Straight-A Study Strategies!
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1. **Determine your learning style.** Do you know what type of learner you are? Complete the online VARK learning styles assessment to find out! Are you a Visual, Auditory, Reading-Writing, or Kinesthetic learner? Or are you a combination of several different learning styles (Multi-Modal)? Use the study tips on the VARK website that relate to your personal learning style. [http://www.vark-learn.com/english/index.asp](http://www.vark-learn.com/english/index.asp)

2. **Chunk it!** Break down your course material into smaller, manageable “chunks”. Set small, realistic daily and weekly goals for yourself that you know you can complete. *Avoid waiting until the last minute to cram in everything all at once!* You will end up creating more anxiety for yourself and will probably not do very well on your exam. Get in the habit of **studying early and often**: 30-60 min of focused study, spread out during the week, is much more effective than cramming it all into one 4-5 hour session the day before the exam. If you have an hour between classes, use that time to review several sections from your lecture notes; if you only have 15 minutes, focus on just one section; or practice vocabulary; or go over a few text diagrams, etc. You’ll be surprised at how much you can actually accomplish and remember, in these shorter, more frequent blasts of studying every day over several weeks.

3. **Take notes!** This is a skill that is far more important in college than it ever was in high school. As you listen attentively during lecture, pay close attention to what is being emphasized and reinforced by your instructors. *Do not write out every single word spoken in class!* You will not have the time. Instead, use shorthand abbreviations and symbols to speed up your note-taking. Over time, you’ll begin to develop your own note-taking system. If your instructor uses PowerPoint handouts, remember, *you still need to take notes!* Instructors explain concepts, provide examples, and share important information well beyond what is included on their presentation outlines.

Also, get into the habit of rewriting your notes after class, preferably on the same day of the class. But rather than just re-copying them, organize your notes in your own way: convert them into outlines or visual concept maps, create flash cards, add color, and supplement them with information from the textbook. And, as you actively read your textbooks, take notes directly in the page margins or in a notebook (this skill is known as **annotating**). By doing this, you are spending significant quality study time with the course concepts and personalizing them in the ways you learn best. **Own the material!**

4. **Be ‘Wholly Present’.** Just like missing work means you won’t get paid, missing class means you won’t get the grade. Absences always have a way of showing up on exam scores. It is very easy to fall behind in college if you miss class. And while in class, don’t simply take up space. Make sure to seat yourself where you can clearly see and
hear with minimal distractions. Engage with your instructors and classmates. Become involved in class activities, ask questions no matter how “dumb” they may seem to you (because they’re not), and participate in discussions. Take a few minutes during the first week of classes and introduce yourself to your instructors during their scheduled office hours.

5. Get organized! Do you have a system to help you keep track of your busy life? Use a daily planner book, course calendar, or an online scheduling tool or apps like EverNote and Google Calendar. Avoid the standard “To-Do” list since they don’t help you figure out when each task will be completed. Take 15 min each Sunday and plan each day of the upcoming week: course times, work schedule, assignments due, exams, study time, personal time, etc. You are now able to “see” your time and have a much clearer idea of when you’ll actually get things done. Take control of your schedule – don’t let it take control of you!

6. Manage your time. All of us waste time and procrastinate to some degree. Or, we try to do too much and end up feeling overwhelmed. Either way, we don’t accomplish much besides raising our stress level. Time management and stress management are two sides of the same coin. How can we make the best use of our time in order to achieve success and maintain our quality of life? One key is to find that balance between school, work, family, friends, health, exercise, and “you” time. Learn to prioritize your time and use it more efficiently. And don’t bother looking for any short-cuts...the reality is they don’t exist. Be honest with yourself - take a critical look at how much time you’re wasting that could be used for quality study time.

I wish you the best of success this semester!

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