phone or computer.
Exam schedule	Before you even begin crafting a schedule, make sure you have all your exam dates in front of you. This will make creating your schedule a lot easier because you will not have to stop and search for information or, even worse, have to start over because you forgot about an exam.
School break schedule	If you have certain school breaks, you can use them to devote more time to studying. Depending on how long you work on your classes per day, consider adding extra study sessions for those courses during the same time you would normally be working on the class. This gives you some extra time to study without really disrupting your normal schedule.
Calculate how much time you have	How much time you have to study for finals will depend on when in the semester you start drawing up your schedule. Once you are ready to set your study schedule, calculate how many days you have between now and when your exams are. This will obviously be a different number for every exam. When you are calculating how much time you have, subtract days that you have a lot going on and won't be able to study. This gives you a more realistic total number of days you have. ^[3]
Prioritize your exams	Once you know how much time you have to study for each exam, prioritize them. List your exams in order, starting with the one you have to take the soonest, and

	<p>ending with your last exam.</p> <p>You might also want to consider prioritizing by how hard the exam is likely to be so you know you have enough time to study for it.^[4]</p>
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PART 2: CREATING YOUR SCHEDULE

Limit your study time per session	<p>Research shows that after about two hours, we are less able to focus on a specific topic or task, and our concentration and ability to retain information declines. Scheduling your study time in two-hour blocks not only prevents you from setting unrealistic goals, it also helps you make the most productive schedule.</p> <p>Depending on how much time you have available to study, you can schedule one two-hour sessions in the morning and one two-hour sessions later in the day.</p> <p>If you are going to schedule multiple sessions per day, try to schedule them for the time when you work best. If you work better in the morning, schedule two sessions before noon - with a break in between. If you work better in the evening, schedule one session before dinner and one after.^[8]</p>
Focus on one topic at a time	<p>In each study session, studying one subject at a time can help you focus on the material better and therefore retain more.^[9]</p> <p>Splitting your time between multiple subjects per study session does not give you enough time to get deep enough in the material to really retain anything.</p> <p>Some change is good when you are studying. Studying one topic for one study session and then switching to something totally different for your next session can keep things fresh and keep up your efficiency and energy.^[10]</p>
Build a time for review	<p>When you are setting up your times to study, make sure you build in ten or fifteen minutes to quickly review what you studied the day before. It keeps things fresh in your mind and will remind you of the connections between what you're doing and what you already did.^[11]</p>
Build in breaks	<p>While you are scheduling time to study, it's also important to build breaks into your schedule. Research suggests that you should take a break for 10 – 15 mins. every hour. You should also schedule larger breaks – like time to exercise or watch TV. Giving your brain and your body a chance to relax will make you more productive in the long run.</p>
Color code your schedule	<p>As you are scheduling your existing appointments and obligations and your study time, color code each type of activity. This gives you a better visual representation of what your week will look like and can often help you see how much time you really need to spend studying.</p>
Stay consistent	<p>Try to study at the same time (and possibly the same place) every day. This can make studying become almost automatic.^[13]</p>

MID-TEST STRATEGIES

Here is a list of the most common—and useful—strategies to apply during an exam.

- Scan the test, first, to get the big picture of how many test items there are, what types there are (multiple choice, matching, essay, etc.), and the point values of each item or group of items.
- Determine which way you want to approach the test:
 - Some students start with the easy questions first, that is, the ones they immediately know the answers to, saving the difficult ones for later, knowing they can spend the remaining time on them.

- If some items on the test are worth more than others (example: an exam consists of an essay points), some students begin with the biggest-point items first, to make sure they get the most points.
- Determine a schedule that takes into consideration how long you have to test, and the types of questions on the test. Essay questions, for example, will require more time than multiple choice, or matching questions.
- Keep your eye on the clock.
- If you can mark on the test, put a checkmark next to items you are not sure of just yet.
 - It is easy to go back and find them to answer later.
 - You might just find some help in some other test items covering similar information.
- Sit where you are most comfortable if possible. That said, if you are in a classroom taking a test, sitting near the front has a couple of advantages:
 - You may be less distracted by other students.
 - If a classmate comes up with a question for the instructor and there is an important clarification given, you will be better able to hear it and apply it, if needed.
- Wear earplugs if noise distracts you.
- Bring water...this helps calm the nerves, for one, and water is also needed for optimum brain function.
- If permitted, get up and stretch (or stretch in your chair) from time to time to relieve tension and increase blood flow to the brain!
- Remember to employ strategies to reduce test-taking anxiety (covered in the next lesson)
- If despite all your best efforts to prepare for a test you just cannot remember the answer to a given item, employ one or more of the following educated guessing (also known as “educated selection”) techniques below. By using these techniques, you have a *better* chance of selecting the correct answer.

Educated Selection		
It is usually best to avoid selecting an extreme or all-inclusive answer (also known as 100% modifiers) such as “always,” and “never”. Choose, instead, words such as “usually,” “sometimes,” etc. (also known as in-between modifiers).	Pay close attention to items that ask you to choose the “best” answer. This means one answer is better or more inclusive than a similar answer.	Regarding matching tests: count both sides to be matched. If there are more questions than answers, ask if you can use an answer more than once.
Make sure to match the grammar of question and answer. For example, if the question indicates a plural answer, look for responses with plural answers.	If you have options such as “all of the above,” or “both A and B,” make sure each item is true before selecting those options.	Although there is some dispute about this, it is still safe to say that choosing “C” is often correct.
Choose the longest, or most inclusive, answer.	If the answers are numbers, choose one of the middle numbers.	Read all of the response options.

STRATEGIES FOR BETTER TEST-TAKING PERFORMANCE

There are many skills and strategies you can employ to help you be a better test taker. One of them, widely used, is **LAB B2OWL**—an acronym to help you remember critical aspects of successful test-taking strategies. Read through the following paragraphs, which describes the strategies in detail. Then review the main concepts in the table, [\[1\]](#) below.

LAB B2OWL	
LAB B2OWL	DESCRIPTION
L	LOOK: Look over the entire exam before you start. Take care to read the directions, underline test words, and circle questions you do not fully understand.
A	ASK: If you have any questions at all, ask. For example, if the exam does not indicate total point allocation, be sure to ask your instructor.
B	BUDGET: Budget your time based on the point allocation for each question. For instance, let us say your exam has one essay question worth 50 percent, and 5 identifications worth 10 percent each. If you have two hours to take the test, this gives you one hour to complete the essay, and 10 minutes for each of the five short-answer questions. You will have 10 minutes in reserve to review your work before turning it in.
B2	BEGIN X 2: Begin with an easy question in order to build your confidence and get warmed up for the rest of the exam. Begin each answer with a thesis topic sentence. Restate the question in a single sentence to help you focus your answer.
O	OUTLINE: Be careful to write a quick outline for your essay on a separate page before you begin. This will help you organize your facts and focus your ideas. It might also show your professor where you were going if you do not have time to finish.
W	WATCH: Watch for key testing words like <i>analyze</i> , <i>define</i> , <i>evaluate</i> , and <i>illustrate</i> . These help you understand what your professor will be looking for in an answer.
L	LOOK: Finally, look over your exam before turning it in to make sure you have not missed anything important.

POST-TEST STRATEGIES

In addition to sighing that big sigh of relief, here are a few suggestions to help with future tests.

- If you do not understand why you did not get an item right, ask the instructor. This is especially useful for quizzes that contain information that may be incorporated into more inclusive exams such as midterms and finals.
- Analyze your results to help you in the future, for example,
 - See if most of your incorrect answers were small things such as failing to include the last step in a math item or neglecting to double-check for simple errors in a short-answer or essay item.
 - See where in the test you made the most errors: beginning, middle, or end. This will help you pay closer attention to those sections in the future.

STRATEGIES FOR MATH AND SCIENCE EXAMS

Math tests require some special strategies because they are often problem based rather than question based. Do The Following Before The Test:

- Attend all classes (in-person, online, or via correspondence) and complete all assignments. Pay special attention to working on all assigned problems. After reviewing problems in class, take careful notes about what you did incorrectly. Repeat the problem and do a similar one as soon as possible. It is important that the last solution to a problem in your mind is a correct solution.
- Think about how each problem solution can be applied in a real-world situation. This helps make even the most complex solutions relevant and easier to learn.
- If you have a study group, take turns presenting solutions to problems, observing, and correcting everyone's work. If you aren't able to be a part of a study group, you can pretend to teach the material to someone. The act of explaining a concept is a great way to help retain material.
- If you are having difficulty with a concept, get help right away. Remember that math especially builds new material on previous material. If you are having trouble with a concept now, you are likely to have trouble going forward. Read out to the instructor or a classmate.

Do The Following During The Test:

Review the entire test before you start and work the problems you feel most confident with first. Approach each problem following **three steps**: You should consider using these three steps whenever you are working with any math problems, not just when you get problems on tests.

1. **Read the problem through twice:** the first time to get the full concept of the question, and the second time to draw out pertinent information. After you read through the problem the first time, ask yourself, "*What is this problem about?*" and "*What is the answer likely to look like?*" The second time through, consider these questions: "*What facts do I have available?*" "*What do I know?*" "*What measurable units must the answer be in?*" Think about the operations and formulas you will need to use. Try to estimate a ballpark answer.
2. **Compute your answer.** First, eliminate as many unknowns as possible. You may need to use a separate formula for each unknown. Use algebraic formulas as far as you can before plugging in actual numbers; that will make it easier to cancel and combine factors. Remember that you may need two or more tries before you come up with the answer.
3. **Check your work.** Start by comparing your actual answer to the estimate you made when you first read the problem. Does your final answer sound likely? Check your arithmetic by opposite operations: use multiplication to check division and addition to check subtraction, and so on.

Science tests also are often problem based, but they also generally use the scientific method. Therefore, science tests may require some specific strategies.

- Before the test, review your lab notes as well as your class notes and assignments. Many exam questions build upon lab experience, so pay close attention to your notes, assignments, and labs. Practice describing the experimental process.
- Read the question carefully. What does the instructor expect you to do - prove a hypothesis, describe an experiment, summarize research? Underline the words that state the objective of the question.
- Look carefully at all the diagrams given with the question. What do they illustrate? Why are they included with the question? Are there elements on the diagram you are expected to label?

- Many science questions are based on the scientific method and experimental model. When you read the test question, identify the hypothesis the problem is proposing; be prepared to describe an experimental structure to prove a hypothesis. When you check your work, make sure the hypothesis, experimental steps, and a summary of results (or expected results) are clear. Some of these elements may be part of the question, while others you may need to provide in your answer.

UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT TYPES OF EXAM QUESTIONS

You can gain even more confidence in your test-taking abilities by understanding the different kinds of questions an instructor may ask and applying the following proven strategies for answering them. Most instructors will likely use various conventional types of questions. Here are some tips for handling the most common types.

1. MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

- Read the instructions carefully to determine if there may be more than one right answer. If there are multiple right answers, does the instructor expect you to choose just one, or do you need to mark all correct options?
- Read each question carefully and try to answer it in your head *before* reading the answer options. Eliminate first the options that are clearly incorrect.
- Look for clue words that hint that certain option answers might be correct or incorrect. Absolute words like “never,” “always,” “every,” or “none” are rarely found in a correct option. Less absolute words like “usually,” “often,” or “rarely” are regularly found in correct options.
- Be on the lookout for the word “not”; it is an easy word to miss if you are reading too quickly as it completely changes the meaning of the possible statements.

2. TRUE-OR-FALSE QUESTIONS

- Most of the tips for multiple-choice questions apply here as well. Be particularly aware of the words “never,” “always,” “every,” “none,” and “not” because they can determine the correct answer.
- Answer obvious questions first. Then go back to statements that require more thought.
- If the question is stated in the positive, restate it to yourself in the negative by adding the word “not” or “never.” Does the new statement sound truer or more false?
- If you still are unsure whether a statement is true or false & must guess, choose “true” because most tests include more true statements than false (guess rather than leave a question blank).

3. MATCHING COLUMNS

- Start by looking at the two columns to be matched. Are there an equal number of items in both columns? If they are not equal, do you have to match some items in the shorter column to two or more items in the longer column, or can you leave some items unmatched? Read the directions to be sure.
- If one column has a series of single words to be matched to phrases in the other column, read all the phrases first, then all the single words before trying to make any matches. Now go back and read each phrase and find the word that best suits the phrase.
- If both columns have single words to be matched, look to cut down the number of potential matches by grouping them by parts of speech (nouns with nouns, verbs with verbs, etc.).

- As always, start by making the matches that are obvious to you, and then work on the ones that require more thought. Mark off all items you have already used so you can easily see which items remain to be matched.

4. SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

- Short answer questions are designed for you to recall and provide some very *specific* information (unlike essay questions, which also ask you to apply critical thinking to that information). When you read the question, ask yourself what exactly the instructor wants to know. Keep your answers short and *specific*.

5. ESSAY QUESTIONS

- Essay questions are used by instructors to evaluate your thinking and reasoning applied to the material covered in a course. Good essay answers are based on *your* thoughts, supported by examples from classes and reading assignments.
- Careful planning is critical to answering essay questions effectively. Note how many essay questions you must answer and how difficult each question seems. Then allocate your time accordingly.
- Read the question carefully and underline or circle keywords. Watch for words that describe the instructor’s expectations for your response (see Table 2.6 “Words to Watch for in Essay Questions”).
- If time allows, organize your thoughts by creating a quick outline for your essay. This helps ensure that you do not leave out key points, and if you run out of time, it may pick up a few points for your grade. Jot down specific information you might want to use, such as names, dates, and places.
- Introduce your essay answer but get right to the point. Remember that the instructor will be grading dozens of papers and avoid “filler” text that does not add value to your answer.
- Write neatly and watch your grammar and spelling. Allow time to proofread your essay. You want your instructor to want to read your essay, not dread it. Remember that grading essays is largely subjective, and a favorable impression can lead to more favorable grading.
- Be sure to answer all parts of the question. Essay questions often have more than one part. Remember, too, that essay questions often have multiple acceptable answers.

Table 2.4 Words to Watch for in Essay Questions

Word	What It Means	What the Instructor Is Looking For
Analyze	Break concept into key parts	Do not just list the parts; show how they work together and illustrate any patterns.
Compare	Show similarities (and sometimes differences) between two or more concepts or ideas	Define the similarities and clearly describe how the items or ideas are similar. Do these similarities lead to similar results or effects?

Word	What It Means	What the Instructor Is Looking For
Contrast	Show differences between two or more concepts or ideas	Define the differences and clearly describe how the items or ideas are different. How do these differences result in different outcomes?
Critique	Judge and analyze	Explain what is wrong—and right—about a concept. Include your own judgments, supported by evidence and quotes from experts that support your point of view.
Define	Describe the meaning of a word, phrase, or concept	Define the concept or idea as your instructor did in class—but use your own words. Examples can help illustrate a definition but remember that examples alone are <i>not</i> a definition.
Discuss	Explain or review	Define the key questions around the issue to be discussed and then answer them. Another approach is to define pros and cons on the issue and compare them.
Explain	Clarify, give reasons for something	Clarity is key for these questions. Outline your thoughts carefully. Proofread, edit, proofread, and proofread again! Good explanations are often lost in too many words.
Illustrate	Offer examples	Use examples from class material or reading assignments. Compare and contrast them to other examples you might come up with from additional reading or real life.
Prove	Provide evidence and arguments that something is true	Instructors who include this prompt in an exam question have often proven the hypothesis or other concepts in their class lectures. Think about the kind of evidence the instructor used and apply similar types of processes and data.
Summarize	Give a brief, precise description of an idea or concept	Keep it short but cover all key points. This is one essay prompt where examples should not be included unless the instructions specifically ask for them. (e.g., “Summarize the steps of the learning cycle and give examples of the main strategies you should apply in each one.”)

TEST ANXIETY AND HOW TO CONTROL IT

For some test takers, preparing for and taking a test can cause worry and anxiety. Most students report that they are more stressed by tests and schoolwork than by anything else in their lives, according to the American Test Anxiety Association.

- Roughly 16–20 percent of students have high test anxiety.
- Another 18 percent have moderately high-test anxiety.
- Test anxiety is the most common academic impairment in grade school, high school, and college.

Test anxiety is “the set of phenomenological, physiological, and behavioral responses that accompany concern about possible negative consequences or failure on an exam or similar evaluative situation” (Zeidner, 1998). In

other words, test anxiety is a combination of stress, tension, worry, dread, fear of failure, and thinking of worst-case scenarios before or during test situations.

EFFECTS OF MODERATE ANXIETY:		
Being distracted during a test	Sleep disturbance	Crying
Having difficulty comprehending relatively simple instructions	High blood pressure	Illness
Having trouble organizing or recalling relevant information	Eating disturbance	Acting Out
Negative attitudes towards self, school, and subjects	Toileting accidents	Cheating

EFFECTS OF EXTREME TEST ANXIETY		
Severe anxiety	Fear of being in the classroom or around others	Thoughts of Suicide

Poor test performance is also a significant outcome of test anxiety. Test-anxious students tend to have lower study skills and lower test-taking skills. Research also suggests that high levels of emotional distress correlate with reduced academic performance overall. Highly test-anxious students score about 12 percentile points below their low-anxiety peers. Students with test anxiety also have higher overall dropout rates. Test anxiety can negatively affect a student’s social, emotional, and behavioral development, as well feelings about themselves and school.

Why does test anxiety occur? Inferior performance arises not because of intellectual problems or poor academic preparation. It occurs because testing situations create a sense of threat for those who experience test anxiety. The sense of threat then disrupts the learner’s attention and memory.

Other factors can influence test anxiety too. Students with disabilities and students in gifted education classes tend to experience high rates of test anxiety. Experiencing test anxiety does not mean that there is something wrong with you or that you aren’t capable of performing well in college. In fact, some stress—a manageable amount of stress—can be motivating. The trick is to keep stress & anxiety at a level where it can help you do your best rather than get in your way.

STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTING AND CONTROLLING TEST ANXIETY

Health and wellness cannot be overstated as factors in test anxiety. Studying and preparing for exams will be easier when you take care of your mental and physical health. The following are a few tips for better health, better focus, and better grades:

1. Try a mini meditation to reduce stress and improve focus. Breathe in deeply, count to five, and exhale slowly. Watch your lower abdomen expand and deflate. Repeat five times.
2. Know when to stop. Although some students may stay up until 4 a.m. studying, it’s not a healthy habit. Your mind is more efficient when you get enough quality sleep, so make sure to schedule enough time for rest.
3. Do not try to be perfect. You will alleviate a lot of anxiety by learning that just “doing your best” is something to be proud of. You do not have to be perfect.

4. Reach out for help. If you feel you need assistance with your mental or physical health, talk to a counselor or visit a doctor.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES TO REDUCING TEST TAKING ANXIETY

- Being well prepared for the test is the best way to reduce test taking anxiety.
- Space out your studying over a few days or weeks, and continually review class material, do not wait until the night before and try to learn everything the night before.
- Try to maintain a positive attitude while preparing for the test and during the test.
- Show up to class early so you will not have to worry about being late.
- Stay relaxed. If you begin to get nervous, take deep breaths slowly to relax yourself so you can get back to work.
- If you do not understand the directions on the test, ask the professor to explain it to you.
- Skim through the test so that you have a good idea how to pace yourself.
- Write down important formulas, facts, definitions and/or keywords in the margin first so you will not worry about forgetting them.
- Do not worry about how fast other people finish their test; just concentrate on your own test.
- If you do not know a question, skip it for the time being (come back to it later if you have time). Remember that you do not have to always get every question right to do well on the test.
- Focus on the question at hand. Do not let your mind wander on other things.
- If you still are experiencing extreme test anxiety after following these tips, seek help from your counselor.

Be good to yourself and give yourself enough time to study in advance for your quizzes, tests, and exams. The more studying you do ahead of time, the less stressed you will feel before the exam.

2.7 ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The college expects students to adhere to the highest standards of good citizenship, honesty, and integrity in their academic work and in their personal conduct. It is always your responsibility as a student to behave honestly and professionally. It is important to familiarize yourself with Coastline College's Statement on Academic Conduct. This can be found on our website or in the *Hope Scholars Guide for Education* booklet. Take a moment to read the responsibilities you have as a college student.

EXAMPLES OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty can take many forms, and you should be careful to avoid them. The following list is a sample of what most institutions will consider unacceptable academic behavior:

1. **Cheating:** using unauthorized notes, study aids, or information on an examination; altering a graded assignment after it has been returned and submitting the work for re-grading; allowing another person to do one's work and submitting that work under one's own name; submitting identical or similar papers for credit in more than one course without prior permission from the course instructors.
2. **Plagiarism:** submitting material that in part or whole is not entirely one's own work without properly citing the source.

3. **Fabrication:** falsifying or inventing any information, data, or citation; presenting data that was not gathered appropriately and failing to include an accurate account of the method by which the data was gathered or collected.
4. **Obtaining an Unfair Advantage:** (a) stealing, reproducing, circulating or otherwise gaining access to examination materials prior to the time authorized by the instructor; (b) stealing, destroying, defacing or concealing library materials with the purpose of depriving others of their use; (c) unauthorized collaboration on an academic assignment; (d) retaining, possessing, using or circulating previously given examination materials, where those materials clearly indicate that they are to be returned to the instructor at the conclusion of the examination; (e) intentionally obstructing or interfering with another student's academic work; or (f) otherwise undertaking activity with the purpose of creating or obtaining an unfair academic advantage over other students' academic work.
5. **Aiding and Abetting Academic Dishonesty:** (a) providing material, information, or other assistance to another person with knowledge that such aid could be used in any of the violations stated above, or (b) providing false information in connection with any inquiry regarding academic integrity.
6. **Falsification of Records and Official Documents:** altering documents affecting academic records; forging signatures of authorization or falsifying information on an official academic document, grade report, letter of permission, petition, drop/add form, ID card, or any other official academic record.
7. **Unauthorized Access to Computerized Academic or Administrative Records or Systems:** viewing or altering computer records, modifying computer programs or systems, releasing or dispensing information gained via unauthorized access, or interfering with the use or availability of computer systems or information.

The attitude of some students that grades are the end-all in academics has led many students to resort to academic dishonesty to try to get the best possible grades or handle the pressure of an academic deadline. Although some students may say, *"Everybody does it,"* or *"It's no big deal,"* you should be mindful of the consequences of cheating:

- **Failing the course or being expelled from school.** Read your course syllabus to understand your instructor's guidelines. Ignorance of the rules is never a valid defense.
- **Wasting your money and time.** Getting a college education is a big investment of your money and time. If you fail a course due to academic dishonesty, you will have to spend more money and time to repeat that course.
- **Cheating causes stress.** Fear of getting caught will cause you stress and anxiety.
- **Jeopardizing your integrity.** Once you jeopardize your integrity by cheating, it is very difficult to regain the trust of others in order to establish a respectable reputation. This can negatively impact your transfer and future career opportunities.
- **Cheating lowers your self-esteem.** If you cheat, you are telling yourself that you are simply not capable of learning. It also robs you of the feeling of satisfaction from genuine success.
- **You do not learn as much.** Cheating will hinder your ability to learn knowledge or foundational knowledge necessary for understanding more advanced material. When you cheat, you cheat yourself out of opportunities.

Technology has made it easier to cheat, but it has also created ways for instructors to easily detect these forms of academic dishonesty. If you feel uneasy about doing something in your work, trust your instincts. Confirm with the instructor that your intended form of research or use of material is acceptable.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Understanding the learning process can help you better manage your study skills.
- Understanding your learning style can help you identify ways to best study and retain information.
- Using active reading strategies helps you get the most out of your reading and retain information.
- The Information Processing System helps us better understand how we store and use information.
- Taking effective notes is an important part of active reading and should help you quickly recall information later.
- Test-taking strategies can help you minimize test anxiety.
- Being dishonest only results in cheating yourself which affects your college career and life overall.

Chapter 2 Sources

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CHAPTER 3: EXPLORING PERSONAL VALUES, SELF-MOTIVATION, SELF-EFFICACY & GOAL SETTING

Chapter 3 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify your personal values and sources of motivation.
2. Explain Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.
3. Distinguish intrinsic from extrinsic motivation as per self-determination theory.
4. Describe the concept of self-efficacy and identify specific strategies and successful behaviors to develop self-efficacy.
5. Compare and contrast mastery, performance, and performance-avoidance goals.
6. Develop and implement effective goals.

Man's main task in life is to give birth to himself, to become what he potentially is. The most important product of his effort is his own personality. —Erich Fromm, psychologist

3.1 PERSONAL VALUES, MOTIVES AND NEEDS

The journey of achieving success in college begins with a single step: identifying your personal values. Your personal values are your core beliefs and guiding principles. They shape the roles you play in daily life. They color your interests and passions and frame your thoughts and words. In essence, your values are a compass that help you make decisions and choices.

What are your values, then? Which are most important to you, and which are least important? How do your values fit into your educational goals? How do your educational goals relate to your future career?



Image by Ian Schneider on Unsplash

To help you answer these questions, you can use a “self-assessment” survey. These surveys can help you evaluate your personal identity—your thoughts, actions, attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors—in relationship to the task at hand, like going to college and preparing for a career.

Many different self-assessment surveys are available from college career centers and online sites. Some are designed as personality tests, like the Keirsey Temperament Sorter, or as inventories, like the Myers- Briggs Type Indicator (MTBI®), the most widely used personality inventory in history. You may also come across instruments designed as scales, or measures, games, surveys, and more. These descriptors are often interchangeably used, although most often they refer to questionnaires. The distinctions are not as important as whether or not the instrument meets your self-assessment needs.

STAGES OF LIFE AND CHANGING VALUES

Keep in mind that your personal values and interests can and do change as you get older. This is evidenced in research conducted by a number of contemporary social scientists, like Erik Erikson and Daniel Levinson. Their studies show how our values affect our choices and how our choices can characterize the stage of life we're in.

For example, college students, ages 18–26, tend to make choices that are tentative (more short-range) and support a desire for autonomy. Later, during ages 27– 31, young adults may rethink decisions and lean toward more permanent choices. In ages 32–42, adults tend to have a greater sense of commitment and stability, as shown by their choices. In essence, our personal identity and values change over time, but they continue to affect our choices and can illuminate the stage of life we're in.

Keeping in mind that there are many phases of life, you can expect to see changes in your values and choices as you get older. You may experience a significant change in perspective while you are in college! To better understand your relationship with your values, you can continually reassess what is important to you. Make a commitment to examining your thinking, actions, and choices, and keep taking self-assessment tests. This will put you in a stronger position to manage changes in your educational goals, your career, living situation, hobbies, friends, and other aspects of your life. Changes are part of normal life transitions.



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3.2 MOTIVATION

MOTIVATION AND BEHAVIOR

Human motivation has long been considered the result of evolutionary processes. In other words, we tend to be motivated by things that help us survive (food, sex, water) and things that are associated with these essentials (money that can be used to buy food, and so on). However, motivation is not quite so simple. We

now have a number of theories that attempt to accurately describe why certain states may motivate some people but not others. This idea can be extrapolated at the level of culture and society as well. For example, the state of hunger might cause us to be highly motivated by food. However, hunger itself may be under strict cultural control. In fact, most aspects of our eating habits are linked in some way to culture. As such, motivators are also, in some way, linked to our culture. This unit touches on the universal theories of motivation and examines how certain approaches to culture can better determine what will be a motivating factor versus what will not.

MOTIVATION AS SELF-DETERMINATION

A recent theory of motivation based on the idea of needs is **self-determination theory**, proposed by the psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (2000), among others. The theory proposes that understanding motivation requires taking into account **three basic human needs**:

- Autonomy—the need to feel free of external constraints on behavior
- Competence—the need to feel capable or skilled
- Relatedness—the need to feel connected or involved with others

The key idea of self-determination theory is that when people feel that these basic needs are reasonably well met, they tend to perceive their actions and choices to be intrinsically motivated or “self-determined.” In that case they can turn their attention to a variety of activities that they find attractive or important, but that do not relate directly to their basic needs.

For example, some college students might read books that the professor has suggested, and they might listen attentively when the professor explains key concepts. But, if one or more basic needs are not met, people will tend to feel coerced by outside pressures or external incentives. They may become preoccupied, in fact, with satisfying whatever need has not been met and thus exclude or avoid activities that might otherwise be interesting, educational, or important. If this happens to a college student, his/her learning will suffer.

SELF-DETERMINATION AND INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

In proposing the importance of needs, then, **self-determination theory is asserting the importance of intrinsic motivation**. The self-determination version of intrinsic motivation, however, emphasizes a person’s perception of freedom, rather than the presence or absence of “real” constraints on action.

Self-determination means a person feels free, even if the person is also operating within certain external constraints. In principle, a student can experience self-determination even if the student must, for example, live within externally imposed rules of appropriate classroom behavior. To achieve a feeling of self-determination, however, the student’s basic needs must be met—needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Self-determination theory recognizes this reality by suggesting that the “intrinsic-ness” of motivation is really a matter of degree, extending from highly extrinsic, through various mixtures of intrinsic and extrinsic, to highly *intrinsic* (Koestner & Losier, 2004). At the extrinsic end of the scale is learning that is regulated primarily by external rewards and constraints, whereas at the intrinsic end is learning regulated primarily by learners themselves.

Table 2 summarizes and gives examples of the various levels and their effects on motivation. By assuming that motivation is often a mix of the intrinsic and extrinsic, you can't expect to have purely intrinsic motivation all the time, but simply to try and take ownership of your actions and values.

Table 2: Combinations of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

Source of regulation of action	Description	Example
"Pure" extrinsic motivation	Person lacks the intention to take any action, regardless of pressures or incentives	Student completes <i>no</i> work even when pressured or when incentives are offered
Very external to person	Actions regulated only by outside pressures and incentives, and controls	Student completes assignment <i>only</i> if reminded explicitly of the incentive of grades and/or negative consequences of failing
Somewhat external	Specific actions regulated internally, but without reflection or connection to personal needs	Student completes assignment independently, but only because of fear of shaming self or because of guilt about consequences of not completing assignment
Somewhat internal	Actions recognized by individual as important or as valuable as a means to a more valued goal	Student generally completes school work independently, but only because of its value in gaining admission to college
Very internal	Actions adopted by individual as integral to self-concept and to person's major personal values	Student generally completes school work independently, because being well educated is part of the student's concept of himself
"Pure" intrinsic regulation	Actions practiced solely because they are enjoyable and valued for their own sake	Student enjoys every topic, concept, and assignment that every teacher ever assigns, and completes school work solely because of his enjoyment

WHERE ARE YOU ON THIS SCALE?

Ask yourself, where do you tend to land on this scale most of the time? The last time you didn't feel motivated to complete a task, did you complete it because someone told you to do it, or did you complete it because YOU wanted to complete it? If you find yourself mostly on the extrinsic side, you may want to consider the benefits to being motivated intrinsically – a greater passion and need for knowledge for the task

at hand. Most of all, when things get tough, you will find the motivation within yourself to complete it, which is more rewarding in the end.

ABRAHAM MASLOW: A HIERARCHY OF MOTIVES AND NEEDS

Abraham Maslow's theory frames personal needs or motives as a hierarchy, meaning that basic or "lower-level" needs have to be satisfied before higher-level needs become important or motivating (1976, 1987). Compared to the stage models of Piaget and Erikson, Maslow's hierarchy is only loosely "developmental," in that Maslow was not concerned with tracking universal, irreversible changes across the lifespan. Maslow's stages are universal, but they are not irreversible; earlier stages sometimes reappear later in life, in which case they must be satisfied again before later stages can redevelop. Like the theories of Piaget and Erikson, Maslow's is a rather broad "story," one that has less to say about the effects of a person's culture, language, or economic level, than about what we all have in common.

In its original version, Maslow's theory distinguishes two types of needs, called **deficit needs** and **being needs** (or sometimes **deficiency needs** and **growth needs**). Table 3 summarizes the two levels and their sublevels.

- **DEFICIT NEEDS** are prior to being needs, not in the sense of happening earlier in life, but in that deficit needs must be satisfied before being needs can be addressed. As pointed out, deficit needs can reappear at any age, depending on circumstances. If that happens, they must be satisfied again before a person's attention can shift back to "higher" needs. Among students, in fact, deficit needs are likely to return chronically to those whose families lack economic or social resources or who live with the stresses associated with poverty (Payne, 2005).

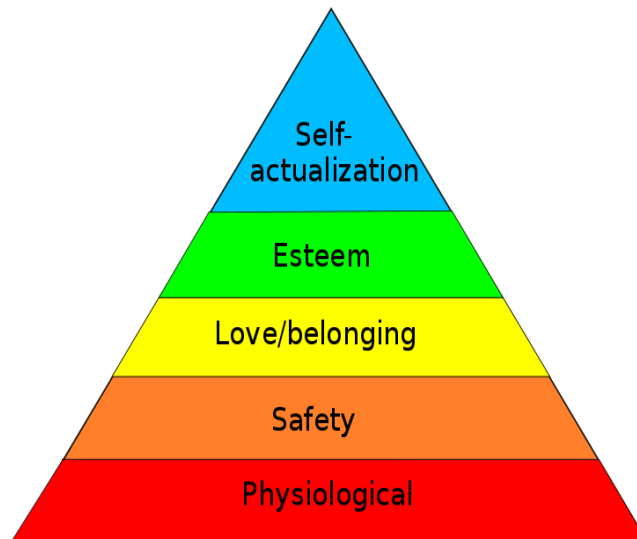


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Table 3: Maslow’s hierarchy of motives and needs

Deficit needs	Being Needs
Physiological needs	Cognitive needs
Safety and security needs	Aesthetic needs
Love and belonging needs	Self-actualization needs

DEFICIT NEEDS: GETTING THE BASIC NECESSITIES OF LIFE

Deficit needs are the basic requirements of physical and emotional well-being. First are **physiological needs**—food, sleep, clothing, and the like. Without these, nothing else matters, especially nothing very “elevated” or self-fulfilling. A student who is not getting enough to eat is not going to feel much interest in learning! Once physiological needs are met, however, **safety and security needs** become important. The person looks for stability and protection, and welcomes a bit of structure and limits if they provide these conditions. A child from an abusive family, for example, may be getting enough to eat, but may worry chronically about personal safety. In school, the student may appreciate a well-organized classroom with rules that insures personal safety and predictability, whether or not the classroom provides much in the way of real learning.

After physiological and safety needs are met, **love and belonging needs** emerge. The person turns attention to making friends, being a friend, and cultivating positive personal relationships in general. In the classroom, a student motivated at this level may make approval from peers or teachers into a top priority. He or she may be provided for materially and find the classroom and family life safe enough, but still miss a key ingredient in life—love. If such a student (or anyone else) eventually does find love and belonging, however, then his or her motivation shifts again, this time to **esteem needs**. Now the concern is with gaining recognition and respect—and even more importantly, gaining self-respect. A student at this level may be unusually concerned with achievement, for example, though only if the achievement is visible or public enough to earn public recognition.

BEING NEEDS: BECOMING THE BEST THAT YOU CAN BE

Being needs are desires to become fulfilled as a person, or to be the best person that you can possibly be. They include **cognitive needs** (a desire for knowledge and understanding), **aesthetic needs** (an appreciation of beauty and order), and most importantly, **self-actualization needs** (a desire for fulfillment of one’s potential). Being needs emerge only after all of a person’s deficit needs have been largely met. Unlike deficit needs, being needs beget more being needs; they do not disappear once they are met, but create a desire for even more satisfaction of the same type. A thirst for knowledge, for example, leads to further thirst for knowledge, and aesthetic appreciation leads to more aesthetic appreciation. Partly because being needs are lasting and permanent once they appear, Maslow sometimes treated them as less hierarchical than deficit needs, and instead grouped cognitive, aesthetic, and self-actualization needs into the single category **self-actualization needs**.

