

Keys to College Success



Registration & Counseling

- Academic counseling is essential! See your counselor on a regular basis to make sure you are on track with your academic program, classes, etc.
- Pay attention to deadlines! If you miss one, it could cost you money or even grades (e.g., add/drop, credit/no credit, book returns).
- Be sure to keep all of your paperwork from meetings with your counselor and computer printouts from registration, adding, and dropping classes. You may need to refer to these later or to use them as proof of your transactions.
- You are in charge of your education! Don't rely on anyone to remind you that you haven't taken a prerequisite or a required course. Stay on top of what you've taken and what you still need.
- Select classes based on your academic abilities. For example, if science is a challenging academic area for you, don't take biology and chemistry in the same semester.
- Be very careful registering for summer or short courses. Remember that you will be receiving 17 ½ weeks' worth of information in an 8-week period. The pace is fast and furious. Take a course in which you are sure you would do well.

Financial Aid Tips

- Remember that you will catch more flies with honey. The people who work in the Financial Aid Office are just like you and have feelings that get hurt when someone is rude. It's understandable that money matters often cause students to get frustrated, annoyed or angry, but taking it out on the financial aid staff is unfair—it's not their fault! Take a deep breath, and approach these folks with courtesy and kindness. You'll find that they will be courteous and kind in return and will be very happy to help you.
- Start early and be persistent. Submit the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) through the Financial Aid Office as soon as you are ready to enroll.
- Consider every possible source of educational funding and good money leads: the Financial Aid Office, the Scholarship Office, your church, clubs and groups you belong to, local civil and special interest organizations, honor societies, the internet (an excellent site: www.fastweb.com).
- Fill out forms completely and neatly. Include all required documentation. Keep copies for your files.
- Respond quickly to all requests for additional information and documentation.
- If you are awarded financial aid, be sure you know what guidelines you must maintain in order to keep your award (e.g., GPA, unit load, work status).

Practical Tips for Success

- You are in control of the education you receive—not your instructors, not your counselor, not your significant other or children. It is your responsibility to go to class regularly, complete your course requirements on time, take the required courses for your curriculum, turn in financial aid forms before deadlines, set up and keep appointments with your counselor, and utilize the colleges services and resources. No one will call or send you a letter to remind you of what you need to do. It's all up to you. Knowing this, you can take full credit for accomplishing your academic goal(s) here.
- Learn your instructors' names and meet with a counselor as soon as possible. These people are working here because they can and will help you...but you need to ask for help!
- Keep every form, letter or document from SRJC in a safe place. Include your computer printouts from registration, adding and dropping classes, financial aid award letters, evaluation of transferred college credits (if you attended another college), textbook

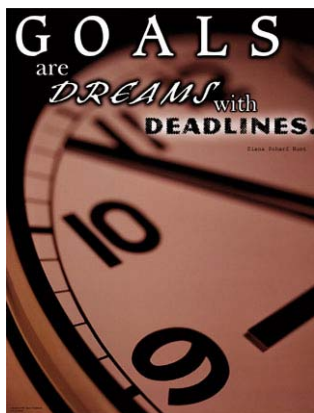
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receipts, all quizzes, exams, papers, and all SRJC correspondence. If you think an error has been made in calculating a final grade, or in whether you added or dropped a class, you'll have the documentation to back up your argument.

- There will be times when you'll be frustrated about a class, an exam, an instructor, a classmate, financial aid, whatever. Remember that the people from whom you ask for help have feelings, too. So take a deep breath and approach them as calmly as possible. You'll be amazed how much more willing people are to help when they are treated kindly and with respect.
- Take advantage of the many student services, organizations and clubs that can help make your college experience a pleasant and memorable one. Make sure you take the time to ENJOY yourself while you're here!

Time Management

- Learn to say no! Saying "no" to friends and family wanting to spend time with you does not make you a terrible person.
- Do not study for more than 3 hours at a time. Your brain really does shut down and any studying you do after that point is just a waste of time.



- Use "waiting time" to study. Look over your notes while waiting for a doctor's appointment or at the laundromat while your clothes tumble-dry. Chunks of time that might otherwise be idle can help you to fit study time into your busy schedule.
 - Create a master schedule. Use different colored ink or highlighters to separate college-related tasks from personal and work responsibilities. Be sure to indicate midterms, finals, project and research- paper due dates, and other important events. Block off times for studying, working, laundry, fun, etc. This will help you to keep from feeling overwhelmed by all you will need to do.
 - Prioritize! Make a daily list of what you need to study, prioritize and set times for each item, and STICK TO IT!
- Use the 30-3-2 Schedule: a) Study for 30 minutes; b) Take a 3-minute break (let the break be a time to think about other things); c) Go back to studying and take an extra 2 minutes to mentally review what you have just read and do a quick preview of what is coming next.

