

A low-angle photograph of graduates in blue and black gowns celebrating, with several caps flying into the air against a bright blue sky with a sun flare. A thick blue wavy line separates the top image from the dark bottom section.

Succeeding in College

**DOS AND DON'TS FROM
FELLOW STUDENTS**

Kevin J Barry

A Companion to Best Practices To Graduate
BestPracticesToGraduate.org

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SUCCESSING IN COLLEGE

DOS AND DON'TS FROM FELLOW STUDENTS

We can learn from our own mistakes – some people would call this painful.

We can learn from others' mistakes – some people would call this smart.

One thing is for sure; it's our choice.

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PART ONE

PROCRASTINATION

PROCRASTINATION

“Some people would suggest that the real solution to obtaining great grades has to do with desire; that if you really wanted it badly enough, you would have studied more. I would argue differently. ‘Wanting it’ is only half the solution; knowing how to effectively plan for your studies represents the other half. This part talks about that second half. By making ‘better decisions’ as outlined in this section, I transformed myself from a ‘C’ student to a student who consistently earned A’s.” – Kevin, Graduate

Making Big Plans to Catch-Up

Background

You are taking a class that involves a major project due at the end of the semester. It is now mid-semester and you have done nothing.

Questionable Decision

“This weekend, I am going to spend all day Saturday and most of Sunday working on the project.”

Better Decision

“Starting today at a designated time and location, I am going to spend approximately 50 minutes working on the outline to my project. At the end of the 50 minute study session, I will clearly define the work I will do in my next study session.”

Explanation

Whenever your decision making process follows a pattern of putting off studying coupled with big and unspecific plans, you are kidding yourself. The reality is that you will not even come close to fulfilling those big plans. Individuals who set clearly defined, small study sessions that are spaced out, such as: “I’ll go to the library and read 10 pages in my math textbook; then, I’ll grab a cup of coffee and go to the study lounge and review my history notes”, are more productive than students who plan ambiguous, larger study sessions, such as: “This Saturday, I’ll book it the entire day.”

Why? Because clearly defined, small study sessions that are approximately 30 to 90 minutes in length are more doable than ambiguous, larger study sessions.

Educational professionals will tell you that more material can be comprehended in three 50 minute study sessions rather than one 2.5 hour study session.

Making Time Endless

How do you make time endless? By making decisions that give you the delusion or false belief of having more time on your hands than you really have. “I’m going to really book-it all weekend” or “I’m going to pull an all-nighter” are decisions that make time endless. In reality, you will not even come close to accomplishing those big study plans.

The problem in making large, ambiguous plans to study is that you negate any sense of urgency to study now. This lack of urgency makes it very easy for activities other than homework to dominate your time. In other words, welcome to the world of procrastination!

By not making that all-nighter decision, you can realistically assess how much time you really do have left or maybe better stated, don't have left. With this realistic assessment, you will study more aggressively and more selectively.

Making Homework Doable

To make time endless is to be dishonest with yourself. The mind game goes like this:

To compensate for doing nothing now, you plan on an even a larger study session later. This makes you feel okay about not doing anything now or quitting your study session sooner than you had planned. It sounds great; however, the problem is that you end up with a planned study session that is even more difficult to achieve than the one you were going to do. You're kidding yourself!

The solution to becoming more productive is to make your homework more doable, not less doable. At this point you need to honestly ask yourself, "If I can't do "X" amount of homework now, then how in the world am I going to do two times that amount of homework later?" Caution yourself from thinking that later will be different. Your personal history should tell you that later will not be so different; more often than not, the only thing that will be different is a more ambiguous, larger study session resulting in low productivity.

If your general state of mind is unenthusiastic about doing homework, then concern yourself with only completing the study session at hand. Thinking about all the work that you have yet to do or making plans for future study sessions can create overwhelming feelings and lead to procrastination.

Squeezing In Study Sessions

Background #1

You get back to your place ready to relax a bit and then eat dinner.

Questionable Decision #1

“I’ll sit back and watch TV, eat dinner, and then start on math homework after dinner.”