People who are motivated by self-actualization have a variety of positive qualities, which Maslow went to some lengths to identify and describe (Maslow, 1976). Self-actualizing individuals, he argued, value deep personal relationships with others, but also value solitude; they have a sense of humor, but do not use it

against others; they accept themselves as well as others; they are spontaneous, humble, creative, and ethical. In short, the self-actualizing person has just about every good quality imaginable! Not surprisingly, therefore, Maslow felt that true self-actualization is rare. It is especially unusual among young people, who have not yet lived long enough to satisfy earlier, deficit-based needs.

3.3 SELF-EFFICACY

SELF-EFFICACY: A DEFINITION

Self-Efficacy is the belief in one's ability to succeed in achieving an outcome or reaching a goal (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy does not refer to your abilities but to how strongly you believe you can use your abilities to work toward goals. Self-efficacy is not a unitary construct or trait; rather, people have self-efficacy beliefs in different domains, such as academic self-efficacy, problem-solving self-efficacy, and self-regulatory self-efficacy. Decades of research show that self-efficacy is a valid predictor of students' motivation and learning. Students with high levels of self-efficacy participate more in class, work harder, persist longer, and have fewer adverse emotional reactions when encountering difficulties than students with lower self-efficacy. (Bandura, 1997). For example, if you believe that you have the skills necessary to do well in college and believe you can use those skills to excel, then you have high *academic self-efficacy*.

Students with high self-efficacy typically have a high motivation to succeed because they understand that they, more than other people or circumstances, determine outcomes and future results.

Self-efficacy may sound similar to a concept you may be familiar with already—*self-esteem*—but these are very different notions. Self-esteem refers to how much you like or “esteem” yourself—to what extent you believe you are a good and worthwhile person. Self-efficacy, however, refers to your self-confidence to perform well and to achieve in specific areas of life such as school, work, and relationships. Self-efficacy does influence self-esteem because how you feel about yourself overall is greatly influenced by your confidence in your ability to perform well in areas that are important to you and to achieve valued goals. For example, if performing well in athletics is very important to you, then your self-efficacy for athletics will greatly influence your self-esteem; however, if performing well in athletics is not at all important to you, then your self-efficacy for athletics will probably have little impact on your self-esteem.

Self-efficacy and openness to risk: Strong self-efficacy leads students to take chances in their work, exploring topics and subjects that are new to them since students who are confident in their abilities to perform and to react to challenges are less worried about failure (Bandura, 1993). This helps when students are undecided about their major and are willing to take a course in a subject that they are interested in exploring as a potential major.

Self-efficacy and Healthy Behaviors: Think about a time when you tried to improve your health, whether through dieting, exercising, sleeping more, or any other way. Would you be more likely to follow through on these plans if you believed that you could effectively use your skills to accomplish your health goals? Many researchers agree that people with stronger self-efficacies for doing healthy things engage in more behaviors that prevent health problems and improve overall health (Strecher, DeVellis, Becker, & Rosenstock, 1986).

DEVELOPING SELF-EFFICACY

Developing a strong sense of self-efficacy takes time. But everyone has the ability to develop it within themselves.

Here are three methods for building self-efficacy:

1. **Practice:** practicing a skill or a subject will make you more confident in your abilities. For example, if you don't think your note-taking skills are great, learn an effective technique, and then practice this technique for each course. You will get better and more confident in your note-taking skills.
2. **Find a role model:** do you know someone who you believe is a good student? Observe their actions and behaviors. By observing their behaviors, you will be able to see how they manage their day and the decisions they make in order to be a good student. This will motivate you to do the same.
3. **Positive Self-Talk:** take a few minutes each day to praise yourself or repeat affirmations when you have accomplished something or learned something new. For example, "I can learn this new concept in Algebra." "I am putting in a lot of time and effort into my English course." "I am trying really hard to meet other students in my courses."

3.4 SETTING AND REACHING GOALS

THE BASICS OF GOAL SETTING

1. Put your Goals into Writing
2. Set SMART GOALS that you are motivated to achieve
3. Create an Action Plan
4. Finally, stick with the plan!



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MOTIVES AS GOALS

One way motives vary is by the kind of goals that students set for themselves, and by how the goals support students' academic achievement. As you might suspect, some goals encourage academic achievement more than others, but even motives that do not concern academics explicitly tend to affect learning indirectly.



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MOTIVATION AND MAKING CHOICES

Every day we make choices. Some are as simple as what clothes we decide to wear, what we'll eat for lunch, or how long to study for a test. But what about life-altering choices—the ones that leave us at a crossroads? How much thought do you give to taking Path A versus Path B? Do you like to plan and schedule your choices, by making a list of pros and cons, for instance? Or do you prefer to make decisions spontaneously and just play the cards that life deals you as they come?

GOALS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

What kinds of achievement goals do students hold? Imagine three individuals, Maria, Sara, and Lindsay, who are taking College Algebra together. Maria's main concern is to learn the material as well as possible because she finds it interesting and because she believes it will be useful to her in later courses. Hers is a **mastery goal** because she wants primarily to learn or master the material. Sara, however, is concerned less about algebra than about getting top marks on the exams and in the course. Hers is a **performance goal** because she is focused primarily on looking successful; learning algebra is merely a vehicle for performing well in the eyes of peers and teachers. Lindsay, for her part, is primarily concerned about avoiding a poor or failing mark. Hers is a **performance-avoidance goal or failure** - avoidance goal because she is not really as concerned about learning algebra, as Maria is, or about competitive success, as Sara is; she is simply intending to avoid failure.

As you might imagine, **mastery, performance, and performance-avoidance goals** often are not experienced in pure form, but in combinations. If you play the clarinet in the school band, you might want to improve your technique simply because you enjoy playing as well as possible—essentially a mastery orientation. But you might also want to look talented in the eyes of classmates—a performance orientation. Another part of what you may wish, at least privately, is to avoid looking like a complete failure at playing the clarinet. One of these motives may predominate over the others, but they all may be present.

Mastery goals tend to be associated with enjoyment of learning the material at hand, and in this sense represent an outcome that teachers often seek for students. By definition, therefore, they are a form of *intrinsic motivation*. As such, mastery goals have been found to be better than performance goals at sustaining students' interest in a subject. In one review of research about learning goals, for example, students with primarily mastery orientations toward a course they were taking not only tended to express greater interest in the course, but also continued to express interest well beyond the official end of the course, and to enroll in further courses in the same subject (Harackiewicz, et al., 2002; Wolters, 2004).

Performance goals, on the other hand, imply extrinsic motivation, and tend to show the mixed effects of this orientation. A positive effect is that students with a performance orientation do tend to get higher grades than those who express primarily a mastery orientation. The advantage in grades occurs both in the short term (with individual assignments) and in the long term (with overall grade point average when graduating). But there is evidence that performance oriented students do not actually learn material as deeply or permanently as students who are more mastery oriented (Midgley, Kaplan, & Middleton, 2001). A possible reason is that measures of performance—such as test scores—often reward relatively shallow memorization of information and therefore guide performance-oriented students away from processing the information thoughtfully or deeply. Another possible reason is that a performance orientation, by focusing on gaining recognition as the best among peers, encourages competition among peers. Giving and receiving help from classmates is thus not in the self-interest of a performance-oriented student, and the resulting isolation limits the student’s learning.

Some people are goal oriented and seem to easily make decisions that lead to achieving their goals, while others seem just to “go with the flow” and accept what life gives them. While the latter may sound pleasantly relaxed, moving through life without goals may not lead anywhere at all. The fact that you’re in college now shows you already have the major goal to complete your college program. A goal is a result we intend to reach mostly through our own actions. Things we do may move us closer to or farther away from that result. Studying moves us closer to success in a difficult course, while sleeping through the final examination may completely prevent reaching that goal. That may be an extreme case, yet still a lot of college students don’t reach their goal of graduating. The problem may be a lack of commitment to the goal, but often students have conflicting goals.

How are you managing your time, your studies, and your social life to best reach your goals?

Consider these four students:

- A. To help his widowed mother, **Yuri** went to work full time after high school. Now, a few years later, he’s dissatisfied with the kinds of jobs he has been able to get and has begun taking computer programming courses in the evening. He’s often tired after work, however, and his mother would like him to spend more time at home. Sometimes he cuts class to stay home and spend time with her.
- B. In her senior year of college, **Becky** has just been elected president of her student union and is excited about planning a major community service project. She knows she should be spending more time on her senior thesis, but she feels her community project may gain her contacts that can help her find a better job after graduation. Besides, the project is a lot more fun, and she’s enjoying the esteem of her position. Even if she doesn’t do well on her thesis, she’s sure she’ll pass.
- C. After an easy time in high school, **James** is surprised his college classes are so hard. He’s got enough time to study for his first-year courses, but he also has a lot of friends and fun things to do. Sometimes he’s surprised to look up from his computer to see it’s midnight already, and he hasn’t started reading that chapter yet. Where does the time go? When he’s stressed, however, he can’t study well, so he tells himself he’ll get up early and read the chapter before class, and then he turns back to his computer to see who’s online.
- D. **Sachito** was successful in cutting back her hours at work to give her more time for her engineering classes, but it’s difficult for her to get much studying done at home. Her husband has been wonderful about taking care of their young daughter, but he can’t do everything, and lately he’s been hinting

more about asking her sister to babysit so that the two of them can go out in the evening the way they used to. Lately, when she's had to study on a weekend, he leaves with his friends, and Sachito ends up spending the day with her daughter—and not getting much studying done.

What do these very different students have in common? Each has goals that conflict in one or more ways. Each needs to develop strategies to meet their other goals without threatening their academic success. And all of them have time management issues to work through: three because they feel they don't have enough time to do everything they want or need to do, and one because even though he has enough time, he needs to learn how to manage it more effectively. For all four of them, motivation and attitude will be important as they develop strategies to achieve their goals.

It all begins with setting goals and thinking about priorities.

As you think about your own goals, think about more than just being a student. You're also a person with individual needs and desires, hopes and dreams, plans and schemes. Your long-term goals likely include graduation and a career but may also involve social relationships with others, a romantic relationship, family, hobbies or other activities, where and how you live, and so on. While you are a student you may not be actively pursuing all your goals with the same fervor, but they remain goals and are still important in your life.

Goals also vary in terms of time. Short-term goals focus on today, the next few days and perhaps the next few weeks. Mid-term goals involve plans for this school year and the time you plan to remain in college. Long-term goals may begin with graduating college and everything you want to happen thereafter. Often your long-term goals (e.g., the kind of career you want) guide your midterm goals (getting the right education for that career), and your short-term goals (such as doing well on an exam) become steps for reaching those larger goals. Thinking about your goals in this way helps you realize how even the little things you do every day can keep you moving toward your most important long-term goals.

SUCCESS BEGINS WITH GOALS

"If you don't know where you are going, you might wind up someplace else."

—Yogi Berra, baseball player and coach

A GOAL is a desired result that you envision and then plan and commit to achieve. Goals can relate to family, education, career, wellness, spirituality, and many other areas of your life. Generally, goals are associated with finite time expectations, even deadlines.

As a college student, many of your goals are defined for you. For example, you must take certain courses, you must comply with certain terms and schedules, and you must turn in assignments at specified times. These goals are mostly set for you by someone else.

But there are plenty of goals for you to define yourself. For example, you decide what you'd like to major in. You decide how long you are going to be in college or what terms you want to enroll in. You largely plan how you'd like your studies to relate to employment and your career.

Goals can also be sidetracked.

Consider the following scenario in which a student makes a discovery that challenges her to reexamine her goals, priorities, and timetables:

Janine had thought she would be an accountant, even though she knew little about what an accounting job might entail. Her math and organizational skills were strong, and she enjoyed taking economics courses and well as other courses in her accounting program. But when one of her courses required her to spend time in an accounting office working with taxes, she decided that accounting was not the right fit for her, due to the higher-stress environment and the late hours.

At first she was concerned that she invested time and money in a career path that did not match her disposition. She feared that changing her major would add to her graduation time. Nevertheless, she did decide to change her major and her career focus.

Janine is now a statistician with a regional healthcare system. She is very happy with her work. Changing her major from accounting to statistics was the right decision for her.

This scenario represents some of the many opportunities we have, on an ongoing basis, to assess our relationship to our goals, reevaluate priorities, and adjust. Opportunities exist every day—every moment, really!

Here is a set of questions we can ask ourselves at any turn to help focus on personal goals:

1. What are my top-priority goals?
2. Which of my skills and interests make my goals realistic for me?
3. What makes my goals believable and possible?
4. Are my goals measurable? How long will it take me to reach them? How will I know if I have achieved them?
5. Are my goals flexible? What will I do if I experience a setback?
6. Are my goals controllable? Can I achieve them on my own?
7. Are my goals in sync with my values?

As you move through your college career, make a point to ask these questions regularly.

VISUALIZE YOUR GOALS

When thinking about your goals, it's a good strategy to visualize your short-term and long-term goals. There are 4 keys to effective visualization:

1. **RELAX:** most positive impact is achieved through deep relaxation
2. **USE PRESENT TENSE:** imagine that you are experiencing the success now.
3. **USE ALL FIVE SENSES:** imagine the scene concretely and specifically
4. **FEEL THE FEELINGS:** events accomplished by strong emotions have the power to motivate

For example, if one of your goals to pass your Counseling C105 course with an A grade, visualize the scene when you see your grade on your transcript. First relax, close your eyes, and imagine the feeling of seeing the grade on your transcript. Feel the emotions – are you happy, grateful, tired? Who is standing around you? Where are you? What are your internal voices telling you?

GUIDELINES FOR CREATING GOALS

1. **Phrase goals as positive statements:** Affirm your excitement and enthusiasm about achieving a goal by using positive language and expectations.

2. **Be exacting:** Set a precise goal that includes dates, times, and amounts, so that you have a basis for measuring how closely you achieve your goals.
3. **Assume you are the captain of your ship:** Identify goals that are linked to your own performance, not dependent on the actions of other people or situations beyond your control.
4. **Be realistic but optimistic and ambitious:** The goals you set should be achievable, but sometimes it pays to reach a little higher than what you may think is possible. Don't set your goals too low.
5. **Be hopeful, excited, and committed:** Your enthusiasm and perseverance can open many doors!

HOW TO SET GOALS: USE SMART GOALS

It is important to utilize a method when setting a goal to help you strategically outline what it is you want to accomplish AND to ensure you can measure your success towards reaching that goal. One method is called the **SMART** goal setting method. SMART is an acronym to help guide you with goal setting. It helps you develop goals which are clear and reachable. Each letter represents a step in the process:

- **(S)** specific: simple, significant, sensible
- **(M)** measurable: meaningful, motivating
- **(A)** achievable: agreed, attainable
- **(R)** relevant: reasonable, realistic, resourced and results based
- **(T)** time based: time limited, time/cost limited, timely, time sensitive



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HOW TO TURN A GENERAL GOAL INTO A SMART GOAL

General Goal (not very specific): "I want to get my degree."

S.M.A.R.T Goal (VERY specific): "I am going to get my bachelor's degree in Psychology from CSU Long Beach by Spring of 20XX."

Specific: What exactly will you accomplish? Ask yourself, Who, What, Where, When, Why.

- Example: "I am going to get my Bachelor's degree in Psychology from CSU Long Beach."

Measurable: How will you know when you have reached this goal? Include dates, or number of units.

- Example: I am going to earn my Bachelor's degree in Psychology from CSULB by June 20XX.

Achievable: What steps are you going to take to achieve your goal?

- Example: Today I will make an appointment to speak with a counselor about the requirements needed to transfer to CSULB as a Psychology major. I will meet with the counselor once a semester to make any updates to my plan.

Relevant: Am I able to achieve this goal given my current and future responsibilities?

- Example: I will take 12 units per semester and pass all of my classes with A or B grades. If my work hours increase, I will take 9 units per semester and take 3 units in the summer and winter sessions.

Timely: When will you achieve this goal?

- Example: I am going to make a counseling appointment today in order to choose 3 courses for the next semester, and pass all of my classes, in order to get closer to graduating from CSULB by June 2027.

ESTABLISHING YOUR PRIORITIES

Thinking about your goals gets you started, but it's also important to think about priorities. We often use the word "priorities" to refer to how important something is to us. We might think, *this* is a really important goal, and *that* is less important. Try this experiment: go back to the goals you wrote in Activity 1 and see if you can rank each goal as a 1 (top priority), 2 (middle priority), or 3 (lowest priority). It sounds easy, but do you actually feel comfortable doing that? Maybe you gave a priority 1 to passing your courses and a priority 3 to playing your guitar. So what does that mean—that you never play guitar again, or at least not while in college? Whenever you have an hour free between class and work, you have to study because that's the higher priority? What about all your other goals—do you have to ignore everything that's not a priority 1? And what happens when you have to choose among different goals that are both number 1 priorities?

In reality, priorities don't work quite that way. It doesn't make a lot of sense to try to rank goals as *always* more or less important. **The question of priority is really a question of what is more important at a specific time.** It is important to do well in your classes, but it's also important to have a social life and enjoy your time off from studying. You shouldn't have to choose between the two—except *at any given time*. Priorities always involve time: what is most important to do *right now*. As we'll see later, time management is mostly a way to juggle priorities so you can meet all your goals. When you manage your time well, you don't have to ignore some goals completely in order to meet other goals. In other words, you don't have to give up your life when you register for college—but you may need to work on managing your life more effectively.

But time management works only when you're committed to your goals. Attitude and motivation are very important. If you haven't yet developed an attitude for success, all the time management skills in the world won't keep you focused and motivated to succeed.

AN ATTITUDE FOR SUCCESS

What's your attitude *right now*—what started running through your mind as you saw the "An Attitude for Success" heading? Were you groaning to yourself, thinking, "No, not the attitude thing again!" Or, at the other extreme, maybe you were thinking, "This is great! Now I'm about to learn everything I need to get through college without a problem!" Those are two attitude extremes, one negative and skeptical, the other positive and hopeful. Most students are somewhere in between—but *everyone* has an attitude of one sort or another

Everything people do and how they do it starts with attitude. One student gets up with the alarm clock and cheerfully prepares for the day, planning to study for a couple hours between classes, go jogging later, and see a friend at dinner. Another student oversleeps after partying too late last night, decides to skip his first class, somehow gets through later classes fueled by fast food and energy drinks while dreading tomorrow's exam, and immediately accepts a friend's suggestion to go out tonight instead of studying. Both students could have identical situations, classes, finances, and academic preparation. There could be just one significant difference—but it's the one that matters.

Here are some characteristics associated with a positive attitude:

- Enthusiasm for and enjoyment of daily activities
- Acceptance of responsibility for one's actions and feeling good about success
- Generally upbeat mood and positive emotions, cheerfulness with others, and satisfaction with oneself
- Motivation to get the job done
- Flexibility to make changes when needed
- Ability to make productive, effective use of time

Here are some characteristics associated with a negative attitude:

- Frequent complaining
- Blaming others for anything that goes wrong
- Often experiencing negative emotions: anger, depression, resentment
- Lack of motivation for work or studies
- Hesitant to change or seek improvement
- Unproductive use of time, procrastination

PLANNING: STAYING FOCUSED AND MOTIVATED

Okay, you've got a positive attitude. But you've got a lot of reading for classes to do tonight, a test tomorrow, and a paper due the next day. Maybe you're a little bored with one of your reading assignments. Maybe you'd rather play a computer game. Uh oh—now what? Attitude can change at almost any moment. One minute you're enthusiastically starting a class project, and then maybe a friend drops by and suddenly all you want to do is close the books and relax a while, hang out with friends.

One of the characteristics of successful people is accepting that life is full of interruptions and change— and planning for it. Staying focused does not mean you become a boring person who does nothing but go to class and study all the time. You just need to make a plan.

Planning ahead is the single best way to stay focused and motivated to reach your goals. Don't wait until the night before an exam. If you know you have a major exam in five days, start by reviewing the material and deciding how many hours of study you need. Then schedule those hours spread out over the next few days—at times when you are most alert and least likely to be distracted. Allow time for other activities, too, to reward yourself for successful studying. Then when the exam comes, you're relaxed, you know the material, you're in a good mood and confident, and you do well.

Planning is mostly a matter of managing your time well, as we'll see later.

Here are some tips for staying focused and motivated:

- If you're not feeling motivated, think about the results of your goals, not just the goals themselves. If just thinking about finishing college doesn't sound all that exciting, then think instead about the great, high-paying career that comes afterward and the things you can do with that income.
- Say it out loud—to yourself or a friend with a positive attitude: "I'm going to study now for another hour before I take a break—and I'm getting an A on that test tomorrow!" It's amazing how saying something aloud puts commitment in it and affirms that it can be true.
- Remember your successes, even small successes. As you begin a project or approach studying for a test, think about your past success on a different project or test. Remember how good it feels to succeed. Know you can succeed again.
- Focus on the here and now. For some people, looking ahead to goals, or to anything else, may lead to daydreaming that keeps them from focusing on what they need to do right now. Don't worry about what you're doing tomorrow or next week or month. If your mind keeps drifting off, however, you may need to reward or even trick yourself to focus on the here and now. For example, if you can't stop thinking about the snack you're going to have when you finish studying in a couple hours, change the plan. Tell yourself you'll take a break in twenty minutes if you really need it—but only if you really work well first.
- If you just can't focus in on what you should be doing because the task seems too big and daunting, break the task into smaller, manageable pieces. Don't start out thinking, "I need to study the next four hours," but think, "I'll spend the next thirty minutes going through my class notes from the last three weeks and figure out what topics I need to spend more time on." It's a lot easier to stay focused when you're sitting down for thirty minutes at a time.
- Never, ever multitask while studying! You may think that you can monitor your e-mails and send text messages while studying, but in reality, these other activities lower the quality of your studying.
- Imitate successful people. Does a friend always seem better able to stick with studying or work until they get it done? What are they doing that you're not? We all learn from observing others, and we can speed up that process by deliberately using the same strategies we see working with others. *Visualize yourself* studying in the same way and getting that same high grade on the test or paper.
- Separate yourself from unsuccessful people. This is the flip side of imitating successful people. If a roommate or a friend is always putting off things until the last minute or is distracted with other interests and activities, tell yourself how different you are. When you hear other students complaining about how hard a
- class is or bragging about not studying or attending class, visualize yourself as not being like them at all.
- Reward yourself when you complete a significant task—but only when you are done. Some people seem able to stay focused only when there's a reward waiting.
- While some people work harder for the reward, others are motivated more by the price of failing. While some people are almost paralyzed by anxiety, others are moved by their fear to achieve their best.
- Get the important things done first. We'll talk about managing your academic planner
- and to-do lists in another chapter, but for now, to stay focused and motivated, concentrate on the things that matter most. You're about to sit down to read a chapter in a book you're not much enjoying, and you suddenly notice some clothing piled up on a chair. "I really should clean up this place," you think. "And I'd better get my laundry done before I run out of things to wear." Don't try to fool yourself into feeling you're accomplishing something by doing laundry rather than studying. Stay focused!

PROBLEM SOLVING: WHEN SETBACKS HAPPEN

Even when you have clear goals and are motivated and focused to achieve them, problems sometimes happen. Accept that they *will* happen, since inevitably they do for everyone. The difference between those who succeed by solving the problem and moving on and those who get frustrated and give up is partly attitude and partly experience—and knowing how to cope when a problem occurs.



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There are different kinds of setbacks that may happen while you're in college—just as to everyone in life. Here are a few examples:

- A financial crisis
- An illness or injury
- A crisis involving family members or loved ones
- Stress related to frequently feeling you don't have enough time
- Stress related to relationship problems

Some things happen that we cannot prevent—such as some kinds of illness or crises involving family members. But many other kinds of problems can be prevented or made less likely to occur. You can take steps to stay healthy, as you'll learn in the chapter that covers Health. You can take control of your finances. You can learn how to build successful social relationships and get along better with your instructors, with other students, and in personal relationships. You can learn time management techniques to ensure you use your time effectively for studying. Most of the chapters in this book also provide study tips and guidelines to help you do well in your classes with effective reading, note-taking, test-taking, and writing skills for classes. Preventing the problems that typically keep college students from succeeding is much of what this book is all about.

Yet, not all problems can be avoided. Illness or a financial problem can significantly set one back—especially when you're on a tight schedule and budget. Other problems, such as a social or relationship issue or an academic problem in a specific class, may be more complex and not easily prevented.

Types of Decision Makers

Problem solving and decision making belong together. You cannot solve a problem without making a decision. There are two main types of decision makers. Some people use a systematic, rational approach. Others are

more intuitive. They go with their emotions or a gut feeling about the right approach. They may have highly creative ways to address the problem, but cannot explain why they have chosen this approach.

What do you do when a problem occurs? First, work to resolve the immediate problem:

1. **Stay motivated and focused.** Don't let frustration, anxiety, or other negative emotions make the problem worse than it already is.
2. **Analyze the problem to consider all possible solutions.** An unexpected financial setback doesn't automatically mean you have to drop out of school. Failing a midterm exam doesn't automatically mean you're going to fail the course—not when you make the effort to determine what went wrong, work with your instructor and others on an improved study plan, and use better strategies to prepare for the next test.
3. **Seek help when you need to.** None of us gets through life alone, and it's not a sign of weakness to see your college counselor if you have a problem.
4. **When you've developed a plan for resolving the problem, work to follow through.** If it will take a while before the problem is completely solved, track your progress in smaller steps so that you can see you really are succeeding. Every day will move you one step closer to putting it behind you.

PROBLEM-SOLVING STRATEGIES

The most effective problem-solving method uses both rational and intuitive or creative approaches. There are six steps within this problem solving method. The six step process is:

1. Identify the problem.
2. Search for alternatives
3. Weigh the alternatives
4. Make a choice
5. Implement the choice
6. Evaluate the results and, if necessary, start the process again

Identify the Problem

To solve a problem, you must first determine what the problem actually is. You may think you know, but you need to check it out. Sometimes, it is easy to focus on symptoms, not causes. You use a rational approach to determine what the problem is. The questions you might ask include:

- What have I (or others) observed?
- What was I (or others) doing at the time the problem occurred?
- Is this a problem in itself or a symptom of a deeper, underlying problem?
- What information do I need?
- What have we already tried to address this problem?

For example, the apprentice you supervise comes to you saying that the electric warming oven is not working properly. Before you call a repair technician, you may want to ask a few questions. You may want to find out what the apprentice means by "not working properly." Does he or she know how to operate the equipment? Did he or she check that the equipment was plugged in? Was the fuse or circuit breaker checked? When did it last work?

You may be able to avoid an expensive service call. At the very least, you will be able to provide valuable information to the repair technician that aids in the troubleshooting process.

Regardless of the problem you encounter, the basic problem-solving process remains the same. In fact, the more complex the problem is, the more important it is to be methodical in your problem-solving approach.

Search For Alternatives

It may seem obvious what you have to do to address the problem. Occasionally, this is true, but most times, it is important to identify possible alternatives. This is where the creative side of problem solving really comes in.

Brainstorming with a group or on your own is an excellent way to identify potential alternatives. Think of as many possibilities as possible. Write down these ideas, even if they seem somewhat zany or offbeat on first impression. Sometimes really silly ideas can contain the germ of a superb solution. Too often, people move too quickly into making a choice without really considering all of the options. Spending more time searching for alternatives and weighing their consequences can really pay off.

Weigh The Alternatives

Once a number of ideas have been generated, you need to assess each of them to see how effective they might be in addressing the problem. Consider the effect they will have on you, those around you, any associated costs, ethics of the actions, and legality to name a few.

Make A Choice

Some individuals and groups avoid making decisions. Not making a decision is in itself a decision. By postponing a decision, you may eliminate a number of options and alternatives. You lose control over the situation. In some cases, a problem can escalate if it is not dealt with promptly.

Implement The Decision

Once you have made a decision, it must be implemented. With major decisions, this may involve detailed planning to ensure that all parts of the operation are informed of their part in the change.

Evaluate The Outcome

Whenever you have implemented a decision, you need to evaluate the results. The outcomes may give valuable advice about the decision-making process, the appropriateness of the choice, and the implementation process itself. This information will be useful in improving the company's response the next time a similar decision has to be made.

After you've solved a problem, you want to try and avoid the same problem in the future:

1. **Be honest with yourself:** how did you contribute to the problem? Sometimes it's obvious, but other times the source of the problem is not as glaring, but may become clearer the more you think about it. A student put off studying all semester, but studied all day before the big test and was well rested and clear-headed at test time but still did poorly; he/she may not yet have learned good study skills. Another student has frequent colds and other mild illnesses that keep him from doing his best: how much better would he feel if he ate well, got plenty of exercise, and slept enough every night? If you don't honestly explore the factors that led to the problem, it's more likely to happen again.
2. **Take responsibility for your life and your role in what happens to you.** Earlier we talked about people with negative attitudes, who are always blaming others, fate, or "the system" (external factors) for their problems. It's no coincidence that they keep on having problems. Unless *you want to* keep having problems, don't keep blaming others.

3. **Taking responsibility doesn't mean being down on yourself.** Failing at something doesn't mean *you* are a failure. We all fail at something, sometime. Adjust your attitude so you're ready to get back on track and feel happy that you'll never make that mistake again!
4. **Make a plan.** You might still have a problem on that next big test if you don't make an effective study plan and stick to it. You may need to change your behavior in some way, such as learning time management strategies. (Read on!)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Goals should be realistic, specific, and time oriented, and you must be committed to them.
- Setting priorities helps keep you focused on your goals but doesn't determine how you use your time at all times.
- Attitude is an important reason students succeed or fail in college. Everyone can work on developing a more positive, motivating attitude.
- Students with high self-efficacy also have a high level of motivation to succeed.
- Planning, the essence of time management, is necessary to stay focused and continue moving toward your goals.
- Networking with other students helps you stay motivated as well as making studying more effective.
- Since problems and setbacks are inevitable, knowing how to solve problems is important for reaching goals. With a good attitude, most common student problems can be prevented.

If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.

—Henry David Thoreau, author

SUMMARY

Success with goals (any goals—education, family, career, finances, etc.) is essentially a three-part process:

1. Identify your long-term, medium-term and short-term goals.
2. Set priorities to accomplish these goals.
3. Manage your time according to the priorities you've set.

By following these three straightforward steps, you can more readily achieve goals because you clearly organized the process and followed through with commitment. Focus your sights on what you want to acquire, attain, or achieve. Prioritize the steps you need to take to get there. And organize your tasks into manageable chunks and blocks of time. These are the roadways to accomplishment and fulfillment.

Words of Wisdom: In the following passage from *Foundations of Academic Success: Words of Wisdom*, former Political Science student Patricia Munsch—now a college counselor—reflects on how a structured, conscientious approach to decision-making and goal setting in college can lead to fulfillment and achievement.

What Do You Enjoy Studying?

There is a tremendous amount of stress placed on college students regarding their choice of major. Every day, I meet with students regarding their concern about choosing right major; the path that will lead to a fantastic, high-paying position in a growth industry. There is a hope that one decision, your college major, will have a huge impact on the rest of your life.

Students shy away from subject areas they enjoy due to fear that such coursework will not lead to a job. I am disappointed in this approach. As a counselor I always ask—what do you enjoy studying? Based on this answer it is generally easy to choose a major or a family of majors. I recognize the incredible pressure to secure employment after graduation, but forcing yourself to choose a major that you may not have any actual interest in because a book or website mentioned the area of growth may not lead to the happiness you predict.

Working in a college setting I have the opportunity to work with students through all walks of life, and I do believe based on my experience, that choosing a major because it is listed as a growth area alone is not a good idea. Use your time in college to explore all areas of interest and utilize your campus resources to help you make connections between your joy in a subject matter and the potential career paths. Realize that for most people, in most careers, the undergraduate major does not lead to a linear career path.

As an undergraduate student I majored in Political Science, an area that I had an interest in, but I added minors in Sociology and Women's Studies as my educational pursuits broadened. Today, as a counselor, I look back on my coursework with happy memories of exploring new ideas, critically analyzing my own assumptions, and developing an appreciation of social and behavioral sciences. So to impart my wisdom in regards to a student's college major, I will always ask, what do you enjoy studying?

Once you have determined what you enjoy studying, the real work begins. Students need to seek out academic counseling. Academic counseling means many different things; it can include course selection, course completion for graduation, mapping coursework to graduation, developing opportunities within your major and mentorship.

As a student I utilized a faculty member in my department for semester course selection, and I also went to the department chairperson to organize two different internships to explore different career paths. In addition, I sought mentorship from club advisors as I questioned my career path and future goals. In my mind I had a team of people providing me support and guidance, and as a result I had a great college experience and an easy transition from school to work.

I recommend to all students that I meet with to create their own team. As a counselor I can certainly be a part of their team, but I should not be the only resource. Connect with faculty in your department or in your favorite subject. Seek out internships as you think about the transition from college to workplace. Find mentors through faculty, club advisors, or college staff. We all want to see you succeed and are happy to be a part of your journey.

As a counselor I am always shocked when students do not understand what courses they need to take, what grade point average they need to maintain, and what requirements they must fulfill in order to reach their goal—graduation! Understand that as a college student it is your responsibility to read your

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM A COLLEGE COUNSELOR

college catalog and meet all of the requirements for graduation from your college. I always suggest that students, starting in their first semester, outline or map out all of the courses they need to take in order to graduate. Of course you may change your mind along the way, but by setting out your plan to graduation you are forcing yourself to learn what is required of you.

I do this exercise in my classes and it is by far the most frustrating for students. They want to live in the now and they don't want to worry about next semester or next year. However, for many students that I see, the consequence of this decision is a second semester senior year filled with courses that the student avoided during all the previous semesters. If you purposefully outline each semester and the coursework for each, you can balance your schedule, understand your curriculum and feel confident that you will reach your goal.

—Dr. Patricia Munsch, *Foundations of Academic Success: Words of Wisdom*

Chapter 3 Sources

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CHAPTER 4: SUCCESS

CHAPTER 4 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Examine positive self-talk and develop your inner self talk.
2. Identify the difference between growth and fixed mindset and explore emotional intelligence.
3. Examine and define college success.
4. Examine characteristics of a successful college student.
5. Learn how to visualize success.

We often think we are open to learning yet, we may create our own mental blocks. Therefore, this chapter will discuss self-empowerment which involves celebrating your strengths and improving upon your weaknesses to increase your self-confidence. You will inevitably experience challenges while in college, but don't be afraid. You have the power within to overcome these obstacles. You can empower yourself with the belief that you can and will achieve success.

The success section will help you define what success in college means to you. Success means different things for different people. By discovering what your personal values are, you will identify what keeps you motivated. Are they intrinsic or extrinsic types of motivation? When you take advantage of your self-empowerment abilities, you will be able to increase your self-efficacy and achieve your greatest success in college and in life.



Image by Austin Schmid from Unsplash

4.1 THE POWER OF POSITIVE SELF-TALK

Is your inner voice positive or negative? What thoughts dominate your mind when you sit down to study? Positive self-talk is very important when it comes to your success in college. If you are always telling yourself that you won't do well, eventually, you will start to believe that.

We all have conversations with ourselves. I might do badly on a test, and I start thinking things like, "I'm just not smart enough" or "That teacher is so hard no one could pass that test." The problem when we talk to ourselves this way is that we listen—and we start believing what we're hearing.

