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Four Steps to a Successful Semester

Step 1— Attend all of every class

Don't go late
Don't leave early
Never miss class, period.

Step 2 – Read text assignments BEFORE each class

This helps you keep up with the lecture
It improves your understanding of the subject
It helps you take better notes

Step 3 – Revise your lecture notes the same day you take them

This improves your natural memory of the material
Fill in the blanks
Look up difficult terms
Show the main ideas and the supporting details

Step 4 – Study 4 hours each day

This includes the time you spend revising your notes
Use the time between classes; don't go home
Find a really good place to study
Guard against interruptions

Additional things to do when you study

Attack your books

Preview the chapters; write notes in the margins; estimate possible test questions; draw timelines; make your own charts and maps; use colors; discuss ideas

Revise your lecture notes

Rewrite; add; correct; organize; estimate possible test questions; compare with other peoples' notes; work any homework problems assigned

Get organized/ get serious

Carry and use a planner; go to all classes; keep organized notebooks; join a study group like SI

Use Learning Assistance (UC 1.01.02, 458-4694)

Study groups; individual tutoring; study skills workshops; Supplemental Instruction; computerized study programs; evening hours tutoring

Plan your time.

Successful students generally find that they need to study for four hours each week day and four hours total over the weekend. Fill in your class times, study times and work times on the attached weekly schedule. Are you being realistic about the amount of studying you will have to do to succeed in your schoolwork? Do you need to make changes at home or at your job in order to have time to study? Think this through and change your schedule now if necessary.

Keep in mind that just staring at a book is not studying. Use the study strategies offered in this packet in order to stay focused and comprehend what you are learning.

Follow through during the semester.

For many students, this is the critical step that determines what their academic outcome will be. Now that you have changed your schedule, organized your finances, and planned your time, set yourself up for success. Adopt a plan to help yourself by using new study strategies, attending Supplemental Instruction, contacting Career Exploration, and checking out campus Registered Student Organizations which interest you. The more you do to keep yourself involved in your education, the more likely that you'll do well this Spring.

Purpose, Audience, Tone and Choice of Words in College Writing

Whenever you speak or write, you make word choices based on your purpose for communication and who you are communicating with. When you are writing, the words you choose determine the tone of your paper.

For example, if you are changing your major from information systems to art history, you might write two letters—one to your parents, in order to explain your decision, and one to the dean of the college. You would use a different kind of vocabulary and style of writing in the letter you write to your parents than in the letter that you write to the dean to explain the same decision. You have the same purpose in both letters—to explain your switch in majors—but you have two different audiences. You will most likely write to your parents in very casual words and phrases, and you will probably write to the dean in a formal, businesslike way. These choices of words produce two different kinds of tone in the two letters. One is familiar and casual. The other is formal and slightly distant.

Whoever reads your work (or listens to you speak) is affected by your choice of words and phrases. Depending on the course and the individual teacher, the tone of your paper can be a significant factor in determining your grade.

Here are 4 types of tone:

1. The kids from my old school buy a lot of their stuff at the store.
2. I can't believe I got an F on this paper. This is so stupid. I did exactly what the teacher said to do and I still got an F. I don't understand how I can do exactly what the teacher says to do and still get an F.
3. I would like to schedule an appointment with you so that we can review this assignment in its entirety, analyze its problematic areas, and renegotiate its evaluation.
4. I would like to make an appointment with you to discuss my assignment. Do you have any free time this week?

Example #4 is a good example of professional or college-level tone. Avoid slang, casual words or phrases, needless repetition, and overly flowery words. Use words that are clear and mean precisely what you want to say.

Also, pay attention to the appearance of your paper. Teachers tend to give higher scores to neater papers. Take a few minutes to copy over your essay, if necessary. You can double-space your writing if you think that your handwriting is hard to read.

Put professional effort into your writing. Plan what you are going to write and then check it for mistakes. Try to always turn in your very best work.

Paragraph structure

Good, professional writing doesn't happen by accident. Expert writers think and plan ahead before they write, in order to accomplish a particular purpose. Read the two paragraphs below. Which one is the better paragraph?

A Man of Many Talents

Mr. Johnson is the most creative person I've ever met. He designed his own house and put in all the floor tile and light fixtures himself. He plants a vegetable and flower garden every spring, and grows so much produce that he has to give away tomatoes and cucumbers to his neighbors in August. He took a night class in oil painting, and now he paints landscapes and flowers in his free time. Give him a box of junk, and he'll put together a toy or a tool and give it back to you. If there's a problem to be solved, he'll always find a way to get the job done. Mr. Johnson never just sighs and says, "Whatever" or "I don't know." Instead, he says, "Let's take a look at that. There's always a way."

Being Creative

Many people are creative. Poetry always seems imaginative to me, especially if it doesn't rhyme. My parents gave me piano lessons when I was in fifth grade. Mr. Johnson can make some amazing toys out of old junk. Different people have different talents. I wish that I could sing better. "If at first you don't succeed, read the directions," my father always used to say. Together, we were pretty good at following directions.

- *Only one of these two selections is truly a paragraph. Which one? Why?*