Goal Setting

- Set realistic goals (in writing) within a realistic timeframe.
- Goals should be specific and clear.
- Determine the purpose of your goals and their achievement benefits. Write them down next to your goal.
- Set specific strategies for accomplishing each goal (in writing).
- Set target dates for self-evaluation of your progress.
- Periodically visualize your goal, as well as your strategies for accomplishing the goal.
- List potential obstacles to attaining the goal.
- List strategies for overcoming the obstacles.
- Follow through on all strategies.
- A question to ask yourself: "Am I willing to make the necessary sacrifices to accomplish my goals?"

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Study Strategies

- Attend as many academic support activities and workshops as possible. The Tutorial Center, Math Lab, and the Writing Center offer free services to help you be successful.
- STUDY! This may be obvious, but you would be surprised how many students don't bother.
- Study in a quiet place where you won't be interrupted by phone calls, children, significant others, or housemates. Your study space should be comfortable and quipped with everything you will need (text and reference books, paper, pencils, calculator, etc.). Studying on your bed is not a good idea (it's too easy to catch a few winks). The college's library, a public library, or a private room in your home is ideal.
- Get rid of clutter. Clear your desk or table of all materials not related to what you are currently studying.
- Tutoring is a GOOD thing! Get help early in the semester if you are in a course with which you think you might need help. The Tutorial Center staff is approachable, friendly, and here to help you. Visit the Tutorial Center, located in the Frank P. Doyle Library, or call (707) 527-4491.

Taking Notes Basics

- Clear, concise notes are more effective than copious notes.
- Instead of using a spiral, use a loose-leaf notebook divided into class sections.
- Make all notes on loose-leaf paper. In an upper corner, title and date each sheet as you use it.
- Rewrite and combine your old study and lecture notes into a new single set of notes or outline. Use them as a replacement for your old notes.



Lecture Notes

- Sit near the front of the class to avoid distractions.
- Be a good listener. Focus and concentrate on the main points of the lecture. Get them down on paper. Put them into your own words later along with your study notes. Pay attention to the instructors' clues as to what they consider important (usually what they write on the blackboard is one clue).
- If there is something you don't understand, ASK!
- Immediately after a lecture, without looking at your notes, try to recall on a separate paper as much as you can about what you have heard and learned. Then review your actual lecture notes to confirm and/or supplement your memory.
- During your next study session, quickly recall again on paper what you learned. Then review and reorganize your lecture notes in your own words.
- Repeat the recall process several times over several days to commit the new information to memory.

Critical Thinking Skills

- Don't believe everything you see, read or hear. Decide for yourself what you are going to believe.
- Critical thinking is important in order to: 1) enhance common sense; 2) filter emotions; 3) categorize experiences; 4) select references; 5) understand the "experts;" 6) sort fact from opinion; and 7) learn to express yourself in a cogent and thought-provoking manner.
- Critical thinkers are: 1) socially attractive; 2) able to resist manipulation; 3) able to overcome confusion; 4) able to perceive connections between subjects and events; 5) able to

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base judgment on evidence and facts; and 6) able to realize that the "truth" is never simple—gray or foggy areas always exist.

Dealing with Instructors and Tough Classes

- Go see your instructors during their office hours posted on the door or on the class syllabus. They have to sit there whether you show up or not, so take advantage of this opportunity.
- Don't be afraid to ask other students and instructors for copies of old exams. The questions may change, but the style and format usually remain the same.
- Make sure your instructors know your name. Putting a face with a name could be a big help, especially if your grade is on the borderline.
- Problems with faculty should be handled honestly and calmly. Always try to remedy conflicts with faculty members first. If the problem remains unresolved, seek advice from your counselor as to which steps to take next.
- What irritates instructors? 1) Not going to class; 2) Not being prepared for class; 3) Not reading the syllabus; 4) Lack of responsibility; 5) Excuses; 6) Not meeting deadlines.

"I Wish Someone Had Told Me..."

- Class attendance really does correlate with your grade. **GO TO CLASS!**
- Communication is key—especially when dealing with instructors, other college staff, and classmates.
- Be on time for class. Walking in late distracts both the instructor and other students, and it is considered rude.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help.
- College is not a contest. You don't have to compete with anyone else for your grade. Learn at your own pace and don't feel inferior if you don't understand something the first time around.
- The bureaucracy of higher education is sometimes overwhelming. Stay calm, ask questions, and be sure you know the name of the person with whom you are speaking.
- Support systems are essential for survival. Make friends. Join clubs. Get to know your counselor.
- Read what you are given.
- Don't take college policy advice from other students. Check the schedule of classes for answers to your questions. If you still don't understand, ask a college staff person or speak with your counselor.
- Join in all the activities you can. Finding a realistic balance between work, college, family and fun is what will get you through.
- Don't be intimidated by faculty and staff. They are employed here to help you be successful. Ask for help when you need it.
- Maintain a positive attitude, be a good listener, stick to your own convictions, and strive past your dreams!