In Skip Downing's book *On Course: Strategies for Creating Success in College and in Life* he discusses his concept of **Creator vs. Victim** and how our self-talk plays a role in either our creator or victim identities. A student with a **Creator Mindset** will see multiple options in the challenges and situations that they face, choose wisely from those options, and take control of the actions necessary to achieve the life they want. A student with a **Victim Mindset** will be prevented from seeing and acting on choices that will help them reach their goals because of the lens they are using to view their situations and circumstances. At times, there are situations that we will encounter or environments we will be in that will be beyond our control. However, those with a Creator mindset will accept personal responsibility and see the areas in which they can take charge.

Downing furthers his concept on Creator vs Victim by identifying the types of self-talk we can engage in: The Inner Critic, the Inner Defender, and the Inner Guide. A student who identifies as an **Inner Critic** would typically engage in self-talk that judges them as being inadequate. They accept too much responsibility and blame for whatever happens in their life. For example, they may engage in self-talk in the extremes such as saying *"I never say the right thing in class"* or *"I am so terrible at math, I will never do well in this subject"*. This type of inner voice finds fault in everything that they do and always blames themselves.

Rather than always blaming themselves, students who engage in **Inner Defender** self-talk tend to always place blame on those around them, not taking accountability for things that may have occurred. Instead of judging themselves, they judge others. For example, an Inner Defender would say *"My teacher is so terrible, it's all their fault I am not passing"* or *"My roommate made me late, it's all their fault!"*. The Inner Defender also tends to blame things on bad luck. As Downing highlights, both the Inner Critic and Inner Defender have good intentions; these persons are trying to protect themselves from emotions that may be unpleasant such as anxiety. I think at times, we can all identify as either an Inner Defender or Inner Critic! But what is important is that we don't embody this type of self-talk day-in and day-out. This can lead us to accepting a lack of responsibility, which in turn leads us further from the success we are seeking.

Those with a Creator mindset will engage in self-talk that Downing describes as the **Inner Guide**. When talking as an inner guide, your internal voice will be seeking the best opportunity or solution in any situation. It understands that focusing our time on judging or blaming others will not help improve a difficult situation. Sometimes what the inner defender or critic may have to say could be accurate. Maybe the instructor really isn't that great or the person designated to assist you maybe really is rude! However, if we solely focus our response and thoughts as a victim, we will spend all our time and energy into judging or blaming ourselves or others whereas someone with a Creator mindset will focus their energy on solving the problem to get themselves back on track.

Think about what you've been saying to yourself since your first day at college. Have you been negative or making excuses, maybe because you're afraid of not succeeding? You *are* smart enough or you wouldn't be here. Even if you did poorly on a test, you can turn that around into a more positive attitude by taking responsibility. *"OK, I goofed off too much when I should have been studying. I learned my lesson—now it's time to buckle down and study for the next test. I'm going to ace this one!"* Hear yourself saying that enough and guess what—you soon find out you *can* succeed even in your hardest classes.

It may seem simplistic, but make sure you are thinking positive about what you are studying. Make sure you have confidence that you can achieve good grades. Always remember to not be extremely critical about a bad grade. A bad grade (or a good grade) should not define you. Perhaps an unsatisfactory grade is sending you a message to study harder, increase your academic support and create a plan to achieve your goal.

Getting an undesirable grade could also mean that instead of continuing with the way you studied, maybe you need to make some changes in your *study habits* so that you are better able to grasp the material. Never get discouraged though, keep trying, keep making adjustments if needed, and your hard work will pay off.

When in doubt, keep telling yourself you CAN do well, even if it is in a challenging subject. Table 4.1 below shows some examples of positive affirmations you can use to develop a positive attitude towards learning and the good habit of positive self-talk. Please take time to develop positive affirmations in areas of your life you would like to improve. We highly encourage you to develop a couple of positive affirmations for your continued success in academics.

Table 4.1 What Can I say to Myself?

What Can I Say To Myself?	
Instead of...	Try thinking...
• I'm not good at this.	• What am I missing?
• I'm awesome at this.	• I'm on the right track!
• I give up.	• I'll use some of the strategies we learned.
• This is too hard.	• This may take some time and effort.
• I can't make this any better.	• I can always improve, so I'll keep trying.
• I just can't do math.	• I'm going to train my brain in Math.
• I made a mistake	• Mistakes help me to learn better.
• She's so smart. I will never be that smart.	• I'm going to figure out how she does it so I can try it!
• It's good enough.	• Is it really my best work?
• Plan A didn't work.	• Good thing the alphabet has 25 more letters!

4.2 FIXED AND GROWTH MINDSET

According to Carol Dweck, individuals can be placed on a continuum according to their implicit views of "where ability comes from." Dweck states that there are two categories: **growth mindset** vs **fixed mindset**. Those with a "fixed mindset" believe that abilities are mostly innate and interpret failure as the lack of necessary basic abilities, while those with a "growth mindset" believe that they can acquire any given ability provided they invest effort or study. Dweck argues that the growth mindset "will allow a person to live a less stressful and more successful life."

In a 2012 interview, Dweck defined both fixed and growth mindsets:

"In a fixed mindset students believe their basic abilities, their intelligence, their talents, are fixed traits with a restricted amount. Eventually, their goal becomes to look smart all the time and never look dumb. In a growth mindset students understand that their talents and abilities can be developed through effort, good teaching and persistence. They don't necessarily think everyone's the same or anyone can be Einstein, but they believe everyone has the ability to be smart if they work hard."^[5]

A large part of Dweck's research on mindsets has been done in the field of education, and how these mindsets affect a student's performance in the classroom. The growth mindset is clearly the more desirable of the two for students. According to Dweck, individuals with a "growth" theory are more likely to continue working hard despite setbacks. Individuals' theories of intelligence can be affected by subtle environmental cues. For example, children given praise such as "good job, you're very smart" are much more likely to develop a fixed mindset, whereas if given compliments like "good job, you worked very hard" they are likely to develop a growth mindset.

While elements of our personality – such as sensitivity to mistakes and setbacks – can make us predisposed towards holding a certain mindset, we are able to develop and reshape our mindset through our interactions.^[7] In multiple studies, Carol Dweck and her colleagues noted that alterations in mindset could be achieved through “praising the process through which success was achieved”,^[8] “having [college aged students] read compelling scientific articles that support one view or the other”,^[7] or teaching junior high school students “that every time they try hard and learn something new, their brain forms new connections that, over time, make them smarter”.^[9] These studies all demonstrate how framing and discussing students’ work and effort play a considerable role in the type of mindset students develop and students’ conceptions of their own ability.

Carol Dweck and Jo Boaler have done extensive research on the topics of fixed and growth mindset. However, studies on mindset depict results that show that there is a disparity in the fixed and growth mindsets of females and males. In Boaler’s *Ability and Mathematics: The Mindset Revolution that is Reshaping Education*, she notes that fixed mindset beliefs lead to inequalities in education and are a main reason for low achievement and participation amongst minorities and female students.^[10] Boaler’s research shows that many women feel as though they are not smart enough or capable enough to continue in certain subjects, such as STEM areas of academia. Boaler uses Carol Dweck’s research showing that, “gender differences in mathematics performance only existed among fixed mindset students” (Boaler, 2013).

Dweck’s research and theory of growth and fixed mindsets has been useful in intervention strategies with at risk students, dispelling negative stereotypes in education held by teachers and students, understanding the impacts of self-theories on resilience, and understanding how process praise can foster a growth mindset and positively impact students’ motivation levels.^[11]

Table 4.2 Mindset

Fixed Mindset Vs Growth Mindset		
Mindset	Fixed Mindset - Intelligence is static	Growth Mindset - Intelligence can be developed
Path	Leads to a desire to look smart and therefore a tendency to:	Leads to a desire to learn and therefore a tendency to:
Challenges	Avoid challenges	Embrace challenges
Obstacles	Give up easily	Persist in the face of setbacks
Effort	See effort as fruitless or worse	See effort as a path to mastery
Criticism	Ignore useful negative feedback	Learn from criticism

Fixed Mindset Vs Growth Mindset		
Success of others	Feel threatened by the success of others	Find lessons and inspiration in the success of others
Outcome	As a result, they may plateau early and achieve less than their full potential. All this confirms a deterministic view of the world.	As a result, they reach ever-higher levels of achievement. All this gives them a greater sense of free will.

When you enter a mindset, you enter a new world. In one world — the world of fixed traits — success is about proving you are smart or talented. Validating yourself. In the other — the world of changing qualities — it is about stretching yourself to learn something new.

Please take time to reflect on a situation where you exercised a fixed mindset. Really evaluate how it impacted you. Imagine if you had the opportunity to go back in time, how would you apply a growth mindset? I can remember when I was enrolled in my first semester of college and I was so excited and scared. I feared my peers and professors would find out I was an average student. I exercised a fixed mindset by continuing my same learning behavior as a college student. I soon found I was not passing my classes. If I could go back in time, I would have a growth mindset and develop my learning habits by asking for support. I would go to tutoring, talk to my professor's, ask follow-up questions, and ask my peers what their understanding of the lesson. I would take responsibility to learn what I did not know and not pretend I knew the information.

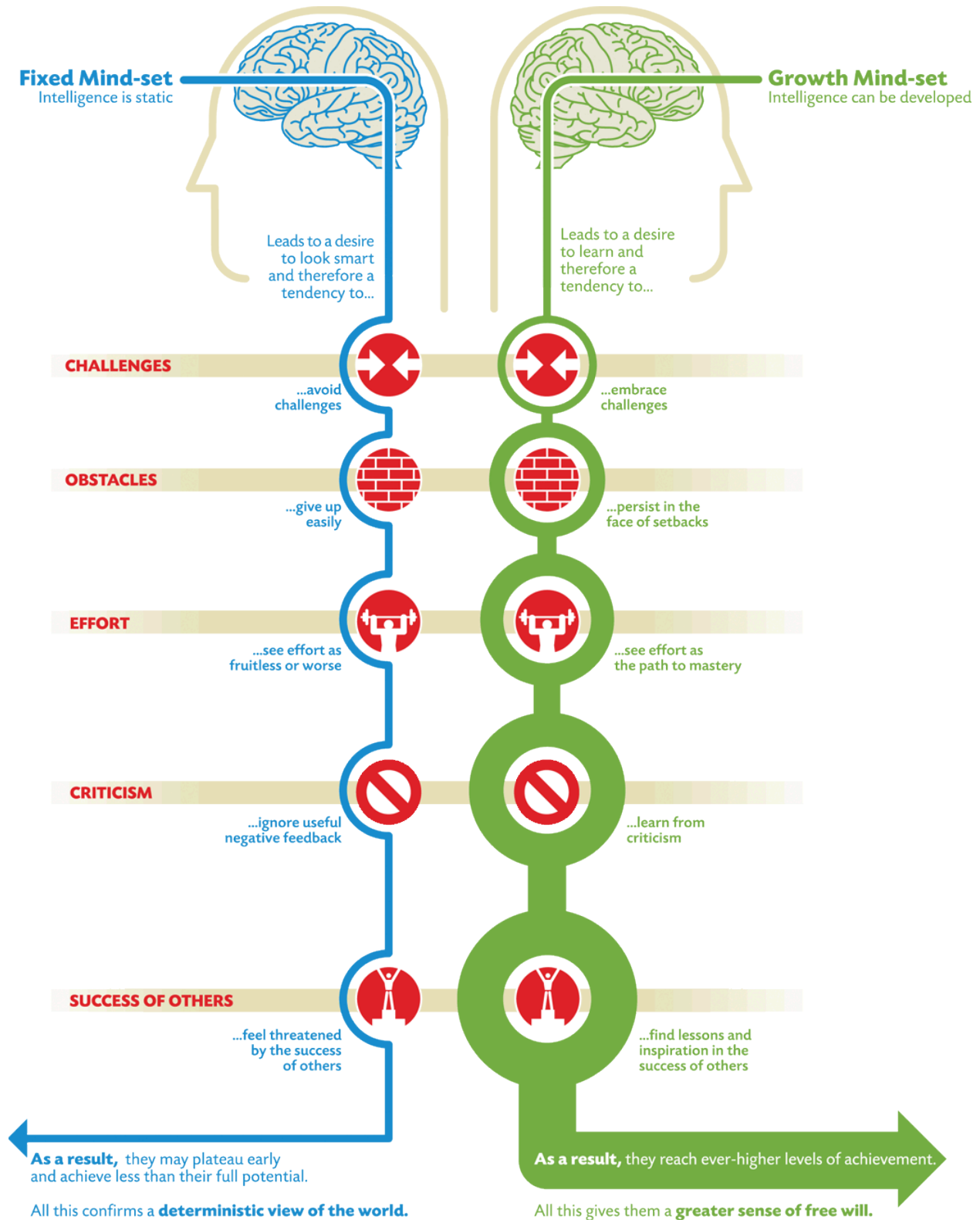


Figure 4.3 Growth Mindset Image

I encourage you to practice a growth mindset. Ensure to review the Fixed Mindset vs. Growth Mindset charts 4.2 and 4.3 and develop an understanding of how you can apply a growth mindset. As I mentioned earlier, I had a fixed mindset in college; I wanted to look “smart” and avoided challenges, especially in math and science courses. In addition, I was not able to really understand positive criticism. I did not know how to

receive it and translate it as a resource to help me become a better learner. My experience with criticism was always negative and it was not intended for my best interest. Honestly, other peoples' success intimidated me and really highlighted how much I doubted my learning abilities.

The biggest mistake I made during my college years was to develop a script in my mind where I focused on a "fixed" deficit mindset. I was really hard on myself and I created mental barriers and convinced myself of not having the abilities to learn. Once I was on academic probation, I evaluated my situation. If I continued on this path, I needed to make a commitment to my education. I valued my opportunity to become the first in my family to earn a college degree. I took a leap of faith and was honest with myself. I identified and created a support system on campus. I made counseling appointments, used the tutoring lab, went to instructor office hours and attended class every day. I acquired new learning habits, time management, note taking strategies, committing to my study time, asking questions and learning from my mistakes.

Today, I continue to learn from my mistakes. I allow myself to learn new concepts and take positive risks. I focus on the learning process and set short and long-term goals. I encourage you to give yourself the opportunity to discover and define your personal success.

4.3 COLLEGE SUCCESS

Action is the foundational key to all success.

—Pablo Picasso, artist

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUCCESS

A college education is aligned with greater success in many areas of life. While enrolled in college, most students are closely focused on making it through the next class or passing the next test. It can be easy to lose sight of the overall role that education plays in life. But sometimes it helps to recall what a truly great step forward you are taking!

It's also important to recognize, though, that some students do not succeed in college and drop out within the first year. Sometimes this is due to financial problems, personal or family crisis. But most of the time students drop out because they're having trouble passing their courses.

In this section, we examine the elements of college success. Are there patterns of success you strive for but aren't yet reaching? Where might you increase your support? What strategies can you use to achieve success in your college endeavors?

Success in college is the theme of this book—and you'll be learning more about everything involved in success in the following chapters. Let's first define what success really means so that you can get started, right now, on the right foot.

Understand first that no book can "make" you be successful—it can only offer the tools for you to use if you want. What are you thinking right now as you read these words? Are you reading this right now only because you *have* to, because it is assigned reading in a course you have to take—and your mind keeps drifting to other things because you're feeling bored? Or are you interested because you've decided you *want* to succeed in college?

We hope it's the latter, that you're feeling motivated—and excited, too—to do a great job in college. But even if you aren't much concerned at present about these issues, we hope you'll keep reading and do some thinking about why you're in college and how to get motivated to do well.

“SUCCESS” AND “FAILURE”

So, what does “success” actually mean in college? Good grades? That's what many students would say— at least toward the beginning of their time in college.

When you ask people about their college experience a few years later, grades are seldom one of the first things mentioned. College graduates reflecting back typically emphasize the following:

- The complete college experience (often described as “the best years of my life”)
- Exploring many different subjects and discovering one's own interests
- Meeting a lot of interesting people, learning about different ways to live
- Learning how to make decisions and solve problems that are now related to a career
- Gaining the skills needed to get the job—and life—one desires

When you are achieving what you want in life and when you are happy and challenged and feel you are living life to its fullest and contributing to the world, then you likely feel successful. When you reach this point, the last thing you will consider are your grades in college.

This is not to say that grades don't matter, getting good grades is not the ultimate goal of college or the best way to define personal success while in college. Five or ten years from now, no one is going to care much about what grade you got in freshman English or Biology 100. A successful college experience does include acceptable grades, but in the end, in your long-range goals, grades are only one component of a larger picture.

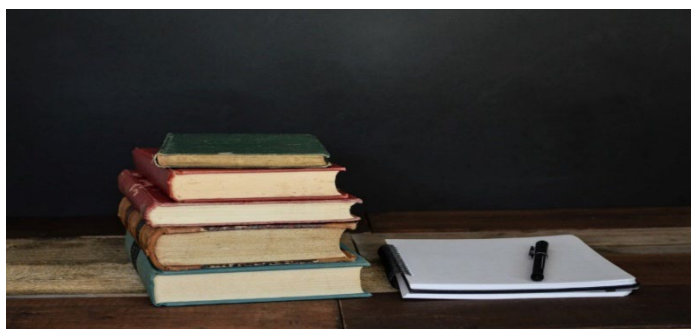


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HOW MUCH DO GRADES MATTER?

As you begin your college experience, it's good to think about your attitude toward grades, since grades often motivate students to study and do well on assignments.

Valuing grades too highly, or not highly enough, can cause problems. A student who is determined to get only the highest grades can easily be frustrated by difficult college classes. Expectations that are too high may lead to disappointment—possibly depression or anxiety—and may become counterproductive. At the other extreme, a student who is too relaxed about grades, who is content simply with passing courses, may not be motivated to study enough even to pass—and may be at risk for failing courses. What is a good attitude to have toward grades? The answer to that depends in part on how grades matter generally—and specifically in your own situation. Here are some ways grades clearly do matter:

- At most colleges, all students must maintain a certain grade point average (GPA) to be allowed to continue taking courses and to graduate.
- Financial aid and scholarship recipients must maintain a certain grade in all courses, or a minimum GPA overall, to continue receiving their financial award.
- In some programs, the grade in certain courses must be higher than simply passing in order to count toward the program or major.

After graduation, it may be enough in some careers just to have completed the program or degree. But in most situations, how well one did in college may still affect one's life. Employers often ask how well you did in college (new graduates at least—this becomes less important after one has gained more job experience). Students who are proud of their grades usually include their GPA on their résumés. Students with a low GPA may avoid including it on their resume, but employers may ask on the company's application form or in an interview (and being caught in a lie can lead to being fired). An employer who asks for a college transcript will see all your grades, not just the overall GPA.

In addition to the importance for jobs, grades matter if you plan to continue to graduate school, professional school, or other educational programs—all of which require your transcript.

Certainly, grades are not the only way people are judged, but along with all forms of experience (work, volunteer, internship, hobbies) and personal qualities and the recommendations of others, they are an important consideration. After all, an employer may think, if this person goofed off so much in college that he got low grades, how can I expect him or her not to goof off on the job?

HOW TO CALCULATE YOUR GPA

Because of various requirements for maintaining a GPA at a certain level, you may need to know how to calculate your GPA before grades come out at the end of the term. The math is not difficult, but you need to consider both the grade in every course and the number of credit hours for that course in order to calculate the overall GPA. Here is how you would do the calculation in the traditional four-point scale. First, translate each letter grade to a numerical score:

$$A = 4$$

$$B = 3$$

$$C = 2$$

$$D = 1$$

Then multiply each grade's numerical score by the number of units or hours for that course:

$$B \text{ in Math } 160 \times 4 \text{ hours} = 3 \times 4 = 12, B \text{ in English } 102 \times 3 \text{ hours} = 3 \times 3 = 9, C \text{ in History } 170 \times 3 \text{ hours} = 2 \times 3 = 6, A \text{ in Counseling } 105 \times 3 \text{ hours} = 4 \times 3 = 12$$

Then add together those numbers for each course:

$$12 + 9 + 6 + 12 = 39.$$

Then divide that total by the total number of credit hours:

HOW TO CALCULATE YOUR GPA

$39 / 13 = 3.0 = \text{GPA of } 3.0.$

Speak with a Counselor if you have transcripts from other colleges and have + and – grades.

The best attitude to take toward grades in college is simply to do the best you can do. Almost everything in this book—from time management to study skills to social skills and staying healthy—will contribute to your overall success and, yes, to getting better grades.

If you have special concerns about grades, such as feeling unprepared in certain classes and at risk of failing, talk with your academic counselor as much as needed. If a class requires more preparation than you have from past courses and experience, you might be urged to drop that class and retake the class—or to seek extra help. Your advisor can help you work through any individual issues related to doing well and getting the best grade possible.

CAN YOU CHALLENGE A GRADE?

Yes and no. College instructors are very careful about how they assign grades, which are based on clear-cut standards often stated in the course syllabus. The likelihood of an instructor changing your grade if you challenge it is very low. On the other hand, we're all human—mistakes can occur, and if you truly feel a test or other score was miscalculated, you can ask your instructor to review the grade. Just be sure to be polite and respectful.

Most situations in which students want to challenge a grade, however, result from a misunderstanding regarding the expectations of the grading scale or standards used. Students may simply feel they deserve a higher grade because they think they understand the material well or spent a lot of time studying or doing the assignment. The instructor's grade, however, is based on your actual responses on a test, a paper or other assignment. The instructor is grading not what he or she thinks is in your head, but what you actually wrote down.

If you are concerned that your grade does not accurately reflect your understanding or effort, you should still talk with your instructor—but your goal should be not to argue for a grade change but to gain a better understanding of the course's expectations so that you'll do better next time. In addition to your professor schedule an appointment to talk to your academic counselor to discuss all your options.

Instructors respect students who want to improve. Visit the instructor during office hours or ask for an appointment and prepare questions ahead of time to help you better understand how your performance can improve and better indicate how well you understand the material.

A major aspect of college for some students is learning how to accept criticism. Your college instructors hold you to high standards and expect you to have the maturity to understand that a lower grade is not a personal attack on you and not a statement that you're not smart enough to do the work. Since none of us are perfect, we all can improve in almost everything we do—and the first step in that direction is accepting evaluation of our work. If you receive a grade lower than you think you have earned, take the responsibility to learn what you need to do to earn a higher grade next time.

GETTING STARTED ON THE RIGHT FOOT RIGHT NOW

The first year of college is almost every student's most crucial time. Statistics show a much higher drop-out rate in the first year than thereafter. Why? Because, for many students, adjusting to college is not easy. Students wrestle with managing their time, their freedom, and their other commitments. It's important to recognize that it may not be easy for you.

Are you ready? Remember that everything in this book will help you succeed in your first year. Motivation and a positive attitude are the keys to getting off to a running start. The next section lists some things you can do to start right now, today, to ensure your success.

- Connect with your counselor if you have any doubt about the courses you have already enrolled in or about the direction you're taking. Start examining how you spend your time, and ensure you make enough time to keep up with your courses.
- Like yourself. You've come a long way to reach this point, you have succeeded in taking this first step toward meeting your college goal, and you are fully capable of succeeding the rest of the way. Avoid the trap of feeling down on yourself if you're struggling with any classes.
- Plan ahead. Check your syllabus for each class and highlight the dates of major assignments and tests. Write on your calendar the important dates coming up.
- Work to create a support system around you. Connect with family, friends, advocates, and those around you that you can lean on for support.
- Introduce yourself to your instructors, if you haven't already. Let them know why you are interested in the course and what you hope to gain from it. Establishing a relationship early in the course is helpful. If issues arise and you need their support, you have already done the work to establish a connection first which can go a long way.
- Participate in your educational journey. Becoming a participating student is another characteristic of the successful student. Find something of particular interest to you and write down a question for the instructor. Connect with others within the college who might be able to provide you support or guidance as you progress in your education and in your future career.
- Vow to pay more attention to how you spend your money. Some students have to drop out because they get into debt.
- Take good care of your body. Good health makes you a better student. Vow to avoid junk food, to get enough sleep, and to move around more.

By doing these few things you'll be a step or two ahead—and on your way to a successful college experience!

SUCCESS AND PRIDE

Almost every successful person begins with two beliefs: the future can be better than the present, and I have the power to make it so.

—David Brooks, columnist and political commentator

If the prospect of committing to the path of higher education still feels daunting, you might find inspiration in thinking about the many potential gains you can experience. Talk with friends, family members, and others who have been to college and to people who have succeeded—in whatever ways they define success. Listen for clues about what they feel worked and what didn't and what they would change. Do you hear threads of topics broached so far in this course?

College success is an attainable goal, so be encouraged that you are on a path of great potential. Below is the success story of a college graduate. Might your story be similar to this one someday?

4.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUCCESSFUL STUDENT

What does it take to be a truly successful college student? Do you believe you already are or will be successful? What things do you need to embrace to ensure your success?

Below is a list of some important characteristics that impact student success. By answering the questions on a scale of “I usually do” to “I seldom do,” you’ll gain insight into the characteristics you’ve got going for you already and where you might need to build some new habits. Remember, these characteristics aren’t things you’re born with—you have to develop and practice them.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS			
DO I . . .	USUALLY	SOMETIMES	SELDOM
Plan my course load realistically based on my non-college responsibilities?			
Know how to get in touch with my counselor?			
Work on my classes at times when I learn best?			
Calculate the amount of study time needed per course and schedule it?			
Ensure to the best of my ability to have all materials needed before the start of the course.			
Know how to access college resources such as the library, counseling, financial aid, veterans resources, and disability services before classes begin?			
Enlist friends and family to support my academic goals and plans, to help keep me on track?			
Participate in class?			
Take notes?			
Review my notes, organize them, and add details after I reflect on what I learned?			
Stay caught up on class work and not get behind?			

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS

DO I . . .	USUALLY	SOMETIMES	SELDOM
Read the required material before the class?			
Start assignments a couple days before they're due?			
Complete assignments?			
Complete assignments fully, and answer all parts of the questions?			
Turn assignments in on time?			
Understand the main ideas, and not just memorize the details?			
Connect with my instructor about the materials taught and assignments when I have questions?			
Start reviewing materials and studying for exams, well before the exam date?			
Review my old exams, problem sets, and quizzes before the final?			
Show my work on homework and exam problems?			
Keep all my exams, and review the materials and types of questions?			
Find the balance between academics and life outside of class?			
Make my education a priority?			
Eat nutritious meals?			
Get adequate sleep?			
Exercise?			
Make certain that I'm physically and mentally healthy?			
Make certain leisure activities don't interfere with studying and class?			

4.5 VISUALIZING SUCCESS

Throughout this course we have focused on multiple factors that contribute to college success. Now it's time to visualize your success!

Visualization is a technique commonly used where one creates a mental image of what one desires. In this case, visualize yourself achieving your personal definition of success. Create a mental image and focus on the details of what your success looks like, what it feels like and who may be involved with you. Picture the details in your mind and think of your personal, academic and career success. Where do you see yourself in the next 2, 5, 7, or 10 years? Where are you and who are you with? What are you doing and what is a typical day like for you? What are you wearing and how do you feel? Create as many details as possible in your mental image so you can see your future clearly. You see it so clearly you can feel it. This feeling is something that is so strong it motivates you to work harder and harder each day until you make this vision a reality. Repeat this visualization exercise daily, maybe once or twice a day. Take anywhere from 3 - 5 minutes a day to practice visualizing your success.

In addition to visualization techniques, think of a symbol that represents success to you. As you move more deeply into your college journey, consider selecting a symbol of your commitment to success.

Consider your own personal definition of “success.” What would a physical representation of that success look like? Many people consider graduation caps or diplomas to be symbols of college success. If those are meaningful to you, consider choosing one. Alternatively, yours can become more personal— an item that speaks to you as a sign of what you're working toward and how you'll know you've “made it.”

Some ideas from previous students include:

- a stethoscope, for an aspiring medical student
- a set of professional salon scissors, for an aspiring beautician/barber
- an office door nameplate, for an aspiring law student

Once you find a meaningful symbol—perhaps an object or an image or even an idea—keep it in a place where you can easily access it. In moments when you need a boost, you can remind yourself that college success begins and ends with your commitment to learning well.

The symbol of success you decide on along with your mental image of personal success can serve as strong motivators that serve to reinforce your efforts throughout your college journey and beyond.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- While success in college involves many benefits and experiences, grades remain one important measure of success.
- Acceptable grades are important for continuing your college program, financial aid, for graduate school or other future educational opportunities, and for obtaining a good job in most careers.
- Succeeding is especially important in one's first year of college because this is the most critical period to avoid the factors that lead to many students dropping out.
- You can launch yourself on a path of success immediately by taking the first steps for help with studies, developing a positive attitude, meeting your instructors and other students, participating actively in your classes.

Chapter 4 Sources

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CHAPTER 5: TIME MANAGEMENT

CHAPTER 5 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Examine how your personality and time management are related.
2. Evaluate how you spend your time.
3. Define and practice different time management strategies.
4. Recognize how you can battle procrastination.

5.1 TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Time management is critical to student success. When you know what you want to do, why not just sit down and get it done? People who complain frequently about “not having enough time” would love it if it were that simple! Time management isn’t actually difficult, but you do need to learn how to do it well.

TIME AND YOUR PERSONALITY

People’s attitudes toward time vary. Some people are always rushing while others are unconcerned about time. Since there are so many different “time personalities,” it’s important to realize how you approach time. Start by trying to figure out how you spend your time during a typical week, using Activity 1.

ACTIVITY 1: WHERE DOES THE TIME GO?

See if you can account for a week’s worth of time. For each of the activity categories listed, make your best estimate of how many hours you spend in a week. (For categories that are about the same every day, just estimate for one day and multiply by seven for that line.)

Category of activity	Number of hours per week
Sleeping	
Eating (including preparing food)	
Personal hygiene (i.e., bathing, etc.)	
Working (employment)	
Volunteer	
Chores, cleaning, etc.	
Attending class (whether online, in-person, or correspondence)	
Studying, reading, and researching (outside of class)	
Organized group activities (clubs, church services, etc.)	
Relaxation (include television, socializing, video games, etc.)	
Attending events	

ACTIVITY 1: WHERE DOES THE TIME GO?

Exercise or sports activities	
Reading for fun or other interests done alone	
Talking on phone, e-mail, etc.	
Other—specify:	
Other—specify:	
Other—specify:	
Other—specify:	
Other—specify:	

Think about your time analysis in Activity 1 - *Where Does the Time Go?* People who estimate too high often feel they don't have enough time. They may experience anxiety and often feel frustrated. People at the other extreme, who often can't account for how they use all their time, may have a more relaxed attitude. They may not actually have any free time, but they may be wasting more time on less important things than they realize.

People also differ in how they respond to schedule changes. Some go with the flow and accept changes easily, while others function well only when following a planned schedule and may become upset if things change. If you dislike unexpected disruptions in your day, schedule some free time into your calendar to account for the unexpected. This is all part of understanding your time personality.

Another aspect of your time personality involves time of day. Are you more alert and focused in the morning, afternoon, or evening? Do you concentrate best when you look forward to a relaxing activity later, or do you study better when you've finished all other activities? Do you function well if you get up early—or stay up late—to accomplish a task? How does that affect the rest of your day or the next day? Understanding this will help you better plan your study periods.

While you may not be able to change your "time personality," you can learn to manage your time more effectively. The key is to be realistic. How accurate is the number of hours you wrote down in Activity 1? The best way to know how you spend your time is to record what you do all day in a time log, every day for a week, and then add that up.

Make your own time log similar to the example in Figure 5.1 "Daily Time Log" below and carry it with you. Fill in what you have been doing. Do this for a week before adding up the time. Then, enter the total hours in the categories in Activity 5.1. You may be spending a lot more time than you thought hanging out with friends, watching tv, or any of the many other distractions. You might find that you study well early in the morning, even though you thought you were a night person, or vice versa. You might learn how long you can continue at a specific task before needing a break.

Although we all wish we had more time, the important thing is what we do with the time we have. Time management strategies can help us better use the time we do have by creating a schedule that works for our own time personality.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
5:00 AM							
6:00 AM							
6:30 AM							
7:00 AM							
7:30 AM							
8:00 AM							
8:30 AM							
9:00 AM							
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10:30 PM							
11:00 PM							
11:30 PM							
12:00 AM							

Figure 5.1 Daily Time Log

5.2 YOUR USE OF TIME

Time management for successful college students involves these factors:

- Determining how much time you need to spend studying
- Knowing how much time you actually have for studying and increasing that time if needed
- Being aware of the times of day you are at your best and most focused
- Using effective long- and short-term study strategies
- Scheduling study activities in realistic segments
- Using a system to plan ahead and set priorities
- Staying motivated to follow your plan and avoid procrastination

STUDY FORMULA

College students are expected to spend, on average, three hours outside of class dedicated to studying for each hour in class. Are you in an online or correspondence course and unsure how many hours you are actually “in class”? The number of units your course is worth equals the amount of “in class” time. For

example, COUN C105 is worth 3 units, therefore this course has a total of 3 “in class” hours regardless of course modality. Use the formula below to help you calculate your total study time:

$$\underline{\hspace{2cm}} \text{ Total Class Units} \times 3 \text{ hours} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}} \text{ Total Study Time per week}$$

If you are a full-time student registered in twelve units, this means you are “in class” about twelve hours a week. Applying the study formula mentioned above, you should dedicate around 36 ($12 \times 3 = 36$) hours a week for studying. A twelve-unit course load translates into a thirty-five to forty hour a week commitment, which is about the same as a typical full-time job. If you hold a part time or full-time job, then time management skills are even more essential to succeed in college.



Image by Sonja Langford on Unsplash

Look back at the number of hours you wrote in Activity 5.1 for a week of studying. Did you account for three hours of study time for every hour in class? Many students begin college not knowing the study formula. Remember this is just an average amount of study time—you may need more or less for your own courses. To be safe, and to help ensure your success, add another five to ten hours a week for studying. Doing this will ensure true learning throughout the semester and will help you avoid cramming before exams.

To reserve this study time, you may need to adjust how much time you spend in other activities. Activity 2 will help you figure out what your typical week should look like.

ACTIVITY 2: WHERE SHOULD YOUR TIME GO?

Plan for the ideal use of a week’s worth of time. Fill in your hours in this order:

1. Hours attending class
2. Study hours (2 times the number of class hours plus 5 or more hours extra)
3. Work, internships, and fixed volunteer time
4. Fixed life activities (sleeping, eating, hygiene, chores, etc.)
5. Now subtotal your hours so far and subtract that number from 168. How many hours are left?
_____ Then portion out the remaining hours for “discretionary activities” (things you don’t have to do for school, work, or a healthy life).
6. Discretionary activities

ACTIVITY 2: WHERE SHOULD YOUR TIME GO?

Category of activity	Number of hours per week
Attending class	
Studying, reading, and researching (outside of class)	
Working (employment)	
Volunteer service or internship	
Sleeping	
Eating (including preparing food)	
Personal hygiene (i.e., bathing, etc.)	
Chores, cleaning, etc.	
Transportation to work or school	
Subtotal:	
Discretionary activities:	
Organized group activities (clubs, church services, etc.)	
Time with friends (include television, video games, etc.)	
Time alone (include television, video games, surfing the Web, etc.)	
Exercise or sports activities	
Reading for fun or other interests done alone	
Talking on phone, e-mail, etc.	
Other—specify:	
Other—specify:	

Note: If you find you have almost no time left for discretionary activities, you may be overestimating how much time you need for eating, errands, and the like. Use the time log in Figure 5.1 to determine if you really must spend that much time on those things.