Better Decision #1

“I’ll do five math problems before dinner and read ten pages in my chemistry text after dinner. Only after completing the ten pages in my chemistry text will I determine what, when, and where I will study next.”

Background #2

It’s 7:00 PM and you feel like going out or unwinding this evening.

Questionable Decision #2

“I have a ton of homework, so I’ll go out and unwind this evening and tomorrow I’ll really book-it.”

Better Decision #2

“Before going out this evening, I’ll complete just one small study session... reading that 10 page history paper.”

Explanation

By not making these “squeezing-in” homework decisions, you will find yourself planning for larger, ambiguous study sessions. This will result in procrastination and low productivity.

Something Vs Nothing

Background

You arrive back at your place sometime between 8:30 to 9:00pm planning to read at least 10 pages in your economic's textbook. However, you're now tired and therefore not feeling too motivated to read your economic's textbook, a book that requires a high level of concentration and effort.

Questionable Decision

"I'll go to bed now and first thing tomorrow morning, when I'm well rested, I'll sit down and read the entire assigned chapter in my economics textbook."

Better Decision

Given how tired I feel and the high level of concentration required to study economics, I'm going to read 10 pages in my business management textbook instead of my economic textbook."

Explanation

Doing something now is always better than doing nothing now. If you find that you simply don't have the motivation to do what you had planned, then don't say: "I'll do nothing now, with the intent of doing something later." This kind of statement usually represents a kidding-yourself decision that translates into procrastination and low productivity.

In this example, beat procrastination by selecting and working on material that matches your concentration and energy levels.

Specifying and Skimming

Background

You have just finished a study session and you are about to get up and do something else.

Questionable Decision

“After dinner, I will study more.”

Better Decision

“Just prior to finishing my existing study session, I have determined that I will read Chapter 9 during my next study session. I will also very briefly skim this chapter right now.”

Explanation

By specifying the material you will study at your next study session and then skimming that material, you can casually think about that material between study sessions. Through this casual involvement, you will find that getting started on your next study session will take less effort. It stands to reason that the easier you make it for yourself to get started, the more likely you are to study when planned.

Unproductive Locations

Background

You're at school; it's mid-day and you are not having a very productive day. Although you're starting to feel pressure to get something done, you just don't feel like studying. You're thinking of going back to your place to study; however, your personal history of studying there is usually unproductive.

Questionable Decision

"When I get back to my place, I will make up for my unproductive day by reading chapter 10 in my business management textbook, doing problems in math, and reading a chapter in my marketing textbook."

Better Decision

"I am aware of a few things about myself:

- 1) I know that planning to do homework at my place has not been very productive, so I will not kid myself by planning to do homework at my place.
- 2) It's here on campus that I'm most productive.
- 3) I am also aware that deciding to do nothing now with the intention of doing a lot later usually means that I'm kidding myself.

Therefore, right now here at school I am going to just focus on completing one study session... I will read part of chapter 10 in my business management textbook, pages 54 through 68."

Explanation

By kidding yourself into believing that this time will be different – deciding to study at a historically unproductive location – you relieve the needed pressure to do homework now. The end result is that you do zero homework now and zero

homework later at your historically unproductive location.

The solution is to be honest with yourself and respect the fact that some locations are more productive for you than others. To respect who you are, do not plan to do significant or even moderate amounts of homework at historically unproductive locations.

Letting Exceptions Fool You

If you actually pull an all-nighter, accomplish a big study session, or study at a historically unproductive location, great! Congratulations on getting a lot done. However, don't play against the odds by letting those few successes give you reason to plan in that way. As soon as you hear yourself planning for large study sessions, stop kidding yourself and start planning for success through clearly defined, small study sessions.

100% Concentration

To think that you have to maintain 100% concentration while studying can be dishonest with yourself. With all the things going on in one's life it is nearly impossible to maintain 100% concentration; therefore, don't wait to start studying until 100% concentration arrives.

There will be times when your mind drifts from your studying. That's okay! Just keep on pulling your mind back to studying until you complete your defined study session.

Catching a Few Z's

Putting off studying to catch a few “Z's” does not typically result in greater productivity; rather, catching some Z's with the intent of being in a better position to study later is usually another way to rationalize procrastination.