Activity 2 – *Where Should Your Time Go?* shows most college students that they do have the time for their studies without losing sleep or giving up their social life. But you may have less time for discretionary activities than in the past. *Something, somewhere has to give.* That’s part of time management—and why it’s important to keep focused on your goals and priorities. The other part is to learn how to use the time you do have as effectively as possible, especially your study time. If you’re a new college student who plans to study for three hours each evening but procrastinates and intentionally (often habitually) puts things off until another day or time, and gets caught up in a conversation, loses time to social media, e-mail and text messages, listens to

loud music while reading a textbook, then maybe you actually spent four hours “studying” in total. However, only two of those hours were dedicated to productive work. In this scenario, you end up behind and feeling like you’re still studying way too much. The goal of time management is to actually get three hours of studying done in three hours and have time for your life as well.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR STUDENTS WHO WORK

You may have almost *no* discretionary time at all left in Activity 3.1 after all your “must-do” activities. If so, you may have overextended yourself—a situation that inevitably will lead to problems. You can’t sleep two hours less every night for the whole school year, for example, without becoming ill or unable to concentrate well on work and school. It is better to recognize this situation now rather than set yourself up for a very difficult term and possible failure. If you cannot cut the number of hours for work or other obligations, see your counselor right away. It is better to take fewer classes and succeed than to take more classes than you have time for and risk failure and jeopardizing your wellbeing.

5.3 TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

The following are some strategies you can begin using immediately to make the most of your time:

- **Prepare to be successful.** When planning ahead for studying, think yourself into the right mood. Focus on the positive. “When I get these chapters read tonight, I’ll be ahead in studying for the next test, and I’ll also have plenty of time tomorrow to do X.” *Visualize* yourself studying well!
- **Use your best—and most appropriate—time of day.** Different tasks require different mental skills. For some kinds of studying, you may be able to start first thing in the morning as you wake, while others may need your most alert moments at another time.
- **Break up large projects into small pieces.** Whether it’s writing a paper for class, studying for a final exam, or reading a long assignment or full book, students often feel daunted at the beginning of a large project. It’s easier to get going if you break it up into stages that you schedule at separate times—and then begin with the first section that requires only an hour or two.
- **Do the most important studying first.** When two or more things require your attention, do the more crucial one first. If something happens and you can’t complete everything, you’ll be less stressed knowing the more crucial task is complete.
- **If you have trouble getting started, do an easier task first.** Like large tasks, complex or difficult ones can be daunting. If you can’t get going, switch to an easier task you can accomplish quickly. This will give you momentum, and often you feel more confident tackling the difficult task after being successful in the first one.
- **If you’re feeling overwhelmed and stressed because you have too much to do, revisit your planner.** Sometimes it’s hard to get started if you keep thinking about other things you need to get done. Review your schedule for the next few days and make sure everything important is scheduled, then relax and concentrate on the task at hand.
- **If you’re really floundering, talk to someone.** Maybe you just don’t understand what you should be doing. Connect with your professor, counselor, or another student to clarify the assignment and help get back on track.
- **Take a break.** We all need breaks to help us concentrate without becoming fatigued and burned out. As a general rule, a short break every hour or so is effective in helping recharge your study energy. Get up and move around to get your blood flowing, clear your thoughts, and work off stress.
- **Use unscheduled times to work ahead.** You’ve scheduled that hundred pages of reading for later today, but you have the textbook with you and unexpectedly have a few minutes. Start reading now

or flip through the chapter to get a sense of what you'll be reading later. Either way, you'll save time later. You may be amazed how much studying you can get done during downtimes throughout the day.

- **Keep your momentum.** Prevent distractions, such as multitasking, that will only slow you down.
- **Reward yourself.** It's not easy to sit still for hours of studying. When you successfully complete the task, you should feel good and deserve a small reward. A healthy snack, a quick video game session, or social activity can help you feel even better about your successful use of time.
- **Just say no.** Always tell others nearby when you're studying, to reduce the chances of being interrupted. Still, interruptions happen, and if you are in a situation where you are frequently interrupted, it helps to have your "no" prepared in advance: "No, I *really* have to be ready for this test" or "That's a great idea, but let's do it tomorrow—I *just can't* today." You shouldn't feel bad saying no—especially if you communicated in advance.
- **Make time for yourself.** Never schedule your day or week so full of work and study that you have no time at all for yourself, your family and friends, and your larger life.
- **Use a calendar planner and daily to-do list.** We'll look at these time management tools in the next section.

QUADRANT TIME MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

An important component of managing our time is properly prioritizing the items we need to get accomplished. By prioritizing our time, we enable ourselves to effectively work ahead while accomplishing items that may need our immediate attention as well. Utilizing the **Quadrant II Time Management System*** (from Stephen Covey's book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective people*), we can chart your actions into four quadrants depending on their importance and urgency.

Those four quadrants are:

- **Quadrant I:** Items that are Urgent and Important would be listed under Quadrant I. This would include items that have impending deadlines and must be done now. An example would include completing a History paper that is due tomorrow. Ideally, you do not want to spend much time in Quadrant I. If you find that most of your actions fall into this quadrant, you may be a consistent procrastinator. People who consistently have multiple items in Quadrant I experience stress due to the constant pressures of looming timelines.
- **Quadrant II:** Items that are Important but Not Urgent fall into Quadrant II. Ideally, this is where most of your actions should be listed. Those who spend most of their time working on items in Quadrant II are managing their time effectively and are working ahead. Unlike Quadrant I, items in this quadrant do not have a looming deadline. For example, an English paper that is due three weeks from now would be listed under this quadrant. By planning ahead, you are allowing yourself the time to properly work on your action items which enables you to do your best work.
- **Quadrant III:** Items that are Not Important but Urgent would be listed under Quadrant III. What could be urgent but not important? Items listed in this quadrant tend to meet other people's needs, but do not help you in reaching your goals. For example, spending time trapped in long, unimportant conversations either in person or on the phone or completing tasks for someone else. If you have difficulty saying "no" to people, you may find yourself spending a lot of time in this quadrant.
- **Quadrant IV:** Items that are Not Urgent and Not Important fall into Quadrant IV. Simply put, items in this quadrant are time wasters. For example, binge watching your favorite tv show would fall into this category. However, we all need to relax and waste time here and there, so this isn't to say that you should never spend any time in Quadrant IV. However, you will want to make sure that you are not

spending an inordinate amount of time in this quadrant. If so, you may find that you are doing so to procrastinate on items that are under Quadrant II, meaning those items will eventually move to Quadrant I where instead of having the time necessary to do your best work, you will be left to work under the pressure of impending deadlines.

QUADRANT I Urgent and Important	QUADRANT II Not urgent but Important
QUADRANT III Urgent but Not Important	QUADRANT IV Not urgent and Not Important

Figure 5.1 Steven Covey's Time Management System

Ultimately, only you can determine what is important and urgent when deciding where your action items should fall on the quadrant as outlined in Figure 5.1. When deciding which quadrant to place your tasks in, ask, will this item help me reach the short and/or long-term goals I have set for myself? Or will they lead me off track? Take time to reflect on where you are currently spending most of your time. If the result is that you are not spending most of your time in Quadrant II, look to see what quadrant you are living in and evaluate why that is. Are you procrastinating? Are you having a tough time saying no to others, forcing you to spend time on items that are important to them but not to you? Are you motivated to reach your goals?

Overall, the Quadrant II Time Management system is an effective time management tool to not only evaluate your current time management effectiveness, but also to help you plot out short and long-term tasks that need to be completed to help you reach your goals while balancing life along with it.

CALENDAR PLANNERS

Calendar planners and to-do lists are effective ways to organize your time. Many types of academic planners are available for purchase, or you can make your own. Some people like a page for each day, and some like a week at a time. Some use computer calendars and planners. Any system will work well if you use it consistently.

Some college students think they don't need to write down their schedule and daily to-do lists. But, it is easy to forget when you have lots going on.

Calendars and planners help you look ahead and write in important dates and deadlines so you don't forget. But it's just as important to use the planner to schedule *your own time*, not just deadlines. For example, you'll learn that the most effective way to study for an exam is to study in several short periods over several days. You can easily do this by choosing time slots in your weekly planner over several days that you will commit to studying for this test. You don't need to fill every time slot, or to schedule everything that you do. But, the more carefully and consistently you use your planner, the more successfully you will manage your time.

But a planner cannot contain every single thing that may occur in a day. We'd go crazy if we tried to schedule every minute detail. For these items, we use a to-do list, which may be kept on a separate page in the planner.

Here is a sample weekly planner in Figure 5.2 Weekly Planner. You can copy this page and begin using it. Fill in this planner for next week.

1. Write in all your class meeting times; your work or volunteer schedule; and your usual hours for sleep, activities, and anything else you do at fixed times. Don't forget time needed for meals and so on. Your first goal is to find all the blocks of "free time" that are left over. Remember that this is an **academic planner**. Don't try to schedule in everything in your life—this is to plan ahead to use your study time most effectively.
2. Check the syllabus for each of your courses and write important dates in the planner. If your planner has pages for the whole term, write in all exams and deadlines. Use red ink or a highlighter for these key dates. Write them in the hour slot for the class when the test occurs or when the paper is due. (If you don't yet have a planner large enough for the whole term, use the Weekly Planner in Figure 5.2 and write any deadlines for your second week in the margin to the right. You need to know what's coming *next* week to help schedule how you're studying *this* week.)

HOURS	Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
6-7 AM							
7-8							
8-9							
9-10							
10-11							
11-12 PM							
12-1							
1-2							
2-3							
3-4							
4-5							
5-6							
6-7							
7-8							
8-9							
9-10							
10-11							
11-12 AM							
12-1							
1-2							
2-3							
3-4							
4-5							
5-6							

Figure 5.2 Weekly Planner

Remember that for every hour spent in class, plan an average of 3 hours of studying outside of class. These are the time periods you now want to schedule in your planner. These times change from week to week, with one course requiring more time in one week because of a paper and a different course requiring more the next week because of a major exam. Make sure you block out enough hours in the week to accomplish what you need to do. As you choose your study times, consider what times of day you are at your best and what times you prefer to use for social or other activities. Don't try to micromanage your schedule. Don't try to estimate exactly how many minutes you'll need two weeks from today to read a given chapter in a given textbook. Instead, just choose the blocks of time you will use for your studies. Don't write in the exact study activity—just reserve the block.

Next, look at the major deadlines for projects and exams that you wrote in earlier. Estimate how much time you may need for each and work backward on the schedule from the due date. For example, you have a short paper due on Friday. You determine that you'll spend 10 hours total on it, from initial brainstorming and planning to drafting and revising. Since you have other things also going on that week, you should start early. You might choose to block an hour a week ahead on Saturday morning to brainstorm your topic and jot down some preliminary notes. Monday evening is a good time to spend 2 hours on the next step or prewriting activities. Since you have a lot of time open Tuesday afternoon, you decide that's the best time to reserve to write the first draft. You block out 3 to 4 hours. You make a note on the schedule to leave time open that afternoon to see your instructor during office hours in case you have any questions on the paper. If not, you'll finish the draft or start revising. On Thursday, you schedule a last block of time to revise and polish the final draft that is due Friday.

If you're surprised by this amount of planning, you may be the kind of student who used to think, "*The paper's due Friday. I have enough time Thursday afternoon, so I'll write it then.*" What's wrong with that? First, college work is more demanding than many first-year students realize, and the instructor expects higher-quality work than you can churn out quickly without revising. Second, if you are tired on Thursday because you didn't sleep well Wednesday night, you may be much less productive than you hoped. Without a time buffer, you're forced to turn in a paper that is not your best work.

Here are some more tips for successful schedule planning:

- Studying is often most effective immediately after a class meeting. If your schedule allows, block out appropriate study time after class periods.
- Be realistic about time when you make your schedule. If your class runs to 4 p.m. and it takes you 20 minutes to wrap things up and reach your study location, don't figure you'll have a full hour of study between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m.
- Don't overdo it. Few people can study 4 to 5 hours nonstop. Scheduling extended time periods like that may just set you up for failure.
- Schedule events that occur at set times, but just leave holes in the schedule for other activities. Enjoy those open times and recharge yourself!
- Try to schedule some time for exercise at least three days a week.
- Plan to use your time between classes wisely. If three days a week you have the same hour free between two classes, what should you do with those three hours?
- Use it to review your notes from the previous class or for the next class. Read a short assignment. Over the whole term, that hour three times a week adds up to a lot of study time.

- If a study activity is taking longer than you had scheduled, look ahead and adjust your weekly planner to prevent the stress of falling behind schedule.
- If you maintain your schedule on your computer or smartphone, it's still a good idea to print and carry it with you. Don't risk losing valuable study time if you're away from the device.
- If you're not paying close attention to everything in your planner, use a colored highlighter to mark the times blocked out for important things.
- When following your schedule, pay attention to start and stop times. If you planned to start your test review at 4 p.m. after an hour of reading for a different class, don't let the reading run long and take time away from studying for the test.

TO-DO LISTS

People use to-do lists in different ways, and you should find what works best for you. As with your planner, consistent use of your to-do list will make it an effective habit. Some people prefer not to carry their planner everywhere, but instead copy the key information for the day onto a to-do list. Using this approach, your daily to-do list starts out with your key scheduled activities and then adds other things you hope to do today.

Although we call it a daily list, the to-do list can also include things you may not get to today but don't want to forget about. Keeping these things on the list, even if they're a low priority, helps ensure that eventually you'll get to it.

Start every day with a fresh to-do list written in a special small notebook or on a clean page in your planner. Check your planner for key activities for the day and check yesterday's list for items remaining. Some items won't require much time, but other activities such as assignments will. Include a time estimate for these so that later you can do them when you have enough free time. If you finish lunch and have 25 minutes left before your next class, think of things on the list you can do now and check them off.

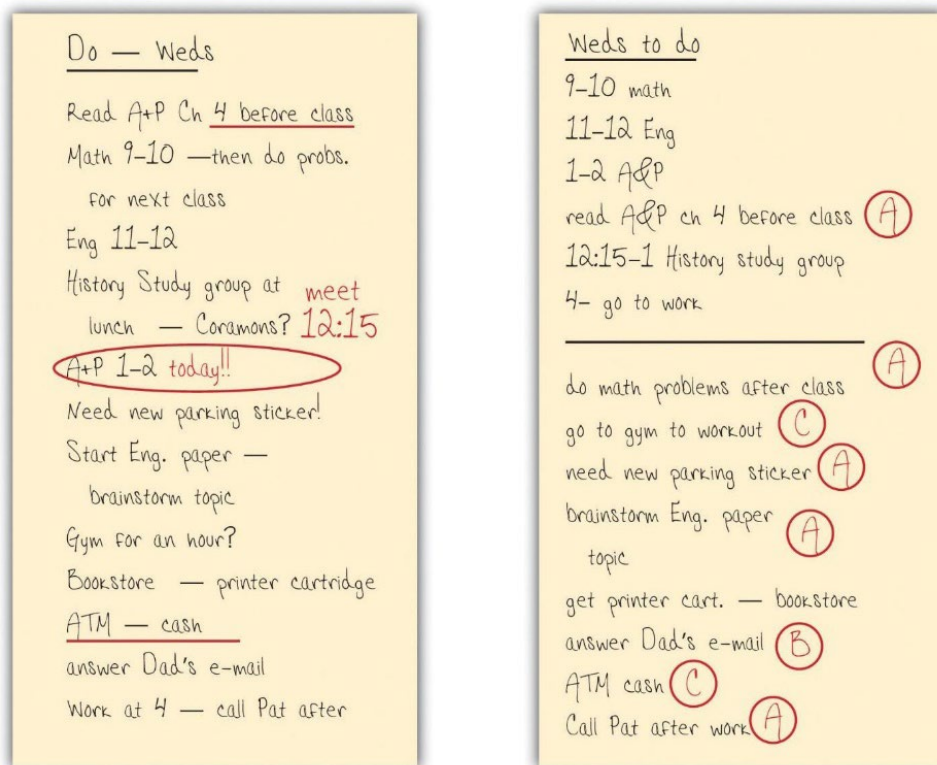


Figure 5.3 Examples of Two Different Students' To-Do Lists

Finally, use some system to prioritize things on your list. Some students use a 1, 2, 3 or A, B, C rating system for importance. Others simply highlight or circle items that are critical to get done today. Figure 5.3 "Examples of Two Different Students' To-Do Lists" shows two different to-do lists. Each is very different but equally effective.

Use whatever format works best for you to prioritize or highlight the most important activities. Here are some more tips for effectively using your daily to-do list:

- Be specific: "Read history chapter 2 (30 pages)" —not "History homework."
- Put important things high on your list where you'll see them every time you check the list.
- Make your list at the same time every day so that it becomes a habit.
- Don't make your list overwhelming. If you added *everything* you eventually need to do, you could end up with so many things on the list that you'd never read through them all. If you worry you might forget something, write it in the margin of your planner's page a week or two away.
- Use your list. Lists often include little things that may take only a few minutes to do, so check your list any time during the day you have free time.
- Cross out or check off things after you've done them. Doing this becomes rewarding.
- Don't use your to-do list to procrastinate. Don't pull it out to find something else you just "have" to do instead of studying!

CHECKPOINT EXERCISE

1. What time(s) of day are you at your most alert?

2. What time(s) of day are you at your least alert?

3. What category of *discretionary* activity (not sleeping, working, studying, etc.) represents your largest use of time?

4. Can you reduce the time you spend in that activity if you need more time for your coursework?

5. For each of the following statements about time management, circle T for true or F for false:

T	F	Think yourself into a positive mood before starting to study.
T	F	Always study just before going to sleep so that you'll dream about the topic.
T	F	Break up larger projects into smaller parts and stages.
T	F	Get everything done on your to-do list before studying so that you're not distracted.
T	F	When feeling stressed by a project, put it off until tomorrow.
T	F	Talk with your instructor or another student if you're having difficulty.
T	F	Try to study at least three hours at a time before taking a break.

CHECKPOINT EXERCISE

T	F	Reward yourself for successfully completing a task.
T	F	Avoid studying at times not written in on your weekly planner; these are all free times just for fun.
T	F	Whenever interrupted by someone, use that opportunity to take a break for up to thirty minutes.
T	F	Turn off all electronic devices when reading an assignment except for your laptop if you use it to take notes.
T	F	Since people procrastinate when they're distracted by other things that need doing, it's best to delay studying until you've done everything else first.
T	F	Studying with someone is a sure way to waste time and develop poor study habits.
T	F	Use a study journal to observe how you use your time and determine what things are keeping you from getting your work done.
T	F	There's no reason to keep a weekly calendar if all your instructors have provided you with a syllabus that gives the dates for all assignments and tests.
T	F	Studying for a particular class is most effective immediately after that class meets.

6. Without looking at your planner, to-do list, or anything else in writing, quickly write a list of everything you need to do in the next few days. Then look through your planner, to-do list, and any other class notes for anything you missed. What might you have forgotten or delayed if you weren't keeping a planner and to-do list?

7. Without looking at your weekly or daily schedule, think about your typical week and the times you have free when not in class, working, studying, eating, and socializing, and so on. List at least three "downtimes" when you don't usually study that you can use for coursework when necessary.

PROCRASTINATION

Procrastination is a way of thinking that lets one put off doing something that should be done now. This can happen to anyone at any time. It's like a voice inside your head keeps coming up with these brilliant ideas for things to do right now other than studying: "I really ought to get this room cleaned up before I study" or "I can study anytime, but tonight's the only chance I have to do X." That voice is also very good at rationalizing: "I really don't need to read that chapter now; I'll have plenty of time tomorrow at lunch...."

Procrastination is very powerful. Some people battle it daily, others only occasionally. Most college students procrastinate often, and about half say they need help avoiding procrastination. Procrastination can threaten one's ability to do well on an assignment or test.

People procrastinate for different reasons. Some people are too relaxed in their priorities, seldom worry, and easily put off responsibilities. Others worry constantly, and that stress keeps them from focusing on the task at hand. Some procrastinate because they fear failure; others procrastinate because they fear success or are such perfectionists that they don't want to let themselves down. Some are dreamers. Many different factors are involved, and there are different styles of procrastinating.

Just as there are different causes, there are different possible solutions for procrastination. Different strategies work for different people. The time management strategies described earlier can help you avoid procrastination. Because this is a psychological issue, some additional psychological strategies can also help:

- Since procrastination is usually a habit, accept that and work on breaking it as you would any other bad habit: one day at a time. Know that every time you overcome feelings of procrastination, the habit becomes weaker. Eventually, you'll have a new habit of being able to start studying right away.
- Schedule times for studying using a daily or weekly planner. Carry it with you and look at it often. Just being aware of the time and what you need to do today can help you get organized and stay on track.
- If you keep thinking of something else you might forget to do later (making you feel like you "must" do it now), write yourself a note about it for later and get it out of your mind.
- Counter a negative with a positive. If you're procrastinating because you're not looking forward to a certain task, try to think of the positive future result of doing the work.
- Counter a negative with a worse negative. If thinking about the positive results of completing the task doesn't motivate you to get started, think about what could happen if you keep procrastinating. You'll have to study tomorrow instead of doing something fun you had planned. Or you could fail the test. Some people can jolt themselves right out of procrastination.
- On the other hand, fear causes procrastination in some people. Don't dwell on the thought of failing. If you're studying for a test and you're so afraid of failing it, you won't be able to focus on studying and will start procrastinating. Instead, try to put things in perspective. Even if it's your most difficult class and you don't understand *everything* about the topic, that doesn't mean you'll fail.
- Study with a motivated friend. Form a study group with other students who are motivated and won't procrastinate along with you. You'll learn good habits from them while getting the work done now.
- Keep a study journal. At least once a day write an entry about how you have used your time and whether you succeeded with your schedule for the day. If not, identify what factors kept you from doing your work. This journal will help you see your own habits and distractions so that you can avoid things that lead to procrastination.
- Get help. If you really can't stay on track with your study schedule or if you're always putting things off until the last minute, see a college counselor. They have lots of experience with this common student problem and can help you find ways to overcome this habit. After an hour of studying, the

idea of continuing to study is dreadful, UNBEARABLE! Your brain stops retaining new information. Your mind can't stop wondering to other topics. You're almost willing to actually go do your laundry than sit there and study any longer. Why is that, you ask?

In a study by Alejandro Lleras, a professor at the University of Illinois, it was discovered that your brain really isn't built for constant stimulation.

Studying for an hour or more is considered a constant stimulation, which gradually causes your brain to stop registering your sight, sound, and even feelings. Eventually your brain will just categorize everything as unimportant since the stimulus is unchanging. In Lleras' experiment, students who were productive were distracted for a short period of time during their task compared to those who just powered through. His experiment proved that your brain is built to detect changes and respond to those changes rather than focusing on a topic for a stretched-out period of time.

POMODORO TECHNIQUE

Francesco Cirillo put Lleras' theory into action in the late 1980s. The Pomodoro technique consists of 5 steps to managing your time.

STEP 1: IDENTITY THE TASKS YOU WANT COMPLETED.

Once you have a realistic list of tasks to accomplish for the day, break the tasks up into 25-minute long tasks, or a **pomodoro**. If your tasks are to write a 4-page paper for English and read a chapter for Biology, you know that it'll take you about an hour to actively read your chapter. Therefore, break that task into 2-3 pomodoros (25-minute sessions). Break your paper into bite-sized pieces like an outline and writing just a couple paragraphs per pomodoro. Just remember to keep your list of pomodoros realistic and write them down. Physically seeing what it is that you need to do will help your state of mind.

STEP 2: SET A TIMER FOR 25 MINUTES, OR 1-POMODORO.

These 25 minutes are meant for you to buckle down and work, work, work. Why only 25 minutes? It's because 25 minutes is a non-threatening time frame, unlike the time frame of an hour or more to just do homework. Use an egg timer or even a phone app, anything to keep track of the time so that you don't have to. If you are staring at a clock to keep track of time, you'll be too distracted to really get anything done.

STEP 3: PUT A CHECKMARK NEXT TO YOUR ACCOMPLISHED TASK WHEN THE TIMER GOES OFF.

Once the timer goes off, you have finished a task so check it off your list with pride! Checking off the task on a list is important because it will give you a sense of accomplishment, which will boost your self-esteem.

STEP 4: SET A TIMER FOR 5 MINUTES.

These 5 minutes are meant for you to take a break. Facebook and playing a game on your phone do NOT count as a break activity. During break time, you want to get up and move. Moving will circulate your blood and rejuvenate your body so that you are mentally and physically ready to return to your pomodoros.

STEP 5: REPEAT.

Repeat these steps until you have accomplished all of your tasks for the day. If you exceed 4 pomodoros, give yourself a longer break, 15-20 minutes.

NOTE: You can exchange the 25 minutes of studying for 30 minutes if you are up for it. When studying for 30 minutes, give yourself 10-minute breaks after each pomodoro.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Time management is critical to student success.
- Identifying your attitude towards time can be helpful in developing strategies that are most helpful for your style.
- For every hour in the classroom, college students are expected to spend, on average, two hours outside of class dedicated to studying for each hour in class.
- Identify strategies that are helpful to stay organized and manage your time.

Chapter 5 Sources

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CHAPTER 6: CRITICAL THINKING

CHAPTER 6 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. The role that logic plays in critical thinking.
2. How critical thinking skills can be used to problem-solve.
3. How critical thinking skills can be used to evaluate information.
4. How to identify strategies for developing yourself as a critical thinker.



Image by Kenny Eliason on Unsplash

The essence of the independent mind lies not in what it thinks, but in how it thinks.
—Christopher Hitchens, author and journalist

6.1 CRITICAL THINKING AND LOGIC

WHAT IS CRITICAL THINKING?

Critical thinking is clear, reasonable, reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do. It means asking probing questions like, “How do we know?” or “Is this true in every case or just in this instance?” It involves being skeptical and challenging assumptions, rather than simply memorizing facts or blindly accepting what you hear or read.

Imagine, for example, that you’re reading a history textbook. You wonder who wrote it and why, because you detect certain biases in the writing. You find that the author has a limited scope of research focused only on a particular group within a population. In this case, your critical thinking reveals that there are “other sides to the story.”

Who are critical thinkers, and what characteristics do they have in common? Critical thinkers are usually curious and reflective people. They like to explore and probe new areas and seek knowledge, clarification, and new solutions. They ask pertinent questions, evaluate statements and arguments, and they distinguish

between facts and opinion. They are also willing to examine their own beliefs, possessing a manner of humility that allows them to admit lack of knowledge or understanding when needed. They are open to changing their mind. Perhaps most of all, they actively enjoy learning, and seeking new knowledge is a lifelong pursuit.

This may well be you!

No matter where you are on the road to be a critical thinker, you can always more fully develop and finely tune your skills. Doing so will help you develop more balanced arguments, express yourself clearly, read critically, and glean important information efficiently. Critical thinking skills will help you in any profession or any circumstance of life, from science to art to business to teaching. With critical thinking, you become a clearer thinker and problem solver.

Critical Thinking IS	Critical Thinking is NOT
Skepticism	Memorizing
Examining assumptions	Group thinking
Challenging reasoning	Blind acceptance of authority
Uncovering biases	

LOGIC

Thinking comes naturally. You don't have to make it happen—it just does. But you can make it happen in different ways. For example, you can think positively or negatively. You can think with “heart” and you can think with rational judgment. You can also think strategically and analytically, and mathematically and scientifically. These are a few of multiple ways in which the mind can process thought.

What are some forms of thinking you use? When do you use them, and why?

As a college student, you are tasked with engaging and expanding your thinking skills. One of the most important of these skills is critical thinking. Critical thinking is important because it relates to nearly all tasks, situations, topics, careers, environments, challenges, and opportunities. It's a “domain-general” thinking skill—not a thinking skill that's reserved for a one subject alone or restricted to a particular subject area.

Great leaders have highly attuned critical thinking skills, and you can, too. In fact, you probably have a lot of these skills already. Of all your thinking skills, critical thinking may have the greatest value.

CRITICAL THINKING AND LOGIC

Critical thinking is fundamentally a process of questioning information and data. You may question the information you read in a textbook, or you may question what a politician or a professor or a classmate says. You can also question a commonly held belief or a new idea. With critical thinking, anything and everything is subject to question and examination for the purpose of logically constructing reasoned perspectives.

WHAT IS LOGIC, AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT IN CRITICAL THINKING?

The word *logic* comes from the Ancient Greek *logike*, referring to the science or art of reasoning. Using logic, a person evaluates arguments and reasoning and strives to distinguish between good and bad reasoning, or between truth and falsehood. Using logic, you can evaluate ideas or claims people make, make good decisions, and form sound beliefs about the world. (Note: "logike." Wordnik. n.d. Web. 16 Feb 2016.)

QUESTIONS OF LOGIC IN CRITICAL THINKING

Let's use a simple example of applying logic to a critical-thinking situation. In this hypothetical scenario, a man has a PhD in political science, and he works as a professor at a local college. His wife works at the college, too. They have three young children in the local school system, and their family is well known in the community. The man is now running for political office. Are his credentials and experience sufficient for entering public office? Will he be effective in the political office? Some voters might believe that his personal life and current job, on the surface, suggest he will do well in the position, and they will vote for him. In truth, the characteristics described don't guarantee that the man will do a good job. The information is somewhat irrelevant. What else might you want to know? How about whether the man had already held a political office and done a good job? In this case, we want to ask, how much information is adequate in order to make a decision based on logic instead of assumptions?

The following questions, presented in Figure 1, are ones you may apply to formulating a logical, reasoned perspective in the above scenario or any other situation:

1. *What's happening?* Gather the basic information and begin to think of questions.
2. *Why is it important?* Ask yourself why it's significant and whether or not you agree.
3. *What don't I see?* Is there anything important missing?
4. *How do I know?* Ask yourself where the information came from and how it was constructed.
5. *Who is saying it?* What's the position of the speaker and what is influencing them?
6. *What else? What if?* What other ideas exist and are there other possibilities?



Figure 6.1 Questions a Critical Thinker Asks

6.2 DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Much of your college and professional life will be spent solving problems; some will be complex, such as deciding on a career, and require time and effort to come up with a solution. Others will be small, such as deciding what to eat for lunch, and will allow you to make a quick decision based entirely on your own experience. But, in either case, when coming up with the solution or deciding what to do, follow the same basic steps.

- **Define the problem.** Use your analytical skills. What is the real issue? Why is it a problem? What are the root causes? What kinds of outcomes or actions do you expect to generate to solve the problem? What are some of the key characteristics that will make a good choice: Timing? Resources? Availability of tools and materials? For more complex problems, it helps to actually write out the problem and the answers to these questions. Can you clarify your understanding of the problem by using metaphors to illustrate the issue?
- **Narrow the problem.** Many problems are made up of a series of smaller problems, each requiring its own solution. Can you break the problem into different facets? What aspects of the current issue are “noise” that should not be considered in the problem solution? (Use critical thinking to separate facts from opinion in this step.)
- **Generate possible solutions.** List all your options. Use your creative thinking skills in this phase. Did you come up with the second “right” answer, and the third or the fourth? Can any of these answers be combined into a stronger solution? What past or existing solutions can be adapted or combined to solve this problem?
- **Choose the best solution.** Use your critical thinking skills to select the most likely choices. List the pros and cons for each of your selections. How do these lists compare with the requirements you identified when you defined the problem? If you still can’t decide between options, you may want to seek further input from your brainstorming team.

GROUP THINK: EFFECTIVE BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorming is a process of generating ideas for solutions in a group. This method is very effective because ideas from one person will trigger additional ideas from another. The following guidelines make for an effective brainstorming session:

- Decide who should moderate the session. That person may participate, but his main role is to keep the discussion flowing.
- Define the problem to be discussed and the time you will allow to consider it.
- Write all ideas down on a board or flip chart for all participants to see.
- Encourage everyone to speak.
- Do not allow criticism of ideas. All ideas are good during a brainstorm. Suspend disbelief until after the session. Remember a wildly impossible idea may trigger a creative and feasible solution to a problem.

You will be called on to make many decisions in your life. Some will be personal, like what to major in, or whether or not to get married. Other times you will be making decisions on behalf of others at work or for a volunteer organization. Occasionally you will be asked for your opinion or experience for decisions others are making. To be effective in all of these circumstances, it is helpful to understand some principles about decision making.

First, define who is responsible for solving the problem or making the decision. In an organization, this may be someone above or below you on the organization chart but is usually the person who will be responsible for implementing the solution. Deciding on an academic major should be your decision because you will have to follow the course of study. Deciding on the boundaries of a sales territory would most likely be the sales manager who supervises the territories, because he or she will be responsible for producing the results with the combined territories. Once you define who is responsible for making the decision, everyone else will fall into one of two roles: giving input, or in rare cases, approving the decision.

Understanding the role of input is very important for good decisions. Input is sought or given due to experience or expertise, but it is up to the decision maker to weigh the input and decide whether and how to use it. Input should be fact based, or if offering an opinion, it should be clearly stated as such. Finally, once input is given, the person giving the input must support the other's decision, whether or not the input is actually used.

Consider a team working on a project for a science course. The team assigns you the responsibility of analyzing and presenting a large set of complex data. Others on the team will setup the experiment to demonstrate the hypothesis, prepare the class presentation, and write the paper summarizing the results. As you face the data, you go to the team to seek input about the level of detail on the data you should consider for your analysis. The person doing the experiment setup thinks you should be very detailed, because then it will be easy to compare experiment results with the data. However, the person preparing the class presentation wants only high-level data to be considered because that will make for a clearer presentation. If there is not a clear understanding of the decision-making process, each of you may think the decision is yours to make because it influences the output of your work; there will be conflict and frustration on the team. If the decision maker is clearly defined upfront, however, and the input is thoughtfully given and considered, a good decision can be made (perhaps a creative compromise?) and the team can get behind the decision and work together to complete the project.

Finally, there is the approval role in decisions. This is very common in business decisions but often occurs in college work as well (the professor needs to approve the theme of the team project, for example). Approval decisions are usually based on availability of resources, legality, history, or policy.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Effective problem solving involves critical and creative thinking.
- The four steps to effective problem solving are the following:
 - Define the problem
 - Narrow the problem
 - Generate solutions
 - Choose the solution
- Brainstorming is a good method for generating creative solutions.
- Understanding the difference between the roles of deciding and providing input makes for better decisions.

6.3 PUTTING IT TOGETHER: THINKING AND UNDERSTANDING

As we've just learned, one of the key skills every student needs is the ability to think critically. Once you've learned to critically examine the content you come into contact with, you can then think creatively to come up with new—and potentially better—solutions to the problems we find in the classroom and, ultimately, in the world.

The following text is an essay by Dr. Andrew Robert Baker, "Thinking Critically and Creatively." In the first few paragraphs, Dr. Baker underscores how essential critical thinking is to improving as students, teachers, and researchers. Dr. Baker continues by illuminating some of the many ways that college students will be exposed to creative thinking and how it can enrich their learning experiences.

THINKING CRITICALLY AND CREATIVELY

Critical thinking skills are perhaps the most fundamental skills involved in making judgments and solving problems. You use them every day, and you can continue improving them.

The ability to think critically about a matter—to analyze a question, situation, or problem down to its most basic parts—is what helps us evaluate the accuracy and truthfulness of statements, claims, and information we read and hear. It is the sharp knife that, when honed, separates fact from fiction, honesty from lies, and the accurate from the misleading. We all use this skill to one degree or another almost every day. For example, we use critical thinking every day as we consider the latest consumer products and why one particular product is the best among its peers. Is it a quality product because a celebrity endorses it? Because a lot of other people may have used it? Because it is made by one company versus another? Or perhaps because it is made in one country or another? These are questions representative of critical thinking.

The academic setting demands more of us in terms of critical thinking than everyday life. It demands that we evaluate information and analyze myriad issues. It is the environment where our critical thinking skills can be the difference between success and failure. In this environment we must consider information in an analytical, critical manner. We must ask questions— What is the source of this information? Is this source an expert one and what makes it so? Are there multiple perspectives to consider on an issue? Do multiple sources agree or disagree on an issue? Does quality research substantiate information or opinion? Do I have any personal biases that may affect my consideration of this information?

It is only through purposeful, frequent, intentional questioning such as this that we can sharpen our critical thinking skills and improve as students, learners and researchers.

While critical thinking analyzes information and roots out the true nature and facets of problems, it is creative thinking that drives progress forward when it comes to solving these problems. Exceptional creative thinkers are people that invent new solutions to existing problems that do not rely on past or current solutions. They are the ones who invent solution C when everyone else is still arguing between A and B. Creative thinking skills involve using strategies to clear the mind so that our thoughts and ideas can transcend the current limitations of a problem and allow us to see beyond barriers that prevent new solutions from being found.

THINKING CRITICALLY AND CREATIVELY

Brainstorming is the simplest example of intentional creative thinking that most people have tried at least once. With the quick generation of many ideas at once, we can block-out our brain's natural tendency to limit our solution-generating abilities so we can access and combine many possible solutions/thoughts and invent new ones. It is sort of like sprinting through a race's finish line only to find there is new track on the other side and we can keep going, if we choose. As with critical thinking, higher education both demands creative thinking from us and is the perfect place to practice and develop the skill. Everything from word problems in a math class, to opinion or persuasive speeches and papers, call upon our creative thinking skills to generate new solutions and perspectives in response to our professor's demands. Creative thinking skills ask questions such as—What if? Why not? What else is out there? Can I combine perspectives/solutions? What is something no one else has brought-up? What is being forgotten/ignored? What about _____? It is the opening of doors and options that follows problem-identification.

Consider an assignment that required you to compare two different authors on the topic of education and select and defend one as better. Now add to this scenario that your professor clearly prefers one author over the other. While critical thinking can get you as far as identifying the similarities and differences between these authors and evaluating their merits, it is creative thinking that you must use if you wish to challenge your professor's opinion and invent new perspectives on the authors that have not previously been considered.

So, what can we do to develop our critical and creative thinking skills? Although many students may dislike it, group work is an excellent way to develop our thinking skills. Many times, I have heard from students their disdain for working in groups based on scheduling, varied levels of commitment to the group or project, and personality conflicts too, of course. True—it's not always easy, but that is why it is so effective. When we work collaboratively on a project or problem, we bring many brains to bear on a subject. These different brains will naturally develop varied ways of solving or explaining problems and examining information. To the observant individual we see that this places us in a constant state of back and forth critical/creative thinking modes.

For example, in group work we are simultaneously analyzing information and generating solutions on our own, while challenging other's analyses/ideas and responding to challenges to our own analyses/ideas. This is part of why students tend to avoid group work—it challenges us as thinkers and forces us to analyze others while defending ourselves, which is not something we are used to or comfortable with as most of our educational experiences involve solo work. Your professors know this—that's why we assign it—to help you grow as students, learners, and thinkers!

—Dr. Andrew Robert Baker, *Foundations of Academic Success: Words of Wisdom*

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Answer the question(s) in the Chapter Review to see how well you understand the topics covered in this chapter.

Use this quiz to check your understanding and decide whether to (1) study the previous section further or (2) move on to the next section.

CHAPTER REVIEW

1. What is critical thinking?

2. Why is it important to pose some questions about the source of the material you read? What kinds of questions should you ask?

3. What is logic?

4. Why is brainstorming more effective at generating new ideas than individual work?

5. List the four steps of problem solving.

6. How do you use critical thinking in solving problems?

Chapter 6 Sources

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CHAPTER 7: CAREER AND MAJOR EXPLORATION



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CHAPTER 7 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the four steps involved in career exploration and resources on campus to support each step.
2. Recognize factors involved in choosing a major.
3. Utilize assessments to gain an understanding of your strengths and the careers they relate to.
4. Develop your vision of success through visualization exercises

7.1 CAREER EXPLORATION

A job: yes, it's something you would like to have, especially if you want to pay your bills. A job lets you enjoy a minimal level of financial security. A job requires you to show up and do what is required of you; in exchange, you get paid. A career involves holding jobs, but it is more a means of achieving personal fulfillment. In a career, your jobs follow a sequence that leads to increasing mastery, professional development, and personal and financial satisfaction. A career requires planning, knowledge, and skills. If it is to be a fulfilling career, it requires that you bring into play your full set of analytical, critical, and creative thinking skills to make informed decisions that will affect your life in both the short term and the long term.

YOUR WORK LIFE

Over the course of your life, you're probably going to spend a lot of time at work. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average workday is about 8.7 hours long. And that means if you work 5 days a week 50

weeks a year for 35 years, you'll spend a total of 76,125 hours of your life at work. If you weren't already convinced, that number should persuade you that it's pretty important to enjoy your career.

THINK ABOUT THIS

If you pursue a career, you'll constantly make decisions about it. Is this the right job for me? Am I feeling fulfilled and challenged? Does this job enable me to have the lifestyle I want? We want to set you up for success by asking you to consider these kinds of questions now, whether you're just graduating from high school or college, or returning to school after working for a while.

The US Department of Labor and Bureau of Labor Statistics defines over 800 occupations in its Standard Occupational Classification system—and new occupations are being created at an ever-faster rate. Just ten years ago, would anyone have imagined the job of a social media marketing specialist? How about the concept of a competitive chef? Vlogging? As new careers develop and old careers morph into almost unrecognizable versions of their original, it's OK if you can't pinpoint exactly what occupation or career will be your lifetime passion. However, it is important to define as best you can what field you will want to develop your career in, because that will help dictate your major and your course selections.

The process of career exploration can be a lot of fun, as it allows you to discover a world of possibilities. Even those students who have a pretty clear idea of what they want to do should go through this process because they will discover new options as backups and occasionally a new direction even more attractive than their original choice. The career exploration process involves four steps. These steps are outlined below:

STEP 1: WHO AM I?

Getting to know who you are—who you *really* are—is the first step.

Get to know yourself and the things you're truly passionate about.

- Gather information about your career related interests and values
- Think about what skills and abilities come naturally to you and which ones you want to develop
- Consider your personality type and how it you want it to play out in your role at work

Be careful to base your self-discovery on what you think, not what Aunt Mary always said about you or the hopes that Dad had for you to join in the family business. This can be especially difficult in some cultures where expectations are put on you by your family and extended relatives. The idea of reflection is finding where your personal interests intersect with career opportunities in the hopes of getting closer to what *your career interests* are. You are a unique individual with a distinct combination of likes, dislikes, personality traits, and skills. But you are not so different that you can't be identified with certain personality types, and those types may help you narrow your career choices. You may schedule an appointment to meet with our career specialist to help you gain a better understanding of your values, interests, skills, abilities, and personality preferences and how they tie into the world of work. One way to assess these areas is through career assessments. Many career assessments are based on the career theory developed by Dr. John Holland. Holland defined six categories of people based on personality, interests, and skills:

1. **Realistic.** These people describe themselves as honest, loyal, and practical. They are doers more than thinkers. They have strong mechanical, motor, and athletic abilities; like the outdoors; and prefer working with machines, tools, plants, and animals.
2. **Investigative.** These people love problem solving and analytical skills. They are intellectually stimulated and often mathematically or scientifically inclined; like to observe, learn, and evaluate; prefer working alone; and are reserved.

3. **Artistic.** These people are the “free spirits.” They are creative, emotional, intuitive, and idealistic; have a flair for communicating ideas; dislike structure and prefer working independently; and like to sing, write, act, paint, and think creatively. They are similar to the investigative type but are interested in the artistic and aesthetic aspects of things more than the scientific.
4. **Social.** These are “people” people. They are friendly and outgoing; love to help others, make a difference, or both; have strong verbal and personal skills and teaching abilities; and are less likely to engage in intellectual or physical activity.
5. **Enterprising.** These people are confident, assertive risk takers. They are sociable; enjoy speaking and leadership; like to persuade rather than guide; like to use their influence; have strong interpersonal skills; and are status conscious.
6. **Conventional.** These people are dependable, detail oriented, disciplined, precise, persistent, and practical; value order; and are good at clerical and numerical tasks. They work well with people and data, so they are good organizers, schedulers, and project managers.

EXERCISE 1: WHAT’S MY TYPE?

Using the descriptions above, choose the three types that most closely describe you and list them in order in the following table. Most people are combinations of two or sometimes three types. Then list the specific words or attributes that made you think you fit in that type description.

	Occupational type	Words and attributes that closely describe me
Primary type (the one I identify with <i>most closely</i>)		
Secondary type		
Tertiary type		

*Note: Your Holland occupational code is made up of the initials of the three personality types you selected, in order.

STEP 2: WHAT’S OUT THERE?

Once you have determined your occupational type, you can begin to explore what types of careers might be best suited to you.

Many of the career guidance tests are based on Holland’s work. Holland studied people who were successful and happy in many occupations and matched their occupations to their occupational type, creating a description of the types of occupations that are best suited to each personality type. Just as many individuals are more than one personality type, many jobs show a strong correlation to more than one occupational type.

Table 7.1 Occupational Options by Type

Ideal Environments	Sample Occupations	
Realistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured • Clear lines of authority • Work with things and tools • Casual dress • Focus on tangible results or well-thought-out goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contractor • Emergency medical technician (EMT) • Mechanic • Military career • Packaging engineer
Investigative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-structured • Research oriented • Intellectual • Work with ideas and data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pharmacist • Lab technician • Nanotechnologist • Geologist • University professor
Artistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-structured • Creative • Rewards unconventional and aesthetic approaches • Creation of products and ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising career • Architect • Animator • Musician • Journalist
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative • Collegial • Work with people and on people-related problems/issues • Work as a team or community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher • Geriatric counselor • Correctional officer • Coach • Nurse
Enterprising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typical business environment • Results oriented • Driven • Work with people and data • Entrepreneurial • Power focused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sales manager • Banker • Lawyer • Business owner • Restaurant manager
Conventional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orderly • Clear rules and policies • Consistent processes • Work with systems to manipulate and organize data • Control and handling of money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auditor • Insurance underwriter • Bank teller • Office manager • Database manager

STEP 3: WHAT FACTORS MIGHT AFFECT MY CHOICE?

You may now have a list of careers you want to explore. But there are other factors you will need to take into consideration as well. It is important to use your creative thinking skills to come up with alternative “right” answers to factors that may present an obstacle to pursuing the right career.

- **Timing.** How much time must I invest before I actually start making money in this career? Will

I need to spend additional time in school? Is there a certification process that requires a specific amount of experience? If so, can I afford to wait?

- **Finances.** Will this career provide me with the kind of income I need in the short term and the security I'll want in the longer term? What investment will I need to make to be successful in this field (education, tools, franchise fees, etc.)?
- **Location.** Does this career require me to relocate? Is the ideal location for this career somewhere I would like to live? Is it somewhere my family would like to live?
- **Family/Personal.** How will this career affect my personal and family life? Do friends and family members who know me well feel strongly (for or against) about this career choice? How important is their input?



Image by Pablo Garcia Saldana on Unsplash

STEP 4: WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

It may seem odd to be thinking about life after school if you are just getting started. But you will soon be making decisions about your future, and regardless of the direction you may choose, there is a lot you can do while still in college. You will need to focus your studies by choosing a major. You should find opportunities to explore the careers that interest you. You can ensure that you are building the right kind of experience on which to base a successful career. These steps will make your dreams come to life and make them achievable.

Now that you have an idea of who you are and where you might find a satisfying career, how do you start taking action toward achieving those goals? Some people talk to family, friends, or instructors in their chosen disciplines. Others have mentors in their lives with whom to process this decision. At Coastline College, we have general counselors, career counselors, and career advisors who can help you with both career decision-making and the educational planning process.

Start by developing a relationship (via phone, email, zoom, or written correspondence) with the staff in the Career Center on campus. All too often students engage these counselors only near the end of their college days. But these counselors can be of great help in matching your interests to a career and in ensuring you are gathering the right kind of experience to make you competitive in the job market.

Keep in mind that deciding on and pursuing a career is an ongoing process. The more you learn about yourself and the career options that best suit you, the more you will need to fine-tune your career plan. Don't be afraid to consider new ideas, but don't make changes without careful consideration. Career planning is exciting: learning about yourself and about career opportunities, and considering the factors that can affect your decision, should be a core part of your thoughts while in college. You'll benefit from exploring the online career exploration tools listed below:

Now it's time to take concrete steps toward achieving your educational and career goals. This may be as simple as creating a preliminary educational plan for next semester or a comprehensive educational plan that maps out your associate degree. You may also want to look for internships, part time work, or volunteer opportunities that help you test and confirm your preliminary career choice. Your community college counselor can help you with this step as well.

Barbara Sher once wrote, "Find a career that you love and you will never work another day in your life." The Career Exploration steps highlighted above will help you find the career you love!

CAREER SERVICES CENTER

The Coastline Career Services Center is here to support students with career exploration and planning. The center provides workshops, job fairs, and one-on-one appointments (via phone, zoom, or written correspondence) for students to meet with a Career specialist. Below is an overview of who does what in the Career Services Center:

Counselor	Career Specialist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Counseling • Finding and discussing major opportunities • Choosing a Career Path • Discussing Transfer Opportunities • Discussing Certification Options • Counseling C104, Career/ Life Planning Class • Career Planning Process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resume Writing Assistance • Employment Advisement • Internship Search and Classes • Interview Preparation including How to Dress • Cover Letter Assistance • LinkedIn Creation • Conduct Career Related Workshops • LinkedIn Creation • Job & Internship Fairs • Service Learning

For more information, contact the Coastline Career Services Center. Please review the Hope Scholars Guide for the Career Services Center contact information.

COUNSELING DEPARTMENT

The Coastline Counseling Department is here to provide holistic educational, career, and personal counseling and program advisement. The mission of the Coastline College Counseling Department is to guide and support our diverse student population through their educational journey, while serving as the bridge across academic disciplines and student services throughout Coastline College to promote access, understanding, and communication. To discuss your educational path, receive an education plan focused on your academic and

career goals, and/or to address other question or obstacles you may be experiencing during your educational journey, please connect with the Coastline Counseling Department. Please review the Hope Scholars Guide for the Counseling Department contact information.

JOB, INTERNSHIP AND VOLUNTEER SEARCH STRATEGIES

Internships are short-term opportunities that allow students to gain valuable work experience in a particular career. Internships allow you to “test drive” your career of choice. The more you know and the more you experience, the more confident you will be with deciding on your career choice. Volunteering offers a similar experience, where you can assist a company or organization and gain experience doing it!

Coastline College offers job, internship and volunteering assistance through the Career Services Center. If your current facility location does not allow to you participate in an internship or volunteer work, Coastline is happy to assist with this down the road if you will be released at a later date.

CONNECT WITH YOUR COLLEGE FACULTY

Your instructors serve as valuable resources when it comes to career exploration. Connect with your instructors about your career goals and share your interests with them. They can serve as great mentors and can help you learn more about different occupations and industry requirements within particular fields. Oftentimes they are directly connected to the industry and can help you get connected too!

Your work experiences and life circumstances will undoubtedly change throughout the course of your professional life, so you may need to go back and reassess where you are on this path in the future. But no matter if you feel like you **were born knowing** what you want to do professionally, or you feel totally unsure about what the future may hold for you, remember that with careful consideration, resolve, and strategic thought, you can find a career that feels rewarding.

7.2 CHOOSING YOUR MAJOR



Image by Alexander Grey on Unsplash

Choosing your college major can feel overwhelming and some students are concerned they will limit their options by committing to a major too soon. If you are uncertain about your major, it is best to focus on your general education (GE) classes. One of the benefits of starting with your GE courses is this allows you to explore various disciplines which may end up grabbing your attention and leading to your major. If not, no problem, you have satisfied one of your GE requirements! If you are considering a particular major but aren't

certain, you are strongly advised to take an introductory course in that discipline. For example, if you think you may like the idea of majoring in sociology, consider taking SOC C100- Introduction to Sociology. Exploring this course can help you decide sooner than later and some courses required for the major, may also double dip and satisfy a GE requirement.

Students sometimes start at Coastline and want to focus on all their general education classes first then focus on selecting a major. However, the sooner you take time to explore your major the better you can plan your classes. Some of your major classes will have prerequisites and you don't want to leave them all for your final semester at Coastline or else you won't be able to finish them in that final term. And you may benefit from knowing your major sooner than later because some of your major classes may also double dip and satisfy a GE or two and this will save you time and money.

Although the selection of a major is important try not to get too anxious about choosing a major or program of study. Working with a counselor can help you select your studies to be as flexible as possible. Consider the following:

- Your choice of major or program will be important only for your first job after college; most people change careers (not just jobs, but careers) several times throughout their lifetime, so there is no possible major that will cover that level of flexibility.
- Many majors and programs share foundation courses with other majors. Sometimes you can change your major without having wasted your time in courses that will be unrelated to your new major. Chances are that if you change your major, it will be to something similar, especially if you have completed career assessments as recommended earlier in this unit.
- If a change in major does cause a delay in completing your degree, it may be a good investment of time to follow a career path you are truly happy with.
- Take time to engage in activities to help you further explore your major including connecting with a career counselor.

While these thoughts might remove some of the stress of making the choice, there is no doubt that it is not always easy to make your choice. The following tips may make it a little easier...and perhaps fun!

- Follow your dreams. Your first instinct in choosing a field of study is probably based on your dreams and life experience. Make sure you base your choice on your own dreams and interests and not those of a parent, spouse, or friends.
- Make it fun. What do you like to do for fun? What kinds of magazines and books do you read? What Websites are bookmarked on your computer? What kinds of volunteer work have you done? What do the answers to these questions tell you about the kind of career you would enjoy?
- Build on your skills. A good choice of a program of study is not based exclusively on your likes; it should also consider your skills. What courses did you "ace" in high school? Consider also courses that you found challenging in which you learned a lot (it's hard to keep a level of determination to tackle a tough subject if you don't enjoy it). What do these courses tell you about what you are skilled at studying?
- Ask around. Connect with people who are following the courses of studies you are considering. Ask them what they like and dislike about their majors. If you can find recent graduates with that major, ask them about the value of their major.
- Speak to a mentor. Everyone has been on a journey. Speaking to mentors can give you industry perspectives, and information on how they got to where they are. Other adults can provide perspectives in various careers that may open you up to other options.

- Two is better than one. Connect with your counselor about a double major; that is an effective way of preparing yourself for the uncertainties and options of future employment. Think about declaring a minor if your college allows it.
- What makes you unique? If you have a major that you'd like to pursue that is not offered at your college, find out if you can plan your own major. This option is especially attractive if you want to combine two seemingly different disciplines into a major (Dance and athletics? Sociology and film? Women's studies and economics?).
- Be open to change. Once you have selected a major, don't panic if it turns out to be the wrong choice; consider it a step toward finding the right program for *you*. Repeat the major selection process, but carefully consider what you learned from your original major choice. Why was it not the right major? (Did it not match your interests? Was the workload too heavy? Were the courses too tough?) What do you know now that you didn't know when you made your first selection that you should consider in making a new choice?

The more time you take to explore your major and career options the sooner you'll be able to make a well-informed decision. Keep the following points in mind and enjoy the process and experience involved in choosing a college major.

- ✓ There is no need to panic over the choice of a major or program of studies.
- ✓ Most students will change their major during their college years.
- ✓ Many people work and have successful careers in disciplines they did not major in.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A career involves holding jobs, but it is more a means of achieving personal fulfillment.
- Career exploration involves four steps; Step 1 Getting to Know Who You Are, Step 2 Exploring Your Options, Step 3 Determining What Factors Affect Your Choice, and Step 4 Taking Next Steps.
- Choosing your major involves exploring your options and should include using resources provided by Coastline College.
- Once you have chosen a major, connect with a counselor to create a plan to get you to your goals.

Chapter 7 Sources

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CHAPTER 8: DIVERSITY AND COMMUNICATION

CHAPTER 8 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Differentiate surface diversity from deep diversity.
2. Define your own identity and develop cultural competency.
3. Practice effective communication strategies to develop beneficial relationships with peers and professors.
4. List guidelines for successfully communicating individually with an instructor, such as doing so during office hours and via e-mail messages that are polite, professional, and effective.
5. Understand the value of having a mentor and how interactions with instructors, your counselor, and others may lead to a mentoring relationship.

Diversity: the art of thinking independently together.

—Malcolm Forbes, entrepreneur, founder of Forbes magazine

8.1 DIVERSITY

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Cultural diversity is found everywhere in college, and it should be respected, appreciated, and celebrated. To be successful as a college student, it is critical that you understand and can describe your own diverse background. Being self-aware allows you to identify what makes you who you are while recognizing the differences that exist between you, other students, your professors, and all the members of a campus community. This section will discuss the factors that make up a person's culture and how one can effectively communicate and work with people who may be different. You will also learn about aspects of a college culture in order to successfully navigate this new world.

WHAT IS DIVERSITY?

There are few words in the English language that have more diverse interpretations than *diversity*. What does *diversity* mean? Better yet—what does diversity mean to *you*? And what does it mean to your best friend, your teacher, your parents, your religious leader, or the person standing behind you in a grocery store?

For each of us, diversity has unique meaning. Below are a few of the many definitions offered by college students at a 2010 conference on the topic of diversity. Which of these definitions rings out to you as most accurate and thoughtful? Which definitions could use some embellishment or clarification, in your opinion?



Image by Ryoji Iwata on Unsplash

Diversity is a group of people who are different in the same place.

Diversity to me is the ability for differences to coexist together, with some type of mutual understanding or acceptance present. Acceptance of different viewpoints is key.

Tolerance of thought, ideas, people with differing viewpoints, backgrounds, and life experiences. Anything that sets one individual apart from another.

People with different opinions, backgrounds (degrees and social experience), religious beliefs, political beliefs, sexual orientations, heritage, and life experience.

DISSIMILAR

Having a multitude of people from different backgrounds and cultures together in the same environment working for the same goals.

Difference in students' background, especially race and gender.

Differences in characteristics of humans.

Diversity is a satisfying mix of ideas, cultures, races, genders, economic statuses and other characteristics necessary for promoting growth and learning among a group.

Diversity is the immersion and comprehensive integration of various cultures, experiences, and people. Heterogeneity brings about opportunities to share, learn and grow from the journeys of others. Without it, limitations arise and knowledge is gained in the absence of understanding.

Diversity is not tolerance for difference but inclusion of those who are not the majority. It should not be measured as a count or a fraction—that is somehow demeaning. Success at maintaining diversity would be when we no longer ask if we are diverse enough, because it has become the norm, not remarkable.^[1]

Diversity means different things to people, and it can be understood differently in different environments. In the context of your college experience, diversity generally refers to people around you who differ by race, culture, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, abilities, opinions, political views, and in other ways. When it comes to diversity on the college campus, we also think about how groups interact with one another, given their differences (even if they are just perceived differences.) How do diverse populations experience and explore their relationships?

“More and more organizations define diversity really broadly,” says Eric Peterson, who works on diversity issues for the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). “Really, it’s any way any group of people can differ significantly from another group of people—appearance, sexual orientation, veteran status, your level in the organization. It has moved far beyond the legally protected categories that we’ve always looked at.”[2]

8.2 SURFACE DIVERSITY AND DEEP DIVERSITY

Surface diversity and deep diversity are categories of personal attributes—or differences in attributes—that people perceive to exist between people or groups of people.

- **Surface-level diversity** refers to differences you can generally observe in others, like ethnicity, race, gender, age, culture, language, disability, etc. You can quickly and easily observe these features in a person. And people often do just that, making subtle judgments at the same time, which can lead to bias or discrimination. For example, if a teacher believes that older students perform better than younger students, she may give slightly higher grades to the older students than the younger students. This bias is based on perception of the attribute of age, which is surface-level diversity.
- **Deep-level diversity**, on the other hand, reflects differences that are less visible, like personality, attitude, beliefs, and values. These attributes are generally communicated verbally and nonverbally, so they are not easily noticeable or measurable. You may not detect deep-level diversity in a classmate, for example, until you get to know him or her, at which point you may find that you are either comfortable with these deeper character levels, or perhaps not. But once you gain this deeper level of awareness, you may focus less on surface diversity. For example: At the beginning of a term, a classmate belonging to a minority ethnic group, whose native language is not English (surface diversity), may be treated differently by fellow classmates in another ethnic group. But as the term gets under

way, classmates begin discovering the person’s values and beliefs (deep-level diversity), which they find they are comfortable with. The surface-level attributes of language and perhaps skin color become more “transparent” (less noticeable) as comfort is gained with deep-level attributes.



Image by Simon Lee on Unsplash

DIFFERENCES AND IDENTITY

Ours is a very diverse society—and increasingly so. Already in many parts of the country, non-Hispanic whites comprise less than 50 percent of the population, and by 2020 an estimated one in three Americans will be a person of color, as will be about half of all college students. But “diversity” means much more than a variety of racial and ethnic differences.

As we’ll use the term here, **diversity** refers to the great variety of human characteristics—ways that we are different even as we are all human and share more similarities than differences. These differences are an essential part of what enriches humanity. Aspects of diversity may be cultural, biological, or personal in nature. Diversity generally involves things that may significantly affect some people’s perceptions of others—not just any way people happen to be different.

When discussing diversity, it is often difficult to avoid seeming to generalize about different types of people—and such generalizations can seem similar to dangerous stereotypes. The following descriptions are meant only to suggest that individuals are different from other individuals in many possible ways and that we can all learn things from people whose ideas, beliefs, attitudes, values, backgrounds, experiences, and behaviors are different from our own. This is a primary reason college admissions departments frequently seek diversity in the student body. Following are various aspects of diversity:

- **Race:** Race refers to what we generally think of as biological differences and is often defined by what some think of as skin color. Such perceptions are often at least as much social as they are biological.
- **Ethnicity:** Ethnicity is a cultural distinction that is different from race. Ethnic groups share a common identity and a perceived cultural heritage that often involves shared ways of speaking and behaving, religion, traditions, and other traits. The term “ethnic” also refers to such a group that is a minority within the larger society. Race and ethnicity are sometimes interrelated but not automatically so.
- **Cultural background:** Culture, like ethnicity, refers to shared characteristics, language, beliefs, behaviors, and identity. We are all influenced by our culture to some extent. While ethnic groups are typically smaller groups within a larger society, the larger society itself is often called the “dominant culture.” The term is often used rather loosely to refer to any group with identifiable shared characteristics.
- **Educational background:** Colleges do not use a cookie-cutter approach to admit only students with identical academic skills. A diversity of educational background helps ensure a free flow of ideas and challenges those who might become set in their ways.
- **Geography:** People from different places within the United States or the world often have a range of differences in ideas, attitudes, and behaviors.
- **Socioeconomic background:** People’s identities are influenced by how they grow up, and part of that background involves socioeconomic factors. Socioeconomic diversity can contribute to a wide variety of ideas and attitudes.
- **Gender roles:** Women hold virtually all professional and social roles, including those once dominated by men, and men have taken on many roles, such as raising a child, that were formerly occupied mostly by women. These changing roles have brought diverse new ideas and attitudes to college campuses.
- **Gender identity:** Gender identity is one’s personal experience of one’s own gender. Gender identity can correlate with the sex at birth – male or female, or can differ from it completely: males may identify as female or vice versa, or a person may identify as a third gender or as falling somewhere along the continuum between male and female.

- **Age:** While younger students attending college immediately after high school are generally within the same age range, older students returning to school bring a diversity of age. Because they often have broader life experiences, many older students bring different ideas and attitudes to the campus.
- **Sexual orientation:** Gays and lesbians make up a significant percentage of people in American society and students on college campuses. Exposure to this diversity helps others overcome stereotypes and become more accepting of human differences.
- **Religion:** For many people, religion is not just a Sunday morning practice but a larger spiritual force that infuses their lives. Religion helps shape different ways of thinking and behaving.
- **Political views:** A diversity of political views helps broaden the level of discourse on campuses concerning current events and the roles of government and leadership at all levels.
- **Physical ability:** Some students have athletic talents. Some students have physical disabilities. Physical differences among students bring yet another kind of diversity to colleges—a diversity that both widens opportunities for a college education and also helps all students better understand how people relate to the world in physical as well as intellectual ways.



Image by Eye for Ebony on Unsplash

Let's reflect on your own social identities and the meanings they have for you. How would you describe your identity or identities? What kind of words would you use to describe yourself in terms of:

- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Age
- Class

You may also expand on this to include other aspects of your identity that are important to you, such as nationality or regional identity, sexuality, religious or political beliefs, occupation or voluntary roles, family roles, interests and abilities, and so on.

ASPECTS OF IDENTITY

Identities are plural

- Every person has a range of identities, according to how they see themselves (and how others see them) in terms of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, age, and so on. This means that seeing an individual in terms of one aspect of their identity – as a black person, for example, rather than as (say) a black

working-class woman who is also a social worker, a mother and a school governor – is inevitably reductive and misleading.

Identities are dynamic

- The identities people assume, and the relative importance they attach to them, change over time because of both personal change in their lives and change in the external world (for example, as a result of changing ideas about disability). Consequently, identity should not be seen as something ‘fixed’ within people.

Identities have different and changing meanings

- Aspects of identity may have different meanings at different times in people's lives, and the meanings that they attribute to aspects of their identity (for example, ethnicity) may be different from the meaning it has for others (for example, being black may be a source of pride for you, but the basis of someone else's negative stereotyping).

Identities are contextual and interactional

- Different identities assume greater or less importance, and play different roles, in different contexts and settings, and in interactions with different people. Different aspects of people's identity may come to the fore in the workplace and in the home, for example, while people might emphasize different aspects of themselves to different people (and different people may see different identities when they meet them).

Identities are negotiated

- In constructing their identities, people can only draw on terms that are available in society at that time, which have meanings and associations attached. However, people may attribute different meanings and importance to those labels. This means people always negotiate their identities, in the context of the different meanings attached to them.

These examples point to the contextual nature of identities. Another example of this is how different identities become important for people in different settings. Stuart Hall, a leading writer on issues of culture and identity, suggests that the word ‘identifications’ is preferable to the term ‘identities’, reflecting a view that identity is a process rather than something fixed and unchanging (Hall, 2000). Furthermore, assuming an identity takes place in a social context. As Hall makes clear, the identities that people take on always come with a history and are to some extent ‘given’ by society, although people may attribute different meanings to them.

Taking this view of identity, as a social process that people engage in, rather than as a fixed essence inside them, is not to deny that particular identities are extremely important for certain groups and individuals. Being a Sikh, or a woman, or gay, may feel like the most important and ‘deepest’ part of you. However, a more dynamic and social model of identity is useful because it makes it difficult to reduce people to any one aspect of their identity, or to use social identity as a way of explaining every aspect of their behavior and needs, including their communication needs and behavior.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY

As a college student, it is important to prepare yourself to be able to adapt to diverse environments. **Cultural competency** can be defined as the ability to recognize and adapt to cultural differences and similarities. It involves “(a) the cultivation of deep cultural self-awareness and understanding (i.e., how one's own beliefs, values, perceptions, interpretations, judgments, and behaviors are influenced by one's cultural community or

communities) and (b) increased cultural other-understanding (i.e., comprehension of the different ways people from other cultural groups make sense of and respond to the presence of cultural differences).”¹

In other words, cultural competency requires you to be aware of your own cultural practices, values, and experiences, and to be able to read, interpret, and respond to those of others. Such awareness will help you successfully navigate the cultural differences you will encounter in diverse environments. Cultural competency is critical to working and building relationships with people from different cultures; it is so critical, in fact, that it is now one of the most highly desired skills in the modern workforce.²

We don’t automatically understand differences among people and celebrate the value of those differences. Cultural competency is a skill that you can learn and improve upon over time and with practice. What actions can you take to build your cultural competency skills?

PREJUDICE

Take a Stand against Prejudice and Hate

Unfortunately, prejudice and hate still exist in America, including on college campuses. Prejudice exists against racial and ethnic minorities, women, people with disabilities, older adults, gays and lesbians—virtually all groups that can be characterized as “different.” All campuses have policies against all forms of prejudice and discriminatory behaviors. But it is not enough for only college administrators to fight prejudice and hate—this is a responsibility for all good citizens who take seriously the shared American value of equality for all people. So, what can you as a college student do?

- **Decide that it does matter.** Prejudice threatens us all, not just the particular group being discriminated against in a specific incident. Don’t stand on the sidelines or think it’s up to the people who may be victimized by prejudice or hate to do something about it. We can all do something.
- **Talk with others.** Communication has great value on campuses. Let others know how you feel about any acts of prejudice or hatred that you witness. The more everyone openly condemns such behavior, the less likely it is to reappear in the future. This applies even if you hear another student telling a racist joke or putting down the opposite sex—speak up and tell the person you find such statements offensive. You don’t want that person to think you agree with them. Speaking up can be difficult to do, but it can be done tactfully. People can and do learn what is acceptable in a diverse environment.
- **Report incidents you observe.** If you happen to see someone spray-painting a hateful slogan, for example, be a good citizen and report it to the appropriate campus office or the police.
- **Support student groups working for change.** Show your support for groups and activities that celebrate diversity and condemn prejudice. Once you become aware of such student activities on campus, you’ll find many ways you can help take a stand.
- **Celebrate diversity.** In many ways, you can learn more about diversity through campus programs and activities. The more all students participate, the closer the campus will come to being free of prejudice and hate. Be a role model in how you act and what you say in relation to diversity, and you may have more effect on others than you realize.

DEALING WITH PREJUDICE

If you yourself experience prejudice or discrimination related to your race or ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, or any other aspect of diversity, don’t ignore it or accept it as something that cannot be changed. As discussed earlier, college students can do much to minimize intolerance in their

environment. Many overt forms of discrimination are illegal and against college policies. You owe it to yourself, first and foremost, to report it to the appropriate college authority.

You can also attack prejudice in other ways. Join an organization that works to reduce prejudice or start a new group and discuss ways you can confront the problem and work for a solution. Seek solidarity with other groups. Organize positive celebrations and events to promote understanding. Write an article for a campus publication explaining the values of diversity and condemning intolerance.

What if you are directly confronted by an individual or group making racist or other discriminatory remarks? In an emotionally charged situation, rational dialogue may be difficult or impossible, and a shouting match or name-calling seldom is productive. If the person may have made an offensive remark inadvertently or because of a misunderstanding, then you may be able to calmly explain the problem with what they said or did. Hopefully, the person will apologize and learn from the experience. But if the person made the remark or acted that way intentionally, confronting this negative person directly may be difficult and not have a positive outcome. Most importantly, take care that the situation does not escalate in the direction of violence. Reporting the incident instead to college authorities may better serve the larger purpose of working toward harmony and tolerance.

8.3 COMMUNICATION SKILLS



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COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Communication is at the core of almost all social interactions, including those involved in friendships and relationships with your instructors. Communication with others has a huge effect on our lives, what we think and feel, and what and how we learn. Communication is, many would say, what makes us human.

Oral communication involves not only speech and listening, of course, but also nonverbal communication: facial expressions, tone of voice, and many other body language signals that affect the messages sent and received. Many experts think that people pay more attention, often unconsciously, to *how* people say something than to *what* they are saying. When the nonverbal message is inconsistent with the verbal (spoken) message, just as when the verbal message itself is unclear because of poorly chosen words or vague explanations, then miscommunication may occur.