The solution: Typically, the state of feeling tired will pass. With this belief in mind, it is best to start studying and work through being tired. Whatever you do, make sure you do at least something now. For example: Read a half a chapter versus the entire chapter or do five problems versus ten problems. Say to yourself: “Only after I finish this reduced study session, will I then decide what's next.” If this 'next' decision is to still catch some Z's, you will have at least done something or you might find that your state of feeling tired has passed.

PART TWO

THREE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITIES TO SECURE GREAT GRADES

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Your First Opportunity

Visit the instructor by the first or second class and inquire about what is needed to do well in the course.

During this first visit with the professor, let him or her know that this class is very important to you. Then, ask the professor questions that will provide you an idea of what the tests will be based on. i.e., “Are tests based more on your lectures or the text book?” This will tell you where to devote your study time.

As stated by a college student: “I had an economics instructor who answered this question by stating that students told him that one could study his lecture notes without regard to the textbook readings and do very well on his tests. With this information, I tape recorded the lectures and listened to the tapes while I reviewed my notes from the lectures. While most other students struggled with the course, I earned a relatively easy ‘A’.”

Your Second Opportunity

In the classroom, review your notes immediately after the lecture. You can achieve a significant return on your study time by reviewing your notes immediately after the lecture in the classroom. There are three reasons for this:

- 1) Because the lecture is fresh on your mind, you can add more information or make a greater number of corrections to your notes.
- 2) While reviewing your notes, you might require some clarifications or think of questions for the instructor. If the instructor is still in the classroom, approach her or him.

3) While reviewing your notes, always keep an open ear to questions other students are asking. In addition to answering questions that you might not have considered, the professor's responses could further clarify what will be on the test.

Your Third Opportunity

Visit your instructor a day or two before the test and ask him or her relevant and meaningful questions about the subject matter and test.

By visiting your instructor a day or two prior to the test and asking him or her questions on the subject matter, you might gain additional insights on areas that you should focus for the upcoming test. Where the professor spends his or her time or doesn't spend time can tell you a lot about what material you should focus on.

Benefit of the Doubt

Consider the following student:

A. He/she inquires with the professor about what is needed to do well in the course. (Adheres to the first biggest opportunity.)

B. He/she stays after every class to review his/her notes and at times ask the instructor questions. (Adheres to the second biggest opportunity.)

C. He/she visits the instructor prior to every test and asks relevant and meaningful questions about the subject matter/test. (Adheres to the third biggest opportunity.)

The semester has ended and this particular student is on the border between two grades. What grade do you think the instructor assigns this student?

PART THREE

QUOTES FROM FELLOW STUDENTS



COLLEGE LIFE

The following quotes represent a cross section of public and private colleges.

“Follow your interests so you are not always forcing yourself to learn... follow your heart.” – *Chris, Freshman*

“Your first semester is most important...how well you do in your first semester will dictate how you do in your next seven... it’s hard to overcome a first bad semester and it’s very easy to have a first bad semester.” – Mike, Junior

“Find a group of people that you will be safe with... people that you don’t have to prove yourself to.” – *Jessica, Graduate*

“Be goal oriented... be purposeful about being in college... why are you there.” – *Jason, Senior*

“Take advantage of the school’s resources to help you find your purpose.” *Josh, Senior*

“Stay close to your adviser to make sure you are on track with your courses for graduation.” – *Nicholas, Sophomore*

“More important than a GPA... what will carry forward is your ability to think... build a skill set that is not collapsible to the exam but to your life.” – Matt, Graduate

“If you decide to major in something, then find someone in the major to shadow. Don’t wait until junior year to find out you don’t like it and have start over.” – *Ashley, Sophomore*

COLLEGE LIFE

“By doing well in your first semesters, you will go into your more difficult classes with a needed and better GPA.” – *Andrew, Senior*

“Try not to isolate yourself in dealing with depression... know that there are many people going through the same thing.” – Jacob, Senior

“Take classes that you really want to take so you can develop a real passion or interest.” – Melissa, Graduate