Miscommunication is at the root of many misunderstandings among people and makes it difficult to build relationships.

Remember that communication is a two-way process. Listening skills are critical for most college students simply because many of us may not have learned how to really listen to another person. Here are some guidelines for how to listen effectively:

- **Talk less to listen more.** Most people naturally like to share their thoughts and feelings, and some people almost seem unable to stop talking long enough to ever listen to another person. Try this: next time you're in a conversation with another student, deliberately try not to speak very much but give the other person a chance to speak fully. You may notice a big difference in how much you gain from the conversation.
- **Ask questions.** To keep the conversational ball rolling, show your interest in the other person by asking them about things they are saying. This helps the other person feel that you are interested in them and helps build the relationship.
- **Watch and respond to the other person's body language.** You'll learn much more about their feelings for what they're saying than if you listen only to their words.
- **Show the other person that you're really listening and that you care.** Make eye contact and respond appropriately with nods and brief comments like "That's interesting!" or "I know what you mean" or "Really?" Be friendly, smile when appropriate, and encourage the person to keep speaking.
- **Give the other person feedback.** Show you understand by saying things like "So you're saying that..." or asking a question that demonstrates you've been following what they're saying and want to know more.

As you learn to improve your listening skills, think also about what you are saying yourself and how. Here are additional guidelines for effective speaking:

- **Be honest, but don't be critical.** Strongly disagreeing may only put the other person on the defensive—an emotion sure to disrupt the hope for good communication. You can disagree, but be respectful to keep the conversation from becoming emotional. Say "I don't know, I think that maybe it's..." instead of "That's crazy! What's *really* going on is...."
- **Look for common ground.** Make sure that your side of a conversation relates to what the other person is saying and that it focuses on what you have in common. There's almost no better way to stop a conversation dead in its tracks than to ignore everything the other person has just said and launch into an unrelated story or idea of your own.
- **Avoid sarcasm and irony unless you know the person well.** Sarcasm is easily misunderstood and may be interpreted as an attack on the other person's ideas or statements.
- **Don't try to talk like the other person,** especially if the person is from a different ethnic or cultural background or speaks with an accent or heavy slang. The other person will feel that you are imitating them and maybe even making fun of them. Be yourself and speak naturally.
- **While not imitating the other person, relate to his or her personality and style of thinking.** We do not speak to our parents or instructors the exact same way we speak to our closest friends, nor should we speak to someone we've just met the same way. Show your respect for the other person by keeping the conversation on an appropriate level.
- **Remember that assertive communication is better than passive or aggressive communication.** "Assertive" in this context means you are honest and direct in stating your ideas and thoughts; you are confident and clear and willing to discuss your ideas while still respecting the

thoughts and ideas of others. A passive communicator is reluctant to speak up, seems to agree with everything others say, hesitates to say anything that others might disagree with, and therefore seldom communicates much at all. Passive communication simply is not a real exchange in communication. Aggressive communication, at the other extreme, is often highly critical of the thoughts and ideas of others. This communication style may be sarcastic, emotional, and even insulting. Real communication is not occurring because others are not prompted to respond honestly and openly.

- **Choose your conversations wisely.** Recognize that you don't have to engage in all conversations. Make it your goal to form relationships and engage in interactions that help you learn and grow as a person. College life offers plenty of opportunities for making relationships and interacting with others if you keep open to them, so you needn't try to participate in every social situation around you.

Some students may have difficulty in the opposite direction: their social lives may become so rich or so time consuming that they have problems balancing their social lives with their schoolwork. Online social media, for example, may eat up a lot of time.

OVERCOMING DIFFICULTIES AND RESOLVING CONFLICTS

Conflicts among people who are interacting are natural. People have many differences in opinions, ideas, emotions, and behaviors, and these differences sometimes cause conflicts. A few examples of conflicts that may occur include your roommate being loud when you need some quiet to study for a test. Or, your instructor gave you a C on a paper because it lacks some of the required elements, but you feel it deserves a better grade because you think it accomplished more important goals.

So how can such conflicts be resolved? Two things are necessary for conflict resolution that does not leave one or more of the people involved feeling negative about the outcome: attitude and communication.

A conflict cannot be resolved satisfactorily unless all people involved have the right attitude:

- **Respect the options and behaviors of others.** Accept that people are not all alike and learn to celebrate your differences. Most situations do not involve a single right or wrong answer.
- **Be open minded.** Just because at first you are sure that that you are right, do not close the door to other possibilities. Look at the other's point of view. Be open to change—even when that means accepting constructive criticism.
- **Calm down.** You can't work together to resolve a conflict while you're still feeling strong emotions. Agree with the other to wait until you're both able to discuss it without strong emotions.
- **Recognize the value of compromise.** Even if you disagree after calmly talking over an issue, accept that as a human reality and understand that a compromise may be necessary in order to get along with others.

With the right attitude, you can then work together to resolve the issue. This process depends on good communication:

- **Listen.** Don't simply argue for your position, but listen carefully to what the other says. Pay attention to their body language as you try to understand their point of view and ask questions to ensure that you do. Paraphrase what you think you hear to give the other a chance to correct any misunderstanding.

- **Use “I statements” rather than “you statements.”** Explain your point of view about the situation in a way that does not put the other person on the defensive and evoke emotions that make resolution more difficult. Don’t say, “You’re always playing loud music when I’m trying to study.” Instead, say, “I have difficulty studying when you play loud music, and that makes me frustrated and irritable.” Don’t blame the other for the problem—that would just get emotions flowing again.
- **Brainstorm together to find a solution that satisfies both of you.** Some compromise is usually needed, but that is usually not difficult to reach when you’re calm and have the right attitude about working together on a solution. In some cases, you may simply have to accept a result that you still do not agree with, simply in order to move on.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

A final communication strategy to be aware of is nonverbal communication. Recall a time when the things someone said to you did not match the tone in their voice or the way they were acting. Whether deliberate or not, humans communicate nonverbally and often deliver a clearer message using nonverbal cues as opposed to just words.

Like verbal communication, nonverbal communication is essential in our everyday interactions. While nonverbal and verbal communications have many similar functions, nonverbal communication has its own set of functions for helping us communicate with each other. For example, at school or your job, you usually do not pay attention to the way you give off nonverbal communication such as hand gestures and facial expressions. Even so, others can and do derive meaning from your nonverbal behaviors whether they are intentional or not. An example of this is how professors watch their students’ nonverbal communication in class (such as slouching, leaning back in the chair, or looking at their cell phones) and make assumptions about them (they are bored, tired, or not paying attention). These assumptions are often based on acts that are, typically, done unintentionally. How do you interpret these student's nonverbals?

Dr. Albert Mehrabian, author of *Silent Messages*, conducted several studies on nonverbal communication. He found that 7% of any message is conveyed through words, 38% through certain vocal elements, and 55% through nonverbal elements (facial expressions, gestures, posture, etc.). Subtracting the 7% for actual vocal content leaves one with the 93% statistic that nonverbal communication accounts for most of your communication. Therefore, it is extremely important to not only focus on your verbal communication, but you must always be aware of your nonverbal communication.

8.4 COMMUNICATING WITH PROFESSORS

So far, we’ve been looking at communication with peers, however, students gain very specific benefits from communicating directly with their instructors.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS OF CONNECTING WITH YOUR INSTRUCTORS

College students are sometimes surprised to discover that instructors like students and enjoy getting to know them. After all, they want to feel they’re doing something more meaningful than talking to an empty room. The human dimension of college really matters, and as a student you are an important part of your instructor’s world. Most instructors are happy to connect with you during and after you complete the course.

In addition, connecting with your instructors often leads to benefits beyond simply doing well in that class.

- Connecting with instructors helps you feel more comfortable in college and more connected to the campus. Students who talk to their instructors are less likely to become disillusioned and drop out.
- Connecting with instructors is a valuable way to learn about an academic field or a career. Don't know for sure what you want to major in, or what people with a degree in your chosen major actually *do* after college? Most instructors will share information and insights with you.
- You may need a reference or letter of recommendation for a job or internship application. Getting to know some of your instructors puts you in an ideal position to ask for a letter of recommendation or a reference in the future when you need one.
- Because instructors are often well connected within their field, they may know of a job, internship, or research possibility you otherwise may not learn about. An instructor who knows you is a valuable part of your network. Networking is very important for future job searches and other opportunities.
- In fact, most jobs are found through networking, not through classified ads or online job postings.
- Think about what it truly means to be "educated": how one thinks, understands society and the world, and responds to problems and new situations. Much of this learning occurs outside the classroom. Talking with your highly educated instructors can be among your most meaningful experiences in college.

GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR INSTRUCTORS

Getting along with instructors and communicating well begins with attitude. As experts in their field, they deserve your respect. Remember that a college education is a collaborative process that works best when students and instructors communicate freely in an exchange of ideas, information, and perspectives. So while you should respect your instructors, you shouldn't fear them. As you get to know them better, you'll learn their personalities and find appropriate ways to communicate. Here are some guidelines for getting along with and communicating with your instructors:

- **Prepare before connecting with your instructor.** Go over your notes on readings and lectures and write down your specific questions. You'll feel more comfortable, and the instructor will appreciate your being organized.
- **Don't forget to introduce yourself.** Especially near the beginning of the term. Unless the instructor has already asked you to address him or her as "Dr. _____," "Ms. _____" or Mr. _____," or something similar, it's appropriate to say "Professor _____."
- **Respect the instructor's time.** In addition to teaching, college instructors sit on committees, do research and other professional work, and have personal lives. Don't try connecting only when you need an immediate answer.
- **Don't try to fool an instructor.** Insincere praise or making excuses for not doing an assignment won't make it in college. Nor is it a good idea to show you're "too cool" to take all this seriously—another attitude sure to turn off an instructor. To earn your instructor's respect, be prepared, do the work, participate genuinely, and show respect—and the instructor will be happy to assist when you need some extra help or reach out to connect to establish a relationship.
- **Try to see things from the instructor's point of view.** Imagine that you spent a couple hours making PowerPoint slides and preparing a class lecture on something you find very stimulating and exciting. Standing in front of a full room, you are gratified to see faces smiling and heads nodding as people understand what you're saying—they really get it! And then a student after class asks, "Is this going to be on the test?" How would *you* feel?
- **Be professional when talking to an instructor.** You can be cordial and friendly, but keep it professional and on an adult level. Be prepared with your questions—not just to chat or joke around. Be prepared to accept criticism in a professional way, without taking it personally or complaining.

- **Use your best communication skills.** Learning the difference between assertive communication and passive or aggressive communication.

PART-TIME AND RETURNING STUDENTS

Students who are working, have restricted access due to their location, who have their own families and other responsibilities may have special obstacles interacting with instructors. Sometimes an older student feels a little out of place and may even feel “the system” is designed for younger students; this attitude can lead to a hesitation to participate in class or see an instructor during office hours.

But participation and communication with instructors is very important for all students—and may be even more important for “nontraditional” students. Getting to know your instructors is particularly crucial for feeling at home in college. Instructors enjoy talking with older and other nontraditional students—even when, as sometimes happens, a student is older than the instructor.

Assert yourself: You are in college for reasons just as good as those of other students, and you have the same rights. Avoid the temptation to give up or feel defeated; connect with your instructor and make the most of your time interacting together.

EMAIL BEST PRACTICES

Just as e-mail has become a primary form of communication in business and society, e-mail has a growing role in education and has become an important and valuable means of communicating with instructors. Virtually all younger college students have grown up using e-mail and have a computer or computer access in college, although some have developed poor habits from using e-mail principally with friends in the past. Some older college students or those who have not had access to technology over the past few years may not yet understand the importance of e-mail and other computer skills in college; if you are not now using e-mail, it's time to learn how (see “Getting Started with E-mail”). Especially when it is difficult or not possible to see an instructor in person during office hours, e-mail (by personal email or through Canvas) can be an effective form of communication and interaction with instructors.

MYTH:

"Email is basically instant, and I know my teacher checks her email all of the time. So, if I don't understand something or have a last-minute question about an assignment, I can email her and she should respond right away. She's definitely up at 10 PM, and it would only take her 2 minutes to write back with the answer."

THE FACTS:

This is a misconception that we're sure all instructors would like to be cleared up from the outset. Most of your instructors provide a maximum email turnaround time, typically between 24-48 hours. As a student, you need to plan ahead as much as possible, and be sure to have an alternate solution if you don't hear back from your instructor before an assignment is due (remember, your assignments are your responsibility, not theirs). Some instructors include a "Questions About the Course" discussion thread in Canvas where they encourage students to answer one another's questions. This could be immensely helpful for you, and might be a way for you to help other students in turn.

Building supportive online relationships and friendships requires skill and practice. The good news is, students who develop good communication skills, learn to be assertive, and are able to cooperate and collaborate well in a virtual environment will find these skills highly transferrable (and valued) in their personal and professional lives long after their course is over.

If your instructor gives you his or her e-mail addresses or notes they prefer you reach out to them via email in Canvas, use this method for contact rather than the telephone for non-urgent matters. Using e-mail respects other people's time, allowing them to answer at a time of their choosing, rather than being interrupted by a telephone call.



Image by Glenn Carstens-Peters on Unsplash

E-mail is a written form of communication that is different from telephone voice messages and text messages. Students who text have often adopted shortcuts, such as not spelling out full words, ignoring capitalization and punctuation, and not bothering with grammar or full sentence constructions. This is inappropriate in an e-mail message to an instructor, who expects a more professional quality of writing. Most instructors expect your communications to be in full sentences with correctly spelled words and reasonable grammar. When writing an email whether through your personal email account or through Canvas, you should follow these guidelines:

- Use a professional e-mail name. If you have a funny name you use with friends, create a different account with a professional name you use with instructors, work supervisors, and others.
- Use the subject line to label your message effectively at a glance. "May I make an appointment?" says something; "In your office?" doesn't.
- Address e-mail messages as you do a letter, beginning "Dear Professor ____." Include your full name if it's not easily recognizable in your e-mail account.
- When you begin, mention what course name/number you are writing about as the instructor may be teaching more than one course. It is also good practice to include your student ID number.
- Get to your point quickly and concisely. Don't make the reader scroll down a long e-mail to see what it is you want to say.
- Because e-mail is a written communication, it does not express emotion the way a voice message does.
- Don't attempt to be funny, ironic, or sarcastic. Write as you would in a paper for class. In a large lecture class or an online course, your e-mail voice may be the primary way your instructor knows you, and emotionally charged messages can be confusing or give a poor impression.
- Don't use capital letters to emphasize. All caps look like SHOUTING.
- Avoid abbreviations, nonstandard spelling, slang, and emoticons like smiley faces. These do not convey a professional tone.
- Don't make demands or state expectations such as "I'll expect to hear from you soon" or "If I haven't heard by 4 p.m., I'll assume you'll accept my paper late."
- When you reply to a message, leave the original message within yours. Your reader may need to recall what he or she said in the original message.
- Be polite. End the message with a "Thank you" or something similar.

- Proofread your message before sending it.
- With any important message, it's a good idea to wait and review the message later before sending it. You may have expressed an emotion or thought that you will think better about later. Many problems have resulted when people sent messages too quickly without thinking.

RESOLVING A PROBLEM WITH AN INSTRUCTOR

The most common issue students encounter with an instructor involves receiving a grade lower than they think they deserve—especially new students not yet used to the higher standards of college. It's depressing to get a low grade, but it's not the end of the world. Don't be too hard on yourself—or on the instructor. Take a good look at what happened on the test or paper and make sure you know what to do better next time. Review the earlier chapters on studying habits, time management, and taking tests.

If you genuinely believe you deserved a higher grade, you can connect with your instructor. *How* you communicate in that conversation, however, is very important. Instructors are used to hearing students complain about grades and patiently explaining their standards for grading. Most instructors seldom change grades. Yet it can still be worthwhile to connect with the instructor because of what you will learn from the experience.

Follow these guidelines to connect about a grade or resolve any other problem or disagreement with an instructor:

- First, go over the requirements for the paper or test and the instructor's comments. Be sure you actually have a reason for discussing the grade—not just that you didn't do well. Be prepared with specific points you want to go over.
- Make an appointment with your instructor during office hours or another time. Don't try to talk about this before or after class or with e-mail or the telephone.
- Allow the instructor to explain his or her comments on the assignment or grading of the test. Don't complain or whine; instead, show your appreciation for the explanation. Raise any specific questions or make comments at this time. For example, you might say, "I really thought I was being clear here when I wrote...."
- Use good listening skills. Whatever you do, don't argue!
- Ask what you can do to improve your grade, if possible. Can you rewrite the paper or do any extra-credit work to help make up for a test score? While you are showing that you would like to earn a higher grade in the course, also make it clear that you're willing to put in the effort and that you want to *learn more*, not just get the higher grade.
- If there is no opportunity to improve on this specific project, ask the instructor for advice on what you might do on the next assignment or when preparing for the next test. You may be offered some individual help or receive good study advice, and your instructor will respect your willingness to make the effort as long as it's clear that you're more interested in learning than simply getting the grade

TIPS FOR TALKING WITH YOUR INSTRUCTORS

- When you have a question, ask it sooner rather than later. Don't wait until the end of the semester.
- Be prepared and plan your questions and comments in advance.
- Be respectful but personable and communicate professionally.
- Be open minded and ready to learn. Avoid whining and complaining.
- There is no such thing as a “stupid question.”



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CONTROLLING ANGER OVER GRADES

If you're going to talk with an instructor about your grade or any other problem, control any anger you may be feeling. Here are a few tips to help you control your anger before you do or say something that you might later regret:

- Being upset about a grade is good because it shows you care and that you have passion about your education. But anger prevents clear thinking, so rein it in first.
- Since anger involves bodily reactions, physical actions can help you control anger: try some deep breathing first.
- Try putting yourself in your instructor's shoes and seeing the situation from their point of view. Try to understand how grading is not a personal issue of “liking” you—that they are really doing something for your educational benefit.
- It's not your life that's being graded. Things outside your control can result in not doing well on a test or assignment, but the instructor can grade only on what you actually did on that test or assignment—not what you could have done or are capable of doing. Understanding this can help you accept what happened and not take a grade personally.

8.5 FINDING A MENTOR

A mentor is someone who is usually older and more experienced than you who becomes your trusted guide, advisor, and role model. A mentor is someone you may want to be like in your future career or profession—someone you look up to and whose advice and guidance you respect. Some colleges and universities have formal systems to help you find an appropriate mentor. You may connect with our student services office to see if there is a program available to you.

Finding a mentor can be one of the most fulfilling aspects of college. As a student, you think about many things and make many decisions, large and small, almost daily: What do you want to do in the future? How can you best balance your studies with your job? What should you major in? Should you take this course or that one? What should you do if you feel like you're failing a course? Where should you put your priorities as you prepare for a future career? How can you be a better student? The questions go on and on. We talk about things like this with our friends and often family members, but often they don't have the same experience or background to help us as a mentor can.

Most important, a mentor is someone who is willing to help you, to talk with you about decisions you face, to support you when things become difficult, and to guide you when you're feeling lost. A mentor can become a valuable part of your future network but also can help you in the here and now.

Many different people can become mentors: other students, family members, people you know through work, your boss. As a college student, however, your best mentor likely is someone involved in education: your counselor, a more experienced student, or an instructor. Finding a mentor is another reason to develop good relationships with your instructors, starting with class participation and communication outside of class.

A mentor is not like a good friend, exactly—you're not going to invite your instructor to a movie—but it does involve a form of friendship. Nor is a mentor a formal relationship: you don't ask an instructor to become your mentor. The mentor relationship is more informal and develops slowly, often without actively looking for a mentor. Here's an example of how one student "found" a mentor:

As a freshman taking several classes, Miguel particularly liked and admired one of his instructors, Professor Canton. Miguel spoke up more in Canton's class and talked with him sometimes during office hours. When it was time to register for the next term, Miguel saw that Canton was teaching another course he was interested in, so he asked him about that course one day during office hours. Miguel was pleased when Professor Canton said he'd like to have him in his class next term.



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By the end of his first year of college, Miguel seemed to know Canton better than any of his other instructors and felt very comfortable talking with him outside of class. One day after talking about a reading assignment, Miguel said he was enjoying this class so much that he was thinking about majoring in this subject and asked Professor Canton what he thought about it. Canton suggested that he take a few more classes before making a decision, and he invited Miguel to sit in on a seminar of upper-level students he was holding.

In his second year, Miguel's interests turned in another direction as he began to think about his future job possibilities, but by then he felt comfortable enough talking with Canton that he occasionally he stopped by the professor's office even though he was not taking a class with him. Sometimes he was surprised how much Professor Canton knew about other departments and other faculty, and Canton often shared insights about other courses he might be interested in that his advisor had not directed him to. When Miguel learned about a summer internship in his field and was considering applying, Canton not only volunteered to write him a letter of recommendation but even offered to help Miguel with the essay part of the application if he wanted.

Often, a mentoring relationship occurs informally as you get to know an instructor or another person over time. In your first year, you don't go searching frantically for a mentor, but you should begin interacting with your instructors and other students in ways that may lead, over time, to developing that kind of relationship.

Similarly, your academic advisor or a college counselor might become a mentor for you if you share interests and you look up to that person as a role model and trusted guide. Your advisor is so important for your college success that if you feel you are not getting along well, you should ask the advising department to switch you to a different advisor. Take the time to build a good relationship with your advisor, the same as with instructors— following the same guidelines in this chapter for communication and interaction.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Diversity refers to a great variety of human characteristics and ways in which people differ.
- Social identities, whether based on ethnicity, gender, disability or other factors, should be seen as: plural, dynamic, contextual, negotiated and produced in social and interactional contexts.
- Stereotypes of people based on their social identities tend to be negative and to define them in relation to their difference from an imaginary 'norm'.
- Stereotypes can lead to prejudice and discrimination, which themselves reflect and perpetuate wider processes of oppression, such as sexism and racism.
- Active listening is a key to great conversations.
- 93% nonverbal communication accounts for most of your communication. Be aware of your nonverbal communication.
- Additional benefits of getting to know and networking with instructors include receiving references and academic advice.
- Prepare in advance before meeting with an instructor and communicate respectfully, honestly, and sincerely your efforts will be repaid.
- It is worthwhile connecting with an instructor when you disagree about a grade because of what you will learn in this interaction.
- Finding a mentor can be one of the most fulfilling experiences in college.
- Online and distance learning courses involve special issues for effective learning, but you must make the effort to interact with the instructor and other students in a way that encourages your success.

CHAPTER 8 SOURCES

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CHAPTER 9: HEALTH

CHAPTER 9 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. The importance of nutrition, exercise, sleep and emotional wellbeing to your overall wellbeing.
2. Stress reduction methods.
3. The importance of relationships to your wellbeing.
4. The consequences of substance abuse

9.1 HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Health and wellness are important for everyone—students included. Not only will you do better in school when your health is good, but you'll be happier as a person. And the habits you develop now will likely persist for years to come. That means that what you're doing now in terms of personal health will have a huge influence on your health throughout life and can help you avoid many serious diseases.

Wellness is more than just avoiding disease. Wellness involves feeling good in every respect, in mind and spirit as well as in body. Good health habits also offer these benefits for your college career:

- More energy
- Better ability to focus on your studies
- Less stress, feeling more resilient and able to handle day-to-day stress
- Less time lost to colds, flu, infections, and other illnesses
- More restful sleep

Everyone knows about stress, but not everyone knows how to control it. Stress is the great enemy of college success. But once you've learned how to reduce it where you can and cope with unavoidable stress, you'll be well on the road to becoming the best student you can be.

Where Are You Now?

Assess your present knowledge and attitudes.

	Yes	Unsure	No
1. I usually eat well and maintain my weight at an appropriate level.			
2. I get enough regular exercise to consider myself healthy.			
3. I get enough restful sleep and feel alert throughout the day.			
4. My attitudes and habits involving smoking, alcohol, and drugs are beneficial to my health.			

5. I am coping in a healthy way with the everyday stresses of being a student.			
6. I am generally a happy person.			
7. I am comfortable with my sexual values.			
8. I understand how all these different health factors interrelate and affect my academic success as a student.			

Where Do You Want to Go?

Think about how you answered the questions above. Be honest with yourself. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your level of personal health at this time?

Not very healthy									Very healthy
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

In the following list, circle the three most important areas of health in which you think you can improve:

- Nutrition
- Weight control
- Exercise
- Sleep
- Smoking
- Alcohol use
- Drug use
- Stress reduction
- Emotional health
- Romantic relationships
- Sexual health

Are there other areas in which you can improve your physical, emotional, and mental health and become happier? Write down other things you feel you need to work on.

9.2 NUTRITION

WHAT IS NUTRITION?

Simply put, **food** is the plants and animals that we eat, and **nutrition** is how food affects the health of the body. According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, “Food is essential—it provides vital nutrients for survival, and helps the body function and stay healthy. Food is comprised of macronutrients including protein,

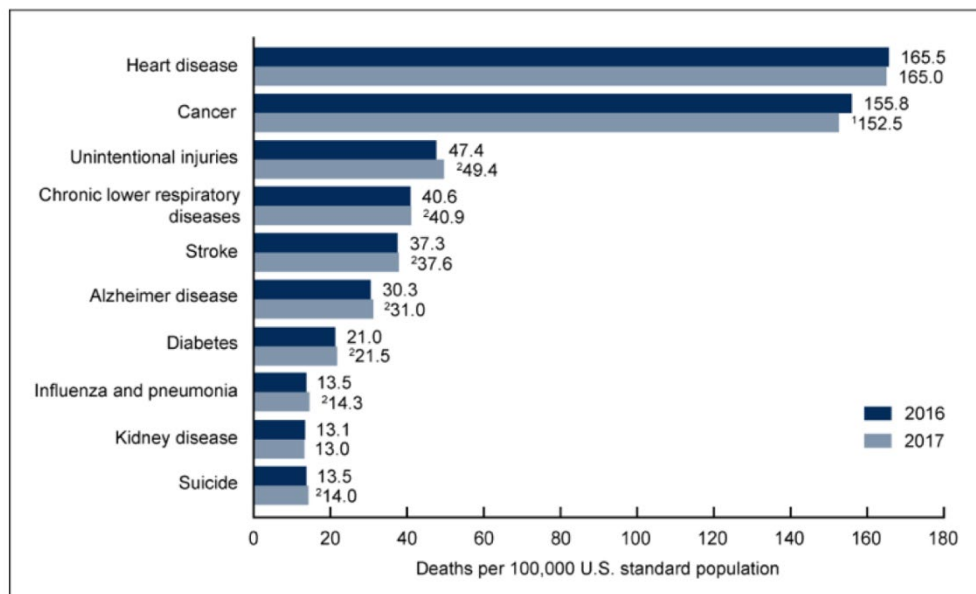
carbohydrate and fat that not only offer calories to fuel the body and give it energy but play specific roles in maintaining health.

HOW NUTRITION AFFECTS HEALTH

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines **health** as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”³ The WHO recognizes nutrition as a critical part of health and development, noting that better nutrition is related to:⁴

- improved infant, child and maternal health
- stronger immune systems
- safer pregnancy and childbirth
- lower risk of non-communicable diseases (such as type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease)
- greater longevity
- greater productivity, creating opportunities to break cycles of poverty and hunger

Malnutrition, including both undernutrition and overnutrition, is a significant threat to human health. In fact, nutrition is associated with four of the top ten leading causes of death in the United States, including heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and stroke.⁵



¹Statistically significant decrease in age-adjusted death rate from 2016 to 2017 ($p < 0.05$).

²Statistically significant increase in age-adjusted death rate from 2016 to 2017 ($p < 0.05$).

NOTES: A total of 2,813,503 resident deaths were registered in the United States in 2017. The 10 leading causes accounted for 74.0% of all deaths in the United States in 2017. Causes of death are ranked according to number of deaths. Rankings for 2016 data are not shown. Data table for Figure 4 includes the number of deaths for leading causes. Access data table for Figure 4 at: https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db328_tables-508.pdf#4.

SOURCE: NCHS, National Vital Statistics System, Mortality.

Figure 9.1 Age-adjusted death rates for the 10 leading causes of deaths: United States 2016 and 2017

Nutrition can affect the health of the mind as well as the body. For example, some research suggests that the foods people eat can influence their mood. A [2019 study](#) of moderately-depressed people aged 17 to 35 years old found that when half of them shifted towards a Mediterranean-style eating pattern for 3 weeks—emphasizing more fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean protein sources, unsweetened dairy, fish, nuts and

seeds, olive oil, and spices—their depression levels decreased compared to participants who continued their usual eating habits. Some (but not all) other studies have also found links between healthier diets and decreased risk of depression. It's not clear why this might be, but researchers speculate that decreased inflammation or changes in the body's microbiome caused by these dietary patterns may play a role in brain functioning and mental health.⁶ This is an area that requires much more research, but as you're thinking about dietary choices, it's worth thinking about how foods make you feel.

In addition to nutrition, **health is affected by genetics, the environment, life cycle, and lifestyle.** One important facet of lifestyle is personal dietary habits. **Dietary habits** include what a person eats, how much a person eats during a meal, how frequently meals are consumed, and how often a person eats out. Other aspects of lifestyle include physical activity level, recreational drug use, and sleeping patterns, all of which play a role in health and impact food choices and nutrition status. Following a healthy lifestyle improves your overall health and well-being.

WHY DO STUDENTS FIND IT SO TOUGH TO EAT HEALTHILY?



Image by Dan Gold on Unsplash

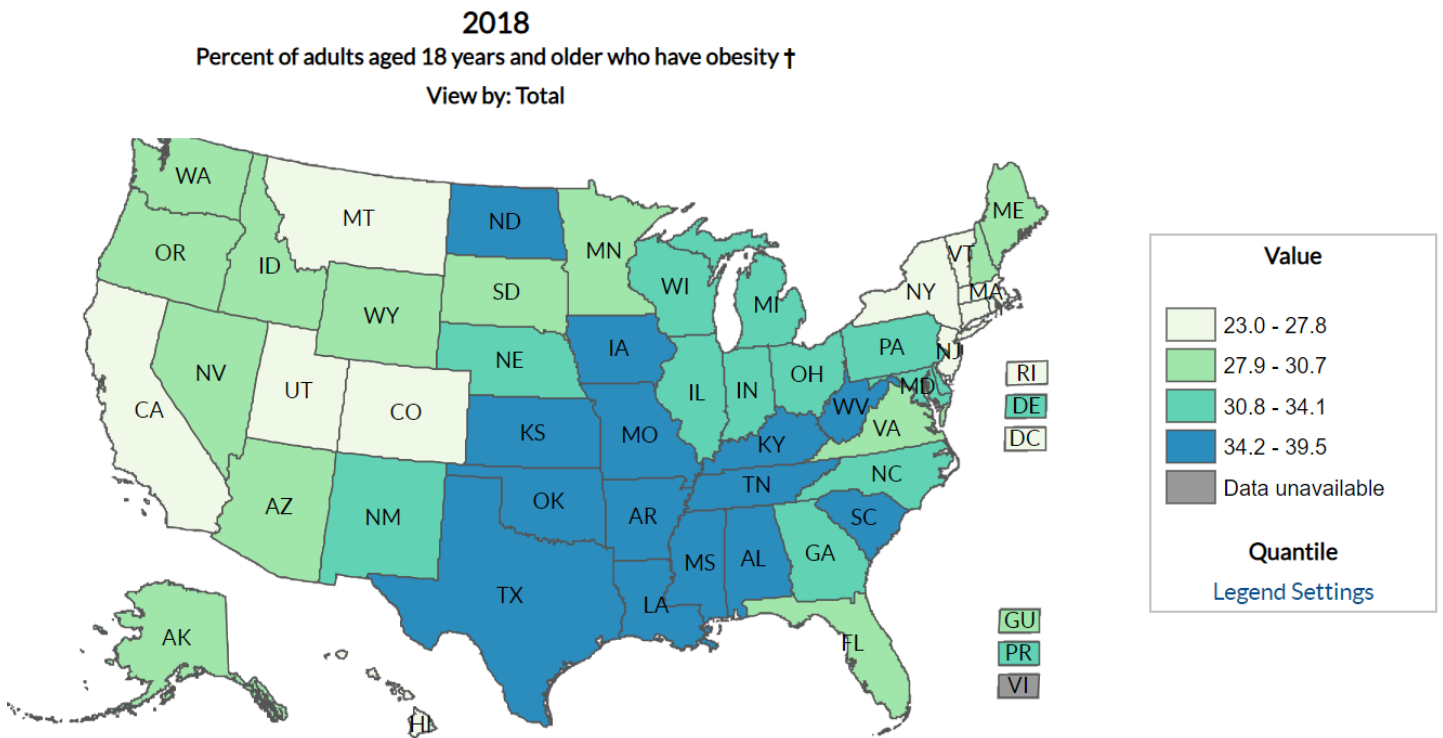
There are other factors besides environment and lifestyle that influence the foods you choose to eat. Food itself can regulate your appetite and how you feel. Multiple studies have demonstrated that some high-fiber foods and high-protein foods decrease appetite by slowing the digestive process and prolonging the feeling of being full (also called **satiety**). Making food choices that maximize nutrient intake and satiety can help manage how much you eat and how long before you eat again.

Food also has social, cultural, and religious significance, all of which impact the foods we choose to eat. The social meanings of food affect what people eat, as well as how and when. Special events in our lives—from birthdays to funerals—are commemorated with equally special foods. Cultural influences and upbringing can also shape an individual's food habits. Being aware of these factors can help people make healthier food choices, and still honor the traditions and ties they hold dear.

AN EPIDEMIC OF OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY

The prevalence of overweight and obesity in the United States is dramatically higher now than it was a few decades ago. This is true for all age groups, including children, adolescents, and adults. One of the largest

changes has been an increase in the number of Americans in the obese category. As shown in the maps below, the prevalence of obesity has doubled and, in some cases, tripled between the 1990s and 2011.



The high prevalence of overweight and obesity across the population is of concern because individuals who are overweight obese, compared to those with a normal or healthy weight, are at increased risk for many serious diseases and health conditions, including the following:

- All-causes of death (mortality)
- High blood pressure (Hypertension)
- High LDL cholesterol, low HDL cholesterol, or high levels of triglycerides (Dyslipidemia)
- Type 2 diabetes
- Coronary heart disease
- Stroke
- Gallbladder disease
- Osteoarthritis (a breakdown of cartilage and bone within a joint)
- Sleep apnea and breathing problems
- Some cancers (endometrial, breast, colon, kidney, gallbladder, and liver)
- Low quality of life
- Mental illness such as clinical depression, anxiety, and other mental disorders
- Body pain and difficulty with physical functioning

Ultimately, obesity can increase the risk of premature death. These increased health risks are not limited to adults. Weight-associated diseases and conditions that were once diagnosed primarily in adults are now

observed in children and adolescents with excess body fat. For example, cardiovascular disease risk factors, such as high blood cholesterol and hypertension, and type 2 diabetes are now increasing in children and adolescents. The adverse effects also tend to persist through the lifespan, as children and adolescents who are overweight and obese are at substantially increased risk of being overweight and obese as adults and developing weight-related chronic diseases later in life. Primary prevention of obesity, especially in childhood, is an important strategy for combating and reversing the obesity epidemic.

But it's not just about body weight. Good nutrition is still important even if you don't have a health problem. What you eat affects how you feel and how well you function mentally and physically. Food affects how well you study and how you do on tests.

Focus on eating nutrient-dense foods and beverages. The core elements that make up a health dietary pattern include:

- Vegetables of all types—dark green; red and orange; beans, peas, and lentils; starchy; and other vegetables
- Fruits, especially whole fruit
- Grains, at least half of which are whole grain
- Dairy, including fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt, and cheese, and/or lactose-free versions and fortified soy beverages and yogurt as alternatives
- Protein foods, including lean meats, poultry, and eggs; seafood; beans, peas, and lentils; and nuts, seeds, and soy products
- Oils, including vegetable oils and oils in food, such as seafood and nuts

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Good nutrition and an appropriate body weight are important for health and wellness. You'll also be more successful academically.
- Eating well does not require counting calories or obsessing over everything you eat. Focus on whole grains, lots of fruits and vegetables, and low-fat meats and dairy products. Minimize processed snacks and foods high in saturated fats, trans fats, sodium, and sugar.

9.3 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

DOES EXERCISE REALLY MATTER?

Exercise is good for both your body and mind. Indeed, physical activity is almost essential for good health and college success. The physical benefits of regular exercise include the following^[1]:

- Improved fitness for the whole body
- Greater cardiovascular fitness and reduced disease risk
- Increased physical endurance
- Stronger immune system, providing more resistance to disease
- Lower cholesterol levels, reducing the risks of cardiovascular disease
- Lowered risk of developing diabetes
- Weight maintenance or loss



Image by Bruno Nascimento from Unsplash.com

Perhaps more important to students are the mental and psychological benefits^[2]:

- Stress reduction
- Improved mood, with less anxiety and depression
- Improved ability to focus mentally
- Better sleep
- Feeling better about oneself

For all of these reasons, it's important for college students to regularly exercise or engage in physical activity. Like good nutrition and getting enough sleep, exercise is a key habit that contributes to overall wellness that promotes college success. First, use the Exercise and Activity Self-Assessment to consider your current habits and attitudes.

EXERCISE AND ACTIVITY SELF-ASSESSMENT

Check the appropriate boxes.

	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom
1. I enjoy physical activity.			
9. Exercise is a regular part of my life.			
10. I get my heart rate up for twenty to thirty minutes several times a week.			
11. I enjoy exercising or engaging in physical activities or sports with others.			

Write your answers.

1. What physical activities do you enjoy?

EXERCISE AND ACTIVITY SELF-ASSESSMENT

12. How often each week do you engage in a physical activity?

13. If you feel you're not getting much exercise, what stands in your way?

14. Overall, do you think you get enough exercise to be healthy?

15. Do you feel a lot of stress in your life?

16. Do you frequently have trouble getting to sleep?

ENJOY IT!

Most important, find a type of exercise or activity that you enjoy—or else you won't stick with it. This can be as simple and easy as a brisk walk or slow jog. Think about what you like to do and explore activities that provide exercise while you're having fun.

Do whatever you need to make your chosen activity enjoyable. Many people listen to music and some even read when using workout equipment. Try different activities to prevent boredom.

Often the biggest obstacle to getting enough exercise, many students would likely agree, is a lack of time. However, we all have the time if we manage it well. Build exercise into your weekly schedule on selected days. Eventually you'll find that regular exercise saves you time because you're sleeping better and concentrating better. Time you used to fritter away is now used for activity that provides many benefits.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Regular exercise has many benefits for your body and mind. You'll also be a better student.
- It is easier to make exercise a regular part of your life if you explore your interests and join activities with others. The time you spend exercising will be made up for with increased ability to concentrate when it's time to study.

9.4 SLEEP

Like good nutrition and exercise, adequate sleep is crucial for wellness and success. Sleep is particularly important for students because there seem to be so many time pressures—attending classes, study, and perhaps work—that most college students have difficulty getting enough. Yet sleep is critical to focus effectively at school. First, use the Sleep Self-Assessment to consider your current habits and attitudes.

SLEEP SELF-ASSESSMENT

Check the appropriate boxes.

	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom
1. I usually get enough sleep.			
17. I feel drowsy or unfocused during the day.			
18. I take a nap when I need more sleep.			
19. I have fallen asleep in class or had trouble staying awake.			
20. I have fallen asleep while studying.			
21. I have pulled an "all-nighter" when studying for a test or writing a class paper.			

Write your answers.

22. How many hours of sleep do you usually get on weeknights?

23. How many hours of sleep do you usually get on weekends?

24. How would you rank the importance of sleep in relation to studying, working, spending time with friends, and other activities?

SLEEP SELF-ASSESSMENT

25. How many hours of sleep do you think you ideally need?

26. Generally, do you believe you are getting as much sleep as you think you need?

THE IMPORTANCE OF A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

You may not realize the benefits of sleep, or the problems associated with being sleep deprived, because most likely you've had the same sleep habits for a long time. Or maybe you know you're getting less sleep now, but with all the changes in your life, how can you tell if some of your stress or problems studying are related to not enough sleep?

A healthy amount of sleep has the following benefits^[1]:

- Improves your mood during the day
- Improves your memory and learning abilities
- Gives you more energy
- Strengthens your immune system

In contrast, not getting enough sleep over time can lead to a wide range of health issues and student problems. Sleep deprivation can have the following consequences:

- Affects mental health and contributes to stress and feelings of anxiety, depression, and general unhappiness
- Causes sleepiness, difficulty paying attention in class, and ineffective studying
- Weakens the immune system, making it more likely to catch colds and other infections
- Increases the risk of accidents (such as while driving)
- Contributes to weight gain

HOW MUCH SLEEP IS ENOUGH?

Most adults need around eight hours of sleep per night^[2]. Some say they need much less than that, but often their behavior during the day shows they are actually sleep deprived. Some genuinely need only about six hours a night. New research indicates there may be a "sleep gene" that determines how much sleep a person needs^[3]. So how much sleep do *you* actually need?



Image by Lauren Kay on Unsplash

There is no simple answer, in part because the quality of sleep is just as important as the number of hours a person sleeps. Sleeping fitfully for nine hours and waking during the night is usually worse than seven or eight hours of good sleep, so you can't simply count the hours.

- Do you usually feel rested and alert all day long?
- Do you rise from bed easily in the morning without struggling?
- Do you have no trouble paying attention during the day?
- Are you able to get through work/the day without feeling exhausted?

If you answered yes to all of these, you likely are in that 10 percent to 15 percent of college students who consistently get enough sleep.

HOW TO GET MORE AND BETTER SLEEP

You have to allow yourself enough time for a good night's sleep. Using the time management strategies discussed in Chapter 3 "Time Management", schedule at least eight hours for sleeping every night. If you still don't feel alert and energetic during the day, try increasing this to nine hours. Keep a sleep journal, and within a couple weeks you'll know how much sleep you need and will be on the road to making new habits to ensure you get it.

MYTHS ABOUT SLEEP

- Exercise before bedtime is good for sleeping. **False:** Exercise wakes up your body, and it may be some time before you unwind and relax. Exercise earlier in the day, however, is beneficial for sleep.
- It helps to fall asleep after watching television or being on my computer. **False:** Rather than helping you unwind, these activities can engage your mind and make it more difficult to get to sleep.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS: SLEEP

- Avoid nicotine, which can keep you awake—yet another reason to stop smoking.
- Avoid caffeine for six to eight hours before bed. Caffeine remains in the body for three to five hours on the average, much longer for some people. Remember that many soft drinks contain caffeine.
- Avoid screens at least 30 minutes before bed.
- Don't eat in the two to three hours before bed.
- Exercise earlier in the day (at least several hours before bedtime).
- Try to get to bed and wake about the same time every day—your body likes a routine.

- Make sure the environment is conducive to sleep: dark, quiet, comfortable, and cool.
- Establish a pre-sleep winding-down routine, such as listening to soothing music or reading (not a textbook).

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Getting enough sleep is very important for wellness and success in college. It's easy to determine if you're getting enough sleep.
- Don't fall for popular myths about sleep. It's worthwhile to get enough sleep, which gives you an improved ability to focus and apply yourself more efficiently in your studies and work.

9.5 EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

Your emotional health is just as important as your physical health—and maybe more so. If you're unhappy much of the time, you will not do as well as in college—or life—as you can if you're happy. You will feel more stress, and your health will suffer.

Still, most of us are neither happy nor unhappy all the time. Life is constantly changing, and our emotions change with it. But sometimes we experience more negative emotions than normally, and our emotional health may suffer.

PROBLEMATIC EMOTIONS

When is an emotion problematic? Is it bad to feel anxious about a big test coming up or to feel sad after breaking up a romantic relationship?

It is normal to experience negative emotions. College students face so many demands and stressful situations that many naturally report often feeling anxious, depressed, or lonely. These emotions become problematic only when they persist and begin to affect your life in negative ways. That's when it's time to work on your emotional health—just as you'd work on your physical health when illness strikes.

ANXIETY

Anxiety is one of the most common emotions college students experience, often as a result of the demands of college, work, and family and friends. It's difficult to juggle everything, and you may end up feeling not in control, stressed, and anxious.

Anxiety typically results from stress. Some anxiety is often a good thing if it leads to studying for a test, focusing on a problem that needs to be resolved, better management your time and money, and so on. But if anxiety disrupts your focus and makes you freeze up rather than take action, then it may become problematic. Using stress-reduction techniques often helps reduce anxiety to a manageable level.

Anxiety is easier to deal with when you know its cause. Then you can take steps to gain control over the part of your life causing the anxiety. But anxiety can become excessive and lead to a dread of everyday situations. There are five types of more serious anxiety^{[1][2]}:

1. **Generalized anxiety disorder** is characterized by chronic anxiety, exaggerated worry and tension, even when there is little or nothing to provoke it. The person may have physical symptoms, especially fatigue, headaches, muscle tension, muscle aches, difficulty swallowing, trembling, twitching, irritability, sweating, and hot flashes.
2. **Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)** is characterized by recurrent, unwanted thoughts (obsessions), repetitive behaviors (compulsions), or both. Repetitive behaviors such as hand washing, counting, checking, or cleaning are often performed with the hope of preventing obsessive thoughts or making them go away.
3. **Panic disorder** is characterized by unexpected and repeated episodes of intense fear accompanied by physical symptoms that may include chest pain, heart palpitations, shortness of breath, dizziness, or abdominal distress.
4. **Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)** can develop after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened. Traumatic events that may trigger PTSD include violent personal assaults, natural or human-caused disasters, accidents, or military combat.
5. **Social phobia (or social anxiety disorder)** is a persistent, intense, and chronic fear of being watched and judged by others and being embarrassed or humiliated by one's own actions. Their fear may be so severe that it interferes with work or school, and other ordinary activities. Physical symptoms often accompany the intense anxiety of social phobia and include blushing, profuse sweating, trembling, nausea, and difficulty talking.

These five types of anxiety go beyond the normal anxiety everyone feels at times. If you feel your anxiety is like any of these, it is important to address it through means available to you such as by visiting a health-care provider. Effective treatments are available to help you regain control.

DEPRESSION

Depression, like anxiety and loneliness, is commonly experienced by college students. It may be a mild sadness resulting from specific circumstances or intense feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. Many people feel depressed from time to time because of common situations:

- Feeling overwhelmed by pressures to study, work, and meet other obligations
- Not having enough time (or money) to do the things you want to do
- Experiencing problems in a relationship, friendship, or work situation
- Feeling overweight, unhealthy, or not in control of oneself
- Feeling that your new life as a student lacks some of the positive dimensions of your former life
- Not having enough excitement in your life

Depression, like stress, can lead to unhealthy consequences such as poor sleep, overeating or loss of appetite, substance abuse, relationship problems, or withdrawal from activities that formerly brought joy. For most people, depression is a temporary state. But severe depression can have crippling effects. Not everyone experiences the same symptoms, but the following are most common¹⁴:

- Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" feelings
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness
- Irritability or restlessness
- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies once pleasurable, including sex

- Fatigue and decreased energy
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details, and making decisions
- Insomnia, early morning wakefulness, or excessive sleeping
- Overeating or appetite loss
- Thoughts of suicide or suicide attempts
- Persistent aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems

If you have feelings like this that last for weeks at a time and affect your daily life, your depression is more severe than “normal,” temporary depression. It is important to address these feelings through means available to you, such as by visiting a health-care provider and get treatment as you would for any other illness.

ACHIEVING EMOTIONAL BALANCE

Emotional balance is an essential element of wellness—and for succeeding in college. Emotional balance doesn’t mean that you never experience a negative emotion, because these emotions are usually natural and normal. Emotional balance means we balance the negative with the positive, that we can be generally happy even if we’re saddened by some things.

Emotional balance starts with being aware of our emotions and understanding them. If you’re feeling angry, stop and think about the real cause of your anger. Are you really angry because your friend said something about one of your bad habits, or are you angry because you haven’t been able to break that habit? Are you feeling anxiety because you’re worried you might not be cut out for college, or are you just anxious about that test tomorrow?

See the “Tips for Success” for other ways you can achieve and maintain a healthy emotional balance.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS: EMOTIONAL HEALTH

- Accept that most emotions can’t be directly controlled. But the things you do—such as getting exercise, using a relaxation technique, trying the various stress-reduction methods discussed in this chapter—do improve your emotional state.
- Connect with others. Your emotional state is less likely to change when you keep to yourself and “stew over” the feeling.
- Develop your empathy for others. Empathy involves recognizing the emotions that others are feeling. You’ll find yourself in better emotional balance as a result, and your relationships will improve.
- Be honest in your relationships. If you try to hide your feelings, the other person will know something is wrong and may react the wrong way.
- Understand that negative emotions are temporary. You may be feeling bad now, but it will pass in time. But if a negative feeling does last a long time, recognize that you likely need help resolving it—and that help is available.
- If you’ve just become a college student, know that the first term is usually the hardest. Hang in there. Once you’ve developed effective study habits and time management skills, each term will be easier and happier than the one before.

9.6 STRESS MANAGEMENT

STRESS

We all live with occasional stress. Since college students often feel even more stress than most people, it's important to understand it and learn ways to deal with it so that it doesn't disrupt your life.

Stress is a natural response of the body and mind to a demand or challenge. The thing that causes stress, called a stressor¹¹, captures our attention and causes a physical and emotional reaction. Stressors include physical threats, such as a car we suddenly see coming at us too fast, and the stress reaction likely includes jumping out of the way—with our heart beating fast and other physical changes. Most of our stressors are not physical threats but situations or events like an upcoming test or an emotional break-up. Stressors also include long-lasting emotional and mental concerns such as worries about money or finding a job. Take the Stress Self-Assessment:

STRESS SELF-ASSESSMENT

Check the appropriate boxes.

	Daily	Sometimes	Never
I feel mild stress that does not disrupt my everyday life.			
I am sometimes so stressed out that I have trouble with my routine activities.			
I find myself eating or drinking just because I'm feeling stressed.			
I have lain awake at night unable to sleep because I was feeling stressed.			
Stress has affected my relationships with other people.			

Write your answers.

1. What is the number one cause of stress in your life?

2. What else causes you stress?

3. What specific things are keeping you from feeling what you'd ideally like to feel like most of the time?

4. What effect does stress have on your studies and academic performance?

5. Regardless of the sources of your own stress, what do you think you can do to better cope with the stress you can't avoid?

WHAT CAUSES STRESS?

Not all stressors are bad things. Exciting, positive things also cause a type of stress, called eustress^[2]. Falling in love, getting an unexpected sum of money, acing an exam you'd worried about—all of these are positive things that affect the body and mind in ways similar to negative stress: you can't help thinking about it, you may lose your appetite and lie awake at night, and your routine life may be momentarily disrupted.

But the kind of stress that causes most trouble results from negative stressors. Life events that usually cause significant stress include the following:

- Serious illness or injury
- Serious illness, injury, or death of a family member or loved one

- Losing a job or sudden financial catastrophe
- Unwanted pregnancy
- Divorce or ending a long-term relationship (including parents' divorce)
- Being arrested or convicted of a crime
- Being put on academic probation or suspended

Life events like these usually cause a lot of stress that may begin suddenly and disrupt one's life in many ways. Fortunately, these stressors do not occur every day and eventually end—though they can be very severe and disruptive when experienced. Some major life stresses, such as having a parent or family member with a serious illness, can last a long time and may require professional help to cope with them.

Everyday kinds of stressors are far more common but can add up and produce as much stress as a major life event:

- Anxiety about not having enough time for classes, job, and studies
- Worries about grades, an upcoming test, or an assignment
- Money concerns
- Conflict with a roommate, someone at work, or family member
- Anxiety or doubts about one's future or difficulty choosing a major or career
- Frequent colds, allergy attacks, other continuing health issues
- Concerns about one's appearance, weight, eating habits, and so on.
- Relationship tensions or loneliness
- Time-consuming hassles such as a broken-down car or the need to find a new apartment

Take a moment and reflect on the list above. How many of these stressors have you experienced in the last month? The last year? Circle all the ones that you have experienced. Now go back to your Stress Self-Assessment and look at what you wrote there for causes of your stress. Write any additional things that cause you stress on the blank lines above.

How many stressors have you circled and written in? There is no magic number of stressors that an "average" or "normal" college student experiences—because everyone is unique. In addition, stressors come and go: the stress caused by a midterm exam tomorrow morning may be gone by noon, replaced by feeling good about how you did. Still, most college students are likely to circle about half the items on this list.

But it's not the number of stressors that counts. You might have circled only one item on that list—but it could produce so much stress for you that you're just as stressed out as someone else who circled all of them. The point of this exercise is to start by understanding what causes your own stress as a base for learning what to do about it.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH STRESS?

Physically, stress prepares us for action: the classic "fight-or-flight" reaction when confronted with a danger. Our heart is pumping fast, and we're breathing faster to supply the muscles with energy to fight or flee. Many physical effects in the body prepare us for whatever actions we may need to take to survive a threat.

But what about nonphysical stressors, like worrying about grades? Are there any positive effects there? Imagine what life would feel like if you never had worries, never felt any stress at all. If you never worried about grades or doing well on a test, how much studying would you do for it? If you never thought at all about money, would you make any effort to save it or make it? Obviously, stress can be a good thing when it

motivates us to do something, whether it's study, work, resolving a conflict with another, and so on. So, it's not stress itself that's negative—it's *unresolved or persistent stress* that starts to have unhealthy effects. Chronic (long-term) stress is associated with many physical changes and illnesses, including the following^[3]:

- Weakened immune system, making you more likely to catch a cold and to suffer from any illness longer
- More frequent digestive system problems, including constipation or diarrhea, ulcers, and indigestion
- Elevated blood pressure
- Increased risk of diabetes
- Muscle and back pain
- More frequent headaches, fatigue, and insomnia
- Greater risk of heart attack and other cardiovascular problems over the long term

Chronic or acute (intense short-term) stress also affects our minds and emotions in many ways^[4]:

- Difficulty thinking clearly or concentrating
- More frequent negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, frustration, powerlessness, resentment, or nervousness—and a general negative outlook on life
- Greater difficulty dealing with others because of irritability, anger, or avoidance

No wonder we view stress as such a negative thing! As much as we'd like to eliminate all stressors, however, it just can't happen. Too many things in the real world cause stress and always will.

UNHEALTHY RESPONSES TO STRESS

Since many stressors are unavoidable, the question is what to do about the resulting stress. A person can try to ignore or deny stress for a while, but then it keeps building and starts causing all those problems. So we have to do something.

Consider first what you have typically done in the past when you felt most stressed; use the Past Stress-Reduction Habits Self-Assessment.

PAST STRESS-REDUCTION HABITS SELF-ASSESSMENT

On a scale of 0 to 5, rate each of the following behaviors for how often you have experienced it because of high stress levels.

Stress Response	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Usually	Always
1. Drinking alcohol	0	1	2	3	4	5
2. Drinking lots of coffee	0	1	2	3	4	5
3. Sleeping a lot	0	1	2	3	4	5
4. Eating too much	0	1	2	3	4	5
5. Eating too little	0	1	2	3	4	5
6. Smoking or drugs	0	1	2	3	4	5
7. Having arguments	0	1	2	3	4	5
8. Sitting around depressed	0	1	2	3	4	5
9. Watching television or surfing the Web	0	1	2	3	4	5
10. Complaining to family/friends	0	1	2	3	4	5
11. Exercising, jogging, biking	0	1	2	3	4	5
12. Practicing yoga or tai chi	0	1	2	3	4	5
13. Meditating	0	1	2	3	4	5
14. Using relaxation techniques	0	1	2	3	4	5
15. Talking with an instructor or counselor	0	1	2	3	4	5

Total your scores for questions 1–10: _____

Total your scores for questions 11–15: _____

Subtract the second number from the first: _____

Interpretation: If the subtraction of the score for questions 11 to 15 from the first score is a positive number, then your past coping methods for dealing with stress have not been as healthy and productive as they could be. Items 1 to 10 are generally not effective ways of dealing with stress, while items 11 to 15 usually are. If your final score is over 20, you're probably like most beginning college students—feeling a lot of stress and not yet sure how best to deal with it.

What's wrong with those stress-reduction behaviors listed first? Why not watch television or get a lot of sleep when you're feeling stressed, if that makes you feel better? While it may feel better temporarily to escape feelings of stress in those ways, ultimately, they may cause more stress themselves. If you're worried about grades and being too busy to study as much as you need to, then letting an hour or two slip by watching television will make you even more worried later because then you have even less time. Eating too much may

make you sluggish and less able to focus, and if you're trying to lose weight, you'll now feel just that much more stressed by what you've done. Alcohol, caffeine, smoking, and drugs all generally increase one's stress over time. Complaining to friends? Over time, your friends will tire of hearing it or tire of arguing with you because a complaining person isn't much fun to be around. So eventually you may find yourself even more alone and stressed.

Yet there is a bright side: there are lots of very positive ways to cope with stress that will also improve your health, make it easier to concentrate on your studies, and make you a happier person overall.

COPING WITH STRESS

Look back at your list of stressors that you circled earlier. For each, consider whether it is external (like bad job hours or not having enough money) or internal, originating in your attitudes and thoughts. Mark each item with an E (external) or an I (internal).

You may be able to eliminate many external stressors. Attempt to adjust your work hours; if you have money problems, work on a budget you can live with or examine ways to reduce your expenses. What about other external stressors? Taking so many classes that you don't have the time to study for all of them? Keep working on your time management skills. Schedule your days carefully and stick to the schedule. Take fewer classes next term if necessary.

Internal stressors, however, are often not easily resolved. We can't make all stressors go away, but we can learn how to cope so that we don't feel so stressed out most of the time. We can take control of our lives. We can find healthy coping strategies.

All the topics in this chapter involve stress one way or another. Many of the healthy habits that contribute to our wellness and happiness also reduce stress and minimize its effects.

GET SOME EXERCISE

Exercise, especially aerobic exercise, is a great way to help reduce stress. Exercise increases the production of certain hormones, which leads to a better mood and helps counter depression and anxiety. Exercise helps you feel more energetic and focused so that you are more productive in your work and studies and thus less likely to feel stressed. Regular exercise also helps you sleep better, which further reduces stress.

GET MORE SLEEP

When sleep deprived, you feel more stress and are less able to concentrate on your work or studies. Many people drink more coffee or other caffeinated beverages when feeling sleepy, and caffeine contributes further to stress related emotions such as anxiety and nervousness.

MANAGE YOUR MONEY

Worrying about money is one of the leading causes of stress.

ADJUST YOUR ATTITUDE

You know the saying about the optimist who sees the glass as half full and the pessimist who sees the same glass as half empty. Guess which one feels more stress?

Much of the stress you feel may be rooted in your attitudes toward school, your work—your whole life. If you don't feel good about these things, how do you change? To begin with, you really need to think about yourself. What makes you happy? Are you expecting your college career to be perfect and always exciting,

with never a dull class or reading assignment? Or can you be happy that you are in fact succeeding in college and foresee a great life and career ahead?

No one answer works for everyone—you have to look at your life, be honest with yourself about what affects your daily attitude, and then look for ways to make changes. The good news is that although old negative habits can be hard to break, once you've turned positive changes into new habits, they will last into a brighter future.

LEARN A RELAXATION TECHNIQUE

Different relaxation techniques can be used to help minimize stress. Following are a few tried-and- tested ways to relax when stress seems overwhelming. Practicing one of them can have dramatic effects.

- **Deep breathing.** Sit in a comfortable position with your back straight. Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose, filling your lungs completely. Exhale slowly and smoothly through your mouth. Concentrate on your breathing and feel your chest expanding and relaxing. After five to ten minutes, you will feel more relaxed and focused.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation.** With this technique, you slowly tense and then relax the body's major muscle groups. The sensations and mental concentration produce a calming state.
- **Meditation.** Taking many forms, meditation may involve focusing on your breathing, a specific visual image, or a certain thought, while clearing the mind of negative energy.
- **Yoga or tai chi.** Yoga, tai chi, and other exercises that focus on body position and slow, gradual movements are popular techniques for relaxation and stress reduction.
- **Music and relaxation.** Many different relaxation techniques have been developed for audio training. Simply play the recording and relax as you are guided through the techniques.



Image by Emily Sea on Unsplash

TIPS FOR SUCCESS: STRESS

- Pay attention to, rather than ignore, things that cause you stress and change what you can.
- Accept what you can't change and resolve to make new habits that will help you cope.
- Get regular exercise and enough sleep.
- Evaluate your priorities, work on managing your time, and schedule restful activities in your daily life. Students who feel in control of their lives report feeling much less stress than those who feel that circumstances control them.
- Slow down and focus on one thing at a time. Know when to say no to distractions.
- Break old habits involving caffeine, alcohol, and other substances.
- Remember your long-range goals and don't obsess over short-term difficulties. Make time to enjoy being with friends.
- Explore new activities and hobbies that you enjoy.
- Find a relaxation technique that works for you and practice regularly.
- Get help if you're having a hard time coping with emotional stress.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Everyone feels stress, and many of the things that cause stress won't go away regardless of what we do. But we can examine our lives, figure out what causes most of our stress, and learn to do something about it.
- Stress leads to a lot of different unhealthy responses that actually increase our stress over the long term. But once we understand how stress affects us, we can begin to take steps to cope in healthier ways.

CHECKPOINT EXERCISES

Why should it not be your goal to try to eliminate stress from your life completely?

List three or more unhealthful effects of stress.

Name at least two common external stressors you may be able to eliminate from your life.

Name at least two common internal stressors you may feel that you need to learn to cope with because you can't eliminate them.

CHECKPOINT EXERCISES

List at least three ways you can minimize the stress you feel.

9.7 SUBSTANCE USE

SUBSTANCE USE AND ABUSE

Substance is the word health professionals use for most things you might take into your body besides food. When people talk about substances, they often mean drugs—but alcohol and nicotine are also drugs and are considered substances. Substances—any kind of drug—have effects on the body and mind. People use these substances for their effects. But many substances have negative effects, including being physically or psychologically addictive. What is important with any substance is to be aware of its effects on your health and on your life as a student, and to make smart choices. Use of any substance to the extent that it has negative effects is generally considered abuse.

SMOKING AND TOBACCO: WHY START, AND WHY IS IT SO HARD TO STOP?

Everyone knows smoking is harmful to one's health, and that smoking causes cancer and lung and heart disease. Most adult smokers continue smoking not because they really think it won't harm them but because it's very difficult to stop.

Many young smokers think there is plenty of time to quit later. Social smokers, who may have a cigarette only occasionally with a friend, usually think they won't develop a habit. Nicotine is a very addictive drug. Admitting this to yourself is the first step toward becoming smoke free.

First, the good news. Stopping smoking brings immediate health benefits, and the benefits get better over time. Just twenty minutes after quitting, your heart rate drops. After two weeks to three months, your heart attack risk begins to drop and your lung function begins to improve. After one year, your added risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a smoker's. And every year your health continues to improve^[1].

TIPS FOR STOPPING SMOKING

Stopping isn't easy. Many ex-smokers say it was the hardest thing they ever did. However, you know it's worth the effort. And it's easier if you think it through and make a good plan. There's lots of help available. Before you quit, the National Cancer Institute suggests you START with these five important steps^[2]:

6. **S** = Set a quit date.
7. **T** = Tell family, friends, and others around you that you plan to quit.
8. **A** = Anticipate and plan for the challenges you'll face while quitting.
9. **R** = Remove cigarettes and other tobacco products from your area.
10. **T** = Talk to your doctor about getting help to quit.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT ALCOHOL?

Of all the issues that can affect a student's health and success in college, drinking causes more problems than anything else. Everyone knows what happens when you drink too much. Your judgment is impaired and you may behave in risky ways. Your health and studies are likely to be affected.

Like everything else that affects your health and happiness—eating, exercise, use of other substances—drinking is a matter of personal choice. Like most decisions we all face, there are trade-offs. The most that anyone can reasonably ask of you is to be smart in your decisions. That means understanding the effects of alcohol and deciding to take control.

HOW MUCH ALCOHOL IS TOO MUCH?

There's no magic number for how many drinks a person can have and how often. If you're of legal drinking age, you may not experience any problems if you have one or two drinks from time to time. According to Health Canada, 'heavy drinking' occurs when a male consumes 5 or more drinks (4 for females) per occasion, at least once a month during the past year^[5].

As with most things that can affect your health and your well-being as a student, what's important is being honest with yourself. You're likely drinking too much or too often if:

- you have missed classes/submitting assignments or work because you were hung over or overslept after drinking;
- your friends or family members have hinted that you drink too much, or you've hidden your drinking from others;
- your drinking is causing trouble in a relationship;
- you can't remember what you did or said while drinking;
- you need to drink to have a good time;
- you've driven a car when you know you shouldn't have after drinking;
- you binge drink (consume five or more drinks at a time).

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Excessive drinking or substance abuse is a common—but unhealthy—response to the stresses of college life. While the decisions are yours, it's important to understand the effects of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs and how they impact your life.
- Quitting smoking is hard, but it's clearly worth it. If you're a smoker, make this the year you become proud of yourself for quitting.
- If you like to drink, be honest with yourself. How much does drinking enrich your life, and how much do the effects of drinking interfere with your life? Make smart decisions so that you live your life to its fullest without regrets about losing control.
- Avoiding drugs can be a complicated issue, certainly not as simple as simply deciding to say no. But you've already made the decision to attend college, and that's a smart decision. Make smart choices in other areas of your life as well.

9.8 RELATIONSHIPS



Image by K B on Unsplash

Romantic relationships are often as much a part of a rich emotional life for college students as for anyone else. But the added challenges of college, often stress these relationships. You may have to give extra attention to a relationship to keep it healthy and avoid conflicts that lead to unhappiness and other problems.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Ideally, a healthy relationship should have these characteristics:

- Both partners should respect each other as individuals with unique interests and personality traits. Don't expect your partner to be just like you; embrace rather than reject differences. Both partners should be supportive of each other.
- Both partners should trust each other and be honest with each other. You must feel that you can open up emotionally to the other without fear of rejection. Starting out with deceptions is certain to cause eventual problems.
- Both partners should be understanding and have empathy for each other. Good communication is essential. Many relationship problems are rooted in misunderstandings, such as when one partner doesn't make the effort to understand what the other wants or needs.

These positive characteristics of a good relationship don't happen overnight. The relationship may begin with romantic attraction and only slowly develop into a trusting, mutually supportive friendship as well. The following signs may indicate that a dating relationship is not developing well:

- Your partner is pressuring you for sex when you're not ready
- Your partner seems angry or abusive when you disagree about something
- Your partner seems possessive when others want to spend time with you; Your partner treats you unequally in any way
- Your partner is emotionally or physically abusive (whether it happens once or many times)

If you recognize that any of these things are happening with someone you're dating, it may be time to reconsider, even if you still feel attraction towards them. Any relationship that begins this way is not likely to end well.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Emotional health is just as important as physical health. We can take steps to reduce the negative emotions that plague us from time to time and gain control over our emotional health.
- Emotional balance results from a variety of things in our lives. We need to connect with others, to be honest and empathetic in our relationships, and to resolve conflicts that can cause bad feelings and threaten our daily happiness. We can learn skills in these areas just as in other areas of our lives.

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

CHAPTER TAKEAWAYS

- Good health helps you be more successful in college.
- For good nutrition, eat a varied diet with lots of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains and minimize fats, sugar, and salt.
- Regular exercise is not only important for good health but is a great way to reduce stress in your life.
- Sleep is one of the first areas where college students cut back when they find themselves too busy with classes, work, and other activities. Taking the time to get enough sleep, however, makes you so much more efficient when studying that it can actually save you time.
- Substance use and abuse not only takes its toll on the body but also contributes to problems in college, at work, and in the future. You may need to make a smart decision between short-term pleasures and long-term success.
- Since many stressors are unavoidable in life, we all need to find good ways to minimize their effects. The best stress-reducers over time become good habits that will increase our wellness and help us succeed in college and careers.
- If you are having an emotional or relationship problem that persists and affects your life, don't hesitate to seek help.

CHAPTER REVIEW

1. Who is responsible for my well-being now? _____

2. Who is responsible for my well-being two years from now? _____

3. Complete these sentences:

What I think most needs change in my diet is

The main reason I don't get enough exercise is

When I feel stressed, I often (How healthy is that? Should you choose healthier activities instead?)

The first step in resolving a conflict you are having with someone else is to

4. How do you know if you're drinking too much or too often?

5. As a college student, why should you care about how much stress you feel and what you do about it?

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CHAPTER 10: FINANCE

CHAPTER 10 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Develop strategies that can help establish financial goals and lifelong skills.
2. Evaluate spending as well as distinguish between essential and optional expenses.
3. Identify strategies for creating and maintaining good budget practices.
4. Determine the benefits and risks associated with credit and identify ways to minimize debt.
5. Discuss available financial aid options for paying college expenses.



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An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.

—Benjamin Franklin, *The Way to Wealth: Ben Franklin on Money and Success*

Depending on your location and ability to work while incarcerated, not each of the topics covered within this chapter may have immediate impact on your life. Some of the situations outlined may not yet be possible. However, we wanted to provide an overarching review of financial goals and literacy as it is an important aspect of being a college student. Empowering yourself with the tool of financial literacy is imperative to help you successfully navigate your higher education and life goals.

10.1 FINANCIAL GOALS

MONEY ISSUES

Many students encounter money worries and obstacles while attending higher education. It does not matter whether you are a “traditional” college student enrolled just after high school or a “nontraditional” student returning to school after several years while located within a facility.

Money problems are stressful and can keep you from concentrating on your studies. Spending too much may lead you to needing to work more hours than you might otherwise, giving you less time to study. Or you might take fewer classes and thus spend more years in college than needed. Worse yet, money problems cause many students to drop out of college entirely.

But it does not have to be this hard. Like other skills, financial skills can be learned, and they have lifelong value.

WHAT ARE YOUR FINANCIAL GOALS?

Whatever it is you plan to do in your future, whether work or other activities, your financial goals in the present should be realistic to enable you to fulfill your plan. Consider these scenarios:

Keri entered college planning to eventually major in business. Her family was not able to give her much financial support, but she chose to attend college because she thought it would help her get into a good graduate business school. She had to take large loans to pay her tuition, but she was not concerned about a budget because she assumed, she would make a lot later on and be able to easily pay off the loans. Yet when she graduated and had to begin making payments on her private bank loans, she discovered she could not afford to go straight to graduate business school after all. She put her dream on hold for a few years and took a job she did not much like.

John had worked a few years after high school but finally decided that he needed a college degree to get the kind of job he wanted. He was happy with his life otherwise and kept his nice apartment and car and enrolled in a couple night classes while continuing to work full time during the day. He was surprised how much he had to study, however, and after a couple months he felt he was struggling. He just did not have enough time to do it all—so he dropped first one class and then, a couple weeks later, the other. He told himself that he would try it again in a year or two, but part of him wondered how anyone could ever get through college while working.

What Keri and John have in common is a conflict between their financial goals and realities. Both were motivated to succeed in college, and both had a vision for their future. But both were unsuccessful in finding ways to make their dreams come true—because of money issues.

Could they have done things differently? Maybe Keri could have avoided such heavy student loans by working summers and part time during the school year. Maybe John could have reduced his living expenses and cut back his work hours to ensure he could balance school and work better. Maybe both were spending thousands of dollars a year on things they could have done without if only they had thought through their goals and learned to live within a budget.

Taking control of your personal finances begins with thinking about your goals and deciding what matters to you. Here are some things to think about:

- Is it important for you to graduate from college without debt? Is it acceptable to you, or necessary, to take some student loans?
- How important is it to take a full load of classes so that your college education does not take longer than necessary?

There are no easy answers to such questions. Most people would like enough money to have and do what they want, low enough expenses that they don't have to work too much to stay on budget, and enough financial freedom to choose activities without being swayed by financial concerns. Few college students live in that world, however. Since you will have to make choices, it is important first to think about what really matters to you—and what you are willing to sacrifice for a while to reach your goals.

The following strategies can help you set financial goals for yourself:

Create SMART goals	SMART stands for specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely. These kinds of goals are more manageable and can help you reach your final target more easily. For example, instead of setting a broad, vague goal of “paying for college,” you might set a goal of paying off your two college loans five years after you graduate. This more specific, measurable goal can help you keep track of your progress and whether you need to make changes to reach it.
Monitor your spending	Try keeping track of what you spend money on during a one-month period. This can help you see where your money goes and where you may be able to save.
Create a budget	Based on what you discovered after monitoring your spending, create a monthly budget you can stick to.
Working	You may already work the equivalent of a full-time job within your facility, or have other commitments that equate to a full-time job. If you will be pursuing your education further after release, it is important to think about whether you will need to work part-time or full-time in addition to your courseload and how this will affect your time and budget.
Choose loans wisely	Many college students need some sort of financial support through loans. While loans are a good way to pay for tuition up front if you do not have the money, remember that they accrue interest until you pay them off. That means that you will end up paying back more in some cases, thousands of dollars more than you initially borrowed. Make sure you investigate and apply for as many scholarships and grants as you can since they will not need to be repaid, and shop around for the loans with the lowest interest rates and best repayment plans. Check with Coastline College’s Financial Aid department for details on how you can receive funding for your current associate’s degree program, such as through the California College Promise Grant, and what options you will have to help you fund other educational goals you may have such as earning a Bachelor’s, Master’s, or Doctorate degree.

10.2 MONITOR YOUR SPENDING

SPENDING ON ESSENTIALS, SPENDING ON OPTIONALS

More people get into financial trouble because they are spending too much, rather than that they are making too little. While spending may seem a simple matter— “I need to buy this, I’d like to buy that”— it is actually very complex. The United States is a consumer society, and we are deluged by advertisements promising that we will be happier, more successful, better liked by more people, sexier, and everything else if only we buy this. Companies have spent billions of dollars researching how to manipulate our buying behavior. No wonder it is so tough to resist these pressures!



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Honestly, practicing money management isn't that hard to figure out. In many ways it's similar to playing a video game. The first time you play a game, you may feel awkward or have the lowest score. Playing for a while can make you OK at the game. But if you learn the rules of the game, figure out how to best use each tool in the game, read strategy guides from experts, and practice, you can get really good at it.

Money management is the same. It's not enough to "figure it out as you go." If you want to get good at managing your money, you must treat money like you treat your favorite game. You have to come at it with a well-researched plan. Research has shown that people with stronger finances are healthier and happier, have better marriages, and even have better cognitive functioning.

Before we get into some financial steps to help you manage a budget, let's take a moment to think about common expenses and ways you may be spending your money.

EXPENSES

There are certain financial obligations most college students have to pay for. Common examples include:

- **Tuition:** This includes the price of attending a university or college. Students pay relatively more or less for this based on where you are going to school and how many credits you are taking.
- **Room and board:** These are essentially "food and shelter" costs. Many college students live in a dorm and eat their meals on campus. Students who live off campus will have to pay for comparable things, like renting an apartment and buying their own groceries. While this may not directly impact you at the moment as a Hope Scholar student, this is something to consider if you will be continuing your education after release. **Books and supplies:** These include books for classes and supplies like notebooks, writing utensils, and calculators. Textbooks are often very expensive, so you may try to find used textbooks for sale or rent the texts that are required. You can also see if the classes you need are offered with Zero-Cost textbooks. When a course is offered with Zero-Cost textbooks, all materials needed for the class will be provided to you by the instructor at no cost to you. Just like this COUN C105 course!
- **Transportation:** Students typically have some transportation costs, whether it be car insurance, maintenance and gas, or public-transportation expenses. Again, this may not impact you currently, but it will be important for you to keep in mind this potential cost if you will be attending a college or university after release. **Personal needs:** Regardless of where you live, you will need money for things like laundry, cell phone, and computer. This expense can vary a lot depending on personal preferences.

NEEDS VS. WANTS

Before you can make an effective budget, you need to look at what you are, or will be, spending money on and consider what is essential and what is optional. Essential costs are the big things:

- Room and board or rent/mortgage, utilities, and groceries
- College tuition, fees, textbooks, supplies
- Transportation, Insurance (health insurance, car insurance, etc.)
- Dependent care if needed
- Essential personal items (some clothing, hygiene items, etc.)

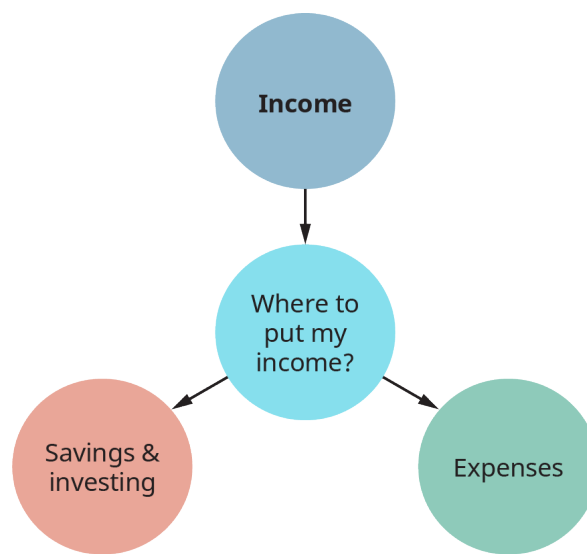
These things are sometimes called **fixed costs**, but that term can be misleading. For example, if someone has the option to move to a less expensive apartment that is smaller or a few blocks farther away, you can partly control that cost, so it is not really “fixed.” Still, for most people, the real savings come from spending less on optional things.

In contrast, “**optional**” **expenses** are things you **want** but could easily get by without. You do not have to spend money on them, and you can spend more or less on them as you choose. Most people spend by habit, not really thinking about where their money goes or how quickly their spending adds up. When people actually start paying attention to where their money is being spent, most are shocked to see how the totals grow. If you can save a thousand dollars a year by cutting back on little things, how far would that go to making you feel much better about your finances?

10.3 MANAGING A BUDGET

If you have ever gone to an ATM to withdraw money and been surprised to discover how little you had left in your account, this section is for you. Even if you are very conscientious about paying your bills on time and generally have frugal spending habits, creating and following a budget can put you so much further ahead.

In essence, a budget is a plan for how you want to spend money. It details how much money comes in each month and how much you have allocated for spending on each thing. The virtue of a budget is that it puts you in control of financial decisions—so you can avoid financial surprises at the end of the month.



Budgeting involves analyzing your income and expenses so you can see where your money is going and adjusting when needed to avoid debt. At first budgeting can seem complex or time-consuming, but once you have gone through the basics, you will find it easy and a very valuable tool for controlling your personal finances. Why create and manage a budget? Going to college changes your financial situation. There are many new expenses, and you likely do not know yet how your spending needs and habits will work out over the long term. Without a budget, it is just human nature to spend more than you have coming in, as evidenced by the fact that most Americans today are in debt. Debt is a major reason many students drop out of college. So, it's worth it to go to the trouble to create and manage a budget.

Managing a budget involves three steps:

1. Listing all your sources of income on a monthly basis.
2. Calculating all your expenditures on a monthly basis.
3. Making adjustments in your budget (and lifestyle in needed) to ensure the money isn't going out faster than it's coming in.

STEP 1: TRACKING INCOME

Many college students receive money or financial assistance from a number of sources. Paying for college can be a big challenge. When deciding how to cover the expense, two important sources of income include:

- **Jobs:** After release, many students work while taking classes to cover their expenses.
- **Financial Aid:** This can come in the form of loans, grants, work-study, or scholarships.

Both options will be discussed later in the chapter that can help you finance your education, but both also come with benefits and potential pitfalls. To track income on a monthly budget, consider all your sources of funds and convert them to a monthly number. For example, you may receive a student loan once during the year or you may work more in the summer and save up money then. To calculate your monthly projected income, add up your income sources and divide that number by the number of months you will be using the income. For example, if you have saved \$4,800 that you can spend over two years of college, divide the \$4,800 by twenty-four months to arrive at a monthly income of \$200 from those savings. Do the same with scholarship grants, student loans, monetary gifts, and so on. If some of your college costs are being paid directly by others, do not include that money in your budget as either income or an expense. Base your monthly budget on just those funds and expenses that involve you directly. Use Table 10.1 "Monthly Income and Funds" to record and total all your income on a monthly basis. If you must estimate some sources, estimate low rather than high; it is a bad trap to assume you will have more money coming in than you actually do—that's a real budget buster.

Table 10.1 Monthly Income and Funds

SOURCE OF INCOME/FUNDS	AMOUNT IN DOLLARS
Projected Job income (take-home amount)	
Projected Funds from parents/family/others	
Projected Monthly draw from savings	
Projected Monthly draw from financial aid	
Projected Monthly draw from student/other loans	
Projected Other income source	
Projected Total Monthly Incoming:	

STEP 2: TRACKING EXPENSES

Tracking expenditures is more difficult than tracking income. Some fixed expenses (tuition, rent, etc.) you should already know, but until you've actually written down everything you spend (or plan to spend after release) in a typical month, it's hard to estimate how much you will really be spending on cups of coffee or smoothies between class, groceries, entertainment, and the like. The best way to itemize this side of your budget is to write down everything you spend—everything, every bottle of water and cookie, and so forth—for a full month. Then, you can total up the different categories of expenses more realistically. You may be astonished how small purchases add up.

Utilize Table 10.2 “Monthly Expenditures” to note your monthly or anticipated monthly expenditures. Make estimates when you have to but be honest with yourself and don't underestimate your usual spending. There will be plenty of time down the road to adjust your budget—but do not start out with an unrealistic plan. Write “est” (for estimated”) next to numbers in your budget that you're guessing at.

Once you have listed your routine expenditures using Table 10.2 “Monthly Expenditures”, write out your own budget categories that fit how *you* actually spend, or plan to spend, money. Everyone is unique, and you want your budget to be easy to use for your own life and habits.

As noted previously with income, if some of your expenses are paid directly by others, do not include them here. Base your monthly budget on just those funds and expenses that involve you directly.

Table 10.2 Monthly Expenditures

EXPENDITURES	AMOUNT IN DOLLARS
Projected Tuition and fees (1/12 of annual)	
Projected Textbooks and supplies (1/12 of annual)	
Projected Housing: monthly mortgage, rent, or room and board	
Projected Home repairs	
Projected Renter's insurance or Property tax	
Projected Average monthly utilities (electricity, water, gas, oil)	
Projected Optional utilities (cell phone, Internet service, cable television)	
Projected Dependent care, babysitting	
Projected Child support, alimony	
Projected Groceries	
Projected Meals and snacks out (including coffee, water, etc.)	
Projected Personal expenses (toiletries, cosmetics, haircuts, etc.)	
Projected Auto expenses (payments, gas, tolls) plus 1/12 of annual insurance premium—or public transportation costs	
Projected Loan repayments, credit card pay-off payments	

EXPENDITURES	AMOUNT IN DOLLARS
Projected Health insurance (1/12 of annual)	
Projected Prescriptions, medical expenses	
Projected Entertainment (movies, concerts, nightlife, sporting events, purchases of video games or any monthly subscriptions)	
Projected Bank account fees, ATM withdrawal fees, credit card finance	
Projected Newspapers, magazines, streaming services or other	
Projected Travel, day trips	
Projected Cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, Beer, wine, liquor	
Projected Gifts	
Hobbies	
Projected Major purchases (computer, home furnishings) (1/12 of	
Projected Clothing, dry cleaning	
Projected Memberships (health clubs, etc.)	
Projected Pet food, veterinary bills, and so on	
Projected Other expenditure:	
Total Monthly Outgoing:	

STEP 3: BALANCING YOUR BUDGET

Now comes the moment of truth: compare your total monthly income with your total monthly expenses. How balanced is your budget at this point? Remember that you estimated some of your expenditures. You cannot know for sure until you track your expenses for at least a month and have real numbers to work with. What if your spending total is higher than your income total? The first step is to make your budget work on paper. Go back through your expenditure list and see where you can cut. Remember, college students should not try to live like working professionals. There are dozens of ways to spend less, as suggested earlier. **The essential first step is to make your budget balance on paper.**

Then your job is to live within the budget. It is normal to have to make adjustments at first. Just be sure to keep the overall budget balanced as you make adjustments. For example, if you find one semester you must spend more for textbooks, you may decide you can spend less on eating out—and subtract the amount from that category that you add to the textbook category. Get in the habit of thinking this way instead of using a credit card if you do not have enough in your budget for something you want or need.

Do not be surprised if it takes several months to make the budget process work. Be flexible but stay committed to the process and do not give up because it feels like too much work to keep track of your money. Without a budget, you may have difficulty reaching your larger goal: taking control of your life while in college.

BUDGETING ON YOUR COMPUTER

If you have access to and are good at Excel or another spreadsheet program, you can create your own budget in a spreadsheet that allows you to monitor your income and expenditures month to month, with the calculations done for you. The categories are general, but you can add up your numbers from **Table 10.2 “Monthly Expenditures”** in these categories and enter them in the online budget form, which then does the calculations for you.

WHAT IF YOU GET INTO FINANCIAL TROUBLE?

People often do not admit to themselves that they have a problem until it becomes unmanageable. We human beings are very good at rationalizing and making excuses to ourselves! Here are some warning signs of sliding into financial trouble:

- You have nothing in the bank in case of an emergency need.
- You do not know how much total debt you have.
- For two or three months in a row, your budget is unbalanced due to spending more than you bring in.
- You have begun using your savings for routine expenses you should be able to handle with your budget.
- You are trying to cut expenses by eliminating something important, such as dropping health insurance or not buying required textbooks.
- You have missed a deadline for a bill or taking credit card cash advances or overdrawing your account.
- You have a big balance on your credit card and have paid only the required minimum payment for the last two months.

If you are experiencing any of these warning signs, first acknowledge the problem. It is not going to solve itself—you need to take active steps before it gets worse and affects your college career. Second, if you just cannot budget your balance, admit that you need help. There is no shame in that. Start with your college counselor or the financial aid office; if they cannot help you directly, they can refer you to someone who can. Remember that they are there to help—their goal is to ensure you succeed in college.

SAVING FOR THE FUTURE

If you are having problems just getting by on your budget, it may seem pointless to even think about saving for the future. If you can possibly put aside some money every month into a savings plan, it is worth the effort:

- An emergency or unexpected situation may occur suddenly. Having the savings to cope with it is much less stressful than having to find a loan or run up your credit cards. Saving is a good habit to develop and will prepare you for the increasing financial complexities of life after graduation.
- You may change your mind about future plans. However, maybe down the road you decide to go to graduate school, law school—or to start your own business, or to join a volunteer program. Your savings may allow you to pursue a new goal.

Good practices that build wealth	Tracking all spending & saving	Knowing the difference between needs & wants	Resisting impulse buying & emotional spending
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Bad practices that dig a debt hole	Living paycheck to paycheck with no plan	Spending money on wants instead of saving	Using credit to buy more than you need & increase what you owe
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KEY TAKEAWAYS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial success while in college depends on understanding and controlling your expenditures. • A detailed monthly budget that lists all income sources and expenditures makes it easier to track expenses and avoid sliding into financial trouble. • Spending too much can lead to financial problems. If you see the signs that you are starting to have money problems, take steps to prevent trouble before it snowballs out of control. • While it may seem difficult just to make ends meet, make it a goal also to attempt to save something for future needs.

10.4 CREDIT

CREDIT CARDS

For many college students, owning a credit card may seem out of reach. Without money in account and assurance that you can pay your monthly credit bill, it can be important to build a credit history for certain opportunities down the road, such as getting a loan to buy a house. Some good offers to look for include error forgiveness (such as waiving penalties the first time you miss a payment), no extra fees, rewards for good grades, and effective customer service.

RISKS AND REWARDS OF CREDIT

Credit cards can provide new opportunities but owning them is also a big responsibility. As a student looking to finance your education and life, should consider the advantages and disadvantages of credit before choosing the best plan.

PROS

- **Saving money:** Credit cards can be connected to checking accounts so that companies know where their customers' money is coming from and they an account to change interest rates to. The account can help you practice saving money rather than needing to have a lot of cash on hand. This can make it easier for you to make large payments for things like tuition and unexpected expenses like vehicle maintenance or medical bills.
- **Receiving benefits:** In addition to cash back for good grades, credit card companies may offer other benefits such as store discounts, gas rewards, and points toward air travel.
- **Building credit:** If you pay off your credit card every month on time, you will start building credit and have a good credit score early on. Your credit score can be an important factor later if you decide to open another account or take out a loan. Some employers may even want to see your credit history.

CONS

- **Overspending:** If something is out of sight, it may be out of mind, and the same can be true of money. Sometimes people overspend with credit cards because it is easy to think that you have more money than you really do.
- **Interest:** Credit card companies with student deals still typically include some level of APR or interest rate. If you do not pay off the entire balance every month, using a credit card can be expensive. Suppose you decide to use your credit card to pay for \$1,000 in school supplies and books. Credit card A has an APR of 10 percent, and credit card B has an APR of 24 percent. If it takes you a year to pay off the \$1,000, you would actually pay a total of \$1,055.04 with credit card A and \$1,134.72 with credit card B—that is \$55 or \$135 on top of the original \$1,000 you charged! This example highlights the importance of paying off the balance as soon as possible AND of choosing a credit card with a lower interest rate.
- **Debt:** Unlike debit cards, credit cards allow users to borrow money that they can pay back at a later date. While this can be useful in emergency situations, you may end up charging more than you can afford to pay back right way, and you may find yourself saddled with debt. Carrying a lot of debt can damage your credit history and score.

AVOIDING DEBT

As we just learned, the temptation to overspend with a credit card and the interest you are charged on your balance can combine to leave you owing more money than you have. Following are tips that will help you avoid slipping into credit card debt:

- **Pay with cash when you can.** Use your budget as a guide for how much cash to carry with you – refer to the video in this chapter on the envelope budget strategy.
- **When possible, use a debit card instead of a credit card.** A debit card is taken just like a credit card in most places, so you can use it instead of cash, but remember that a purchase is subtracted immediately from your account. Do not risk overdraft fees by using a debit card when you do not have the balance to back it up. Record a debit card purchase in your checkbook register as soon as possible.
- **Make it a priority to pay your balance in full every month.** If you can not pay it all, pay as much as you can—and then remember that balance will still be there, so try not to use the card at all during the next month.
- **Do not get cash advances on your credit card.** With most cards, you begin paying interest from that moment forward—so there will still be an interest charge even if you pay the bill in full at the end of the month. Cash advance interest rates are often considerably higher than purchase rates.
- **Do not use more than one credit card.** Multiple cards make it easy to misuse them and lose track of your total debt.
- **Get and keep receipts for all credit card purchases.** Do not throw them away because you will see the charges on your monthly statement. Write the amounts down in your spending budget. You also need the receipts in case your monthly statement has an error.
- **Stop carrying your credit card.** If you do not have enough willpower to avoid spontaneous purchases, be honest with yourself. Do not carry the card at all—after all, the chances of having an emergency need for it are likely to be very small. Having to go home to get the card also gives you a chance to consider whether you really need whatever it is that you were about to buy.

CREDIT HISTORY AND REPORTS

Many younger college students are just beginning to develop a credit history. Older students likely have had credit cards for years, as well as automobile and other types of loans, possibly a mortgage, and other financial transactions that add up to a credit history. But everyone needs to understand what a credit history is and how your monetary habits now can affect your future financial well-being and your future options. For example, frequent overdrafts on a debit card can prevent you from being approved for a credit card, or late credit card payments can prevent you in the future from obtaining a car loan. Credit bureaus collect financial data on everyone. The credit report they issue is a detailed history of many years of your financial habits. It includes the following:

- Current and past credit accounts (credit cards and store charge cards)
- History of balances and credit payments
- History of late or missed payments
- Inquiries into your credit status (e.g., if you have applied for a number of credit cards, this is recorded even if you did not receive the cards)
- Bankruptcy or mortgage foreclosure proceedings

All this information remains in your credit report for up to seven to ten years. For example, frequent overdrafts on a debit card can prevent you from being approved for a credit card, or late credit card payments can prevent you in the future from obtaining a car loan. What you do today can really come back to haunt you!

YOUR FICO SCORE

By law, you are entitled to one free credit report each year from Annual credit Report. Different companies use slightly different ratings, but 300 or so is a low credit score, and 700-850 is high.

The higher the score, the lower the risk to lenders. Refer to table 10.3 for more details on credit score.

Table 10.3

CREDIT SCORE RANGES	RATING	DESCRIPTION
<580	Poor	This credit score is well below the average score of US consumers and demonstrates to lenders that the borrower may be a risk.
580-669	Fair	This credit score is below the average score US consumers, though many lenders will approve loans with this score.
670-739	Good	This credit score is near or slightly above the average of US consumers, and most lenders consider this a good score.
740-799	Very Good	This credit score is above the average of US consumers and demonstrates to lenders that the borrower is very dependable.
800+	Exceptional	This credit score is well above the average score of US consumers and clearly demonstrates to lenders that the borrower is an exceptionally low risk.

COMPONENTS OF A CREDIT SCORE AND HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR CREDIT

To sum up your creditworthiness, credit bureaus analyze all your data to come up with a single number, called your credit score or FICO score. (**FICO** is short for the **Fair Isaac Credit Organization**, which created this method of analyzing data.) The calculations of each credit bureau differ somewhat. The score may be anywhere between 250 and 336 (poor credit risk) and 843 and 900 (excellent credit risk).

Credit scores contain a total of five components. These components are credit payment history (35 percent), credit utilization (30 percent), length of credit history (15 percent), new credit (10 percent), and credit mix (10 percent) as discussed in video. The main action you can take to improve your credit score is to stop charging and pay bills on time. Even if you cannot pay the full amount of the credit balance, which is the best practice, pay the minimum on time. Paying more is better for your debt load but does not improve your score. Carrying a balance on a credit card does not improve your score. Your score will go down if you pay bills late and owe more the 30 percent of your credit available. Your credit score reflects your willingness and ability to do what you say you will do—pay your debts on time.

Credit bureaus are not required to tell you the FICO score that they report to a lender who inquiries about your credit history. Check with any of the individual credit bureaus listed earlier if you need to know your score. Or you may be able to get this information from a lender with whom you have a loan. Most students have no need to know their credit score, except to understand how banks and other lenders make their decisions if you are applying for any type of loan.

PROTECTING YOUR IDENTITY

Identity theft is a serious and growing problem. Identity theft is someone else's use of your personal information—usually financial information—to make an illegal gain. A criminal who has your credit card number or bank account information may be able to make purchases or transfer funds from your accounts. Someone with the right information about you, such as your social security number along with birth date and other data, can even pretend to be you and open new credit accounts that you don't know about—until the bank or collection agency tries to recover amounts from you. Although innocent, you would spend a lot of time and effort dealing with the problem.

CASE STUDY

Maria's Financial Dilemma

When Maria decided to attend university after working full time a few years, she was confident she could afford it. She had saved enough money to pay tuition for two years, and she cut back to part-time work that paid enough, she calculated, to live on. With great enthusiasm she registered for the fall term.

Her money problems began in November when her car broke down on the way to her job. The mechanic said her transmission had to be rebuilt and her car also really needed new rear shocks the bill was well over a thousand dollars. She paid with her Visa card. At the end of the month, she did not have enough in her checking account to pay the credit card bill in full. She almost decided just to pay the minimum, but then she checked her statement and saw the 18 percent interest rate and decided to pay the full balance from her savings. She would not need that money for tuition until next year anyway, and that gave her a long time to save it up.

The first week in December, she slipped on an icy sidewalk and sprained her ankle. Unfortunately, she could not do her job on crutches and had no sick time built up, so she lost two weeks' pay.

Still, "that's life," she thought, although she was so worried about money now that she almost decided to register for just two courses the next term. But university was her priority, so she took a full load and increased her work hours for a couple months to help her get caught up financially. But then as midterm exams grew closer, she felt unprepared because she had not had enough time for studying. Because of the stress she was not sleeping well, and one day she fell asleep in class. Always rushing around, she was eating more junk food than ever and feeling too guilty to even get on the scale to see if she was gaining weight, too. She found herself daydreaming about the coming summer and being free of classes. To feel better, she took long drives in her car on the weekends.

She did pass her midterms, though she did not do as well as she had hoped. She still had not been able to save enough for next year's tuition but felt that she had the summer to work full time and make up for it.

In April, her boss told her that business was too slow to be able to increase her hours to full time for the summer. He was very sorry, but she could keep working part time if she wanted.

Now Maria really doubted if she would be able to make it. Her family could spare no money to help her out. She had enough for rent, food, and her car, but that was about it. If she did not figure something out, she could not afford tuition in the fall. Even with an installment plan to break up tuition payments, she just was not making enough to cover it. She did not know what to do.

What is the first step Maria should take to start sorting out her financial situation and learn about her options?

CASE STUDY

Maria's financial planning was based on making enough to cover what she spends and using her savings for tuition. If she were to make a monthly budget and analyze every expenditure, might she be able to cut back and save more for unexpected expenses that come up? List areas in which she would likely be able to spend less if she used a budget.

Maria's attitude toward her credit card is a healthy indicator that she wants to avoid debt. If this proved to be the only solution, however, should she consider a student loan to cover the tuition for her second year? Why or why not?

If Maria were considering not attending university the second year, but instead looking for a new full-time job that would allow her to save up tuition money again, what advice might you give her?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Credit cards have several important benefits when used carefully, including building a credit history and having emergency funds available.
- Do not charge purchases up to the credit card's limit but set your own personal limit that allows you to pay the balance in full every month.
- Avoid high credit card balances by using the card minimally, paying cash when you can, and avoiding cash advances.
- How you manage your credit and finances now affects your credit history and creditworthiness in the future.

CHECKPOINT EXERCISES

1. What is the best number of credit cards to have and carry with you?

2. For each of the following statements, circle T for true or F for false:

T	F	The more credit cards you have, and the larger the balances you keep, the better is your credit rating if you make the minimum payments every month on time.
T	F	Most credit cards charge the same interest rate.
T	F	An overdraft on an ATM cash advance will not cost you anything if you pay it off at the end of the month.
T	F	Your credit history begins only after graduation from university, so it does not matter much how you manage money while still in school.
T	F	Identity theft happens only to senior citizens.

3. How often can one obtain a free credit report?

10.5 FINANCIAL AID

APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID

Follow these general rules to ensure you receive any aid for which you are qualified:

1. While at the community college level, apply for the California College Promise Grant. If approved, this grant will cover the cost of your tuition. With most of Coastline's classes also providing Zero Textbook Costs, the cost of your community college education may end up being free or very minimal!
2. Apply for any applicable Coastline Scholarships.
3. We recommend you save other avenues of financial aid, such as grants, to help you pay for the cost of a bachelor's degree after transfer to a four-year university.
4. To help finance a bachelor's degree, you will want to start your financial aid applications early to ensure you make the deadline. The federal government offers a standard form called the Free Application for Financial Student Aid (FAFSA) which qualifies you for federal financial aid and also opens the door for nearly all other financial aid. You will apply for financial aid through your college or university every year, even if you do not qualify in your first year. Your situation may change, and you want to remain eligible depending the awards or loans that may become available.
5. Research possible outside financial aid based on other criteria. Many private scholarships or grants are available, for example, for the dependents of employees of certain companies, students pursuing a degree in a certain field, or students of a certain ethnic status or from a certain religious or geographical background, and the like. Evaluate student loans carefully and do not borrow more than you need or can repay without hardship after graduation.

6. Do not pay for financial aid resource information. Some online companies try to profit from the anxieties of students about financial aid by promising to find financial aid for you for a fee. Legitimate sources of financial aid information are free.

The Coastline College Financial Aid and Scholarship office are here to help you navigate your financial aid options and questions. For any questions about your current or future financial aid options, please connect with them.

KEEPING YOUR FINANCIAL AID

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requires students to maintain a completion rate of 67% or higher to remain eligible for financial assistance. To determine how many hours you need to earn to comply with the SAP policy, Financial Aid is required by regulation to include all attempted course work when calculating your GPA and progression rate. Students must maintain the required grade point average (GPA) necessary to continue as degree candidates and must maintain an academic standing consistent with the Academic Standing Policy outlined in the Coastline College catalog.

TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID

You may already be receiving financial aid or understand what types of financial aid are available. Even if you are not receiving financial aid, you should still take time to understand the basics because your financial situation may change, and you may need help paying for college. You owe it to yourself to learn about potential types of aid you might receive.

There are three main categories of financial aid:

1. Scholarships and grants (money or tuition waivers that do not need to be repaid)
2. Student loans (money that does need to be repaid, usually starting after graduation)
3. Work study programs (money that is earned for tuition or other expenses)

SCHOLARSHIPS AND GRANTS

Scholarships and grants are “free” money—you do not have to pay them back, unlike student loans. A **scholarship** is generally based on merit rather than demonstrated financial need—based on past grades, test scores, achievements, or experiences, including personal qualifications such as athletic ability, skills in the arts, community, or volunteer experiences, and so on. Do not make the mistake of thinking scholarships go only to students with high grades. Many scholarships, for example, honor those with past leadership or community experience or the promise of future activities. Even the grades and test scores needed for academic scholarships are relative: a grade that does not qualify for a scholarship at one college may earn a scholarship at another. Never assume that you are not qualified for any kind of scholarship or grant.

A **grant** also does not need to be paid back. Most grants are based on demonstrated financial need such as Federal Pell Grant. A grant may be offered by the college, a federal or provincial program, or a private organization or civic group. Often, grants are provided with student loans to those with financial needs. As noted earlier, it is recommended you pursue the California College Promise Grant to help fund your associate’s degree. This grant is available to community college students and covers the cost of tuition. It is recommended that other types of grants, such as the Pell Grant, are saved to help you fund further educational goals, such as a bachelor’s degree.

STUDENT LOANS

Many different student loan programs are available for college students. Ideally, one would like to graduate without having loan balances to repay after college. However, almost two-thirds of full-time college students do need student loans to pay for college. With smart choices about the type of loan and a structured repayment program for your working years after graduation. There is no reason to fear a loan. Just remember that the money eventually must be repaid—it is not “free” money even though it may feel that way while you are in school.

All student loans are not the same. Interest terms vary widely, and with most private loans the interest starts building up immediately. The best loan generally is a subsidized federal loan. “**Subsidized**” in this case means the interest does not begin on the loan until after graduation. With **unsubsidized** loans, by contrast, you are responsible for paying interest on the loan even while you are in school, meaning the terms of an unsubsidized loan are less favorable to you as a student. If you do not make interest payments while in school, the interest will be added to the loan amount each year and will result in a larger student loan balance when you graduate.

Many colleges and universities have also created additional programs – such as textbook or childcare assistance or an emergency fund – to support their students facing financial need. Check with your school’s financial aid office to find out if you qualify for any additional assistance. There are also other types of student loans to consider such as Direct Plus Loans for parents and private loans, but it is best to avoid them altogether when necessary.

WORK STUDY PROGRAMS

Work-study programs are the third type of financial aid. They are administered by colleges and are a common part of the financial aid package for students with financial need. You work for what you earn, but work-study programs often have advantages over outside jobs. The college runs the program, so you do not have to spend valuable time looking for a job. Work study students usually work on or near campus, and work hours are controlled to avoid interfering with classes and study time. Work study students are more engaged with the academic community than students working off campus.

ADDITIONAL FEDERAL SUPPORT

The federal government offers a handful of additional options for college students to find financial support such as **Education Tax Credits**. The IRS (Internal Revenue Service) gives out free money to student and their parents through two tax credits, although you will have to choose between them. The American opportunity tax credit (AOTC) will refund up to \$2,500 of qualifying education expenses per eligible student, while the lifetime learning credit (LLC) refunds up to \$2,000 per year regardless of the number of qualifying students. While the AOTC may be a better tax credit to choose for some, it can only be claimed for four years for each student, and it has other limitations. The LLC has fewer limitations, and there is no limit on the number of years you can claim it. Lifetime learners and nontraditional students may consider the LLC a better choice. Calculate the benefits for your situation. The IRS warns taxpayers to be careful when claiming the credits. There are potential penalties for incorrectly claiming the credits, and you or your family should consult a tax professional or financial adviser when claiming these credits.

Thus, when you have extra financial aid money, consider saving it for future education expenses. Just like you will need an emergency fund all your adult life, you will want an emergency fund for college when expensive books or travel abroad programs present unexpected costs.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Many forms of financial aid are available for college students.
- Consider all forms of financial aid—not just the aid managed by your college. Look into private scholarships and grants.
- Carefully consider how much to borrow in student loans.

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

CHAPTER TAKEAWAYS

- Controlling your finances while in college is important both for your future well-being and for eliminating stress that can impede your academic success.
- Meeting your financial goals while in college may require some financial sacrifice but need not result in hardship.
- Tracking your spending with an effective budget is the first step toward taking control of your finances.
- Understanding your own spending habits and practicing a few simple principles for spending less help prevent unnecessary debt. Make and use a budget to take control of your financial life.
- Credit card spending can lead to out-of-control debt. Use credit cards minimally and wisely.
- Look into all forms of financial aid. Do not take more in student loans than you really need.

Chapter 10 Sources

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CHAPTER 11: NOW WHAT?

CHAPTER 11 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. What you found most helpful in this course.
2. How you have been applying the techniques you have learned in this course in your everyday life.
3. What you plan on doing now that you have completed this course.

11.1 THE GRAND FINALE

You are now at the end of the course and this chapter is designed to help you not only reflect on yourself and what you have learned in this course but how you will apply what you have learned in your everyday life. What follows are a series of questions where you will reflect these topics. These same prompts are provided to you in your journal for you to respond to.

Reflection Questions

1. You learned several strategies in this course: Time management, critical thinking, note-taking, etc. Which strategies did you find the most useful for you and why? Did your confidence in that area improve? How? What specifically about these strategies did you like? What would you change? Why?
2. Compare your skills in 2 areas covered in the course from when you started the course to now. Did your skills in these areas improve? How? Do you feel more confident in this area? How and why?
3. How will you specifically apply 2 skills that you learned in this course in the classroom? How will you be sure that the strategies are still working for you a year from now? What will you do if they are not? Be specific.

We hope you enjoyed this course and have found this book to be of great value. We wish you continued success as you pursue your personal, academic and career goals at Coastline Community College!

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