“85% of your success is just showing up for class.” – *David, Senior*

“Surround yourself with positive people.” – *Samantha, Senior*

“Do research on your major and don’t rely solely on your adviser... be proactive or you might miss taking a needed class... this could throw-off your whole plan.” – *Taylor, Junior*

“Be open to academic chance... don’t confirm a major... take things that you are interested in... this might pique something for you.” – *Rachel, Senior*

“Be open minded to people... don’t judge a book by it’s cover.” *Juan, Sophomore*

“Must earn a high GPA in your Freshman and Sophomore years... if you don’t, it will be difficult to make up.” – *Robert, Freshman*

“Biggest struggle is balancing your coursework with a social life... you must stay focused on your goals and values.” – *Jordan, Senior*

“Don’t go into the term wanting to get straight A’s; rather, take classes that you’re interested in... form your class selection more on a life plan.” – Victoria, Senior

“Establish connections and friendships that are beneficial to your goals and values...don’t behave in a way that degrades you.” – *Kate, Senior*

COLLEGE LIFE

“Be the person you wanted to be that you could not be in high school.”

– *Luis, Sophomore*

“Know your priorities. Ask yourself: 10 years down the road, what do you want your college experience to be? You won’t remember the grades... the value in college has to do with learning more about yourself.” – *Hannah, Sophomore*

“Be open to what your passion is... it’s not always best to come into school with a pre-determined area of study... challenge yourself on what your real passion is... be aggressive to seek and find opportunities.” – *Ethan, Junior*

“Don’t worry about getting all A’s; rather, be more focused on developing people skills or engaging in community outreach.” – *Cody, Senior*

“DO something completely different... everything you do does not always have to be something that will enrich your career.” – Steve, Graduate

“Try an activity that you might not normally try and develop friendships that you might not normally have.” – *Brooke, Graduate*

“If you take care of your academics, everything else will fall into place.” – *Tim, Sophomore*

“Going to all your classes will alleviate most issues you will have.” – *Sara, Senior*

“Be yourself... develop a personal relationship with at least one of your professors... this will be the best college experience you will have. Four years will go by fast.” – *Lauren, Senior*

“If you have a problem, the school is paying someone to help you solve it... find that person...everyone at the school works for you.” – Jeff, Junior

“To be in total control of your destiny, have goals and a realistic plan on how to achieve them.” – *Bryan, Senior*



PLANNING FOR YOUR CLASSES

“There is nothing wrong with withdrawing from a class if you can’t maintain the workload.” – *Kyle, Junior*

“Have a plan. e.g., Study abroad.” – *Melissa, Freshman*

“Make sure you see your adviser twice a semester because the requirements for graduation can change.” – *Kristen, Sophomore*

“Register for classes as soon as the school allows... go ASAP because classes will fill-up fast.” – *Bryan, Sophomore*

“Start with general ed courses... don’t take too many specialized classes because you might change your major... to check things out, maybe take one specialized class per semester.” – *Nicole, Graduate*

“Choose classes properly... see a counselor, but make your own decisions.” – *Al, Senior*

“Make sure you choose your major early-on.” – *Marissa, Senior*

“Get your prerequisite classes done ASAP.” – *Amy, Senior*

“After you pick a major, stick to it... it will cost a lot to change... additional classes means more dollars spent... so pick one and stick to it.” – *Crystal, Junior*

“Ask upper classmates about the classes that you are thinking of taking.”
– *Tony, Senior*

“Don’t think that on-line classes are easy.” – *Paige, Junior*

PLANNING FOR YOUR CLASSES

“Know what you want to do; otherwise, you could waste your time taking too many general courses.” – *Dick, Sophomore*

“Try to be academically involved 1 or 2 summers... it helps to keep things fresh on your mind.” – *Patrick, Graduate*

“Don’t start out with a heavy course load... you might end up with an initial poor GPA.” – *Katie, Senior*

“Check-in with your counselor every semester to make sure you are on the right track.” – *Caitlin, Senior*

“Research professors on-line at ratemyprofessors.com.” – *Lindsey, Freshman*

“Choose a major that you are most interested in... do what you really want to do... go through course listings and select a major that has the most interesting courses to you.” – *Miranda, Senior*

“As a freshman, try to take classes in your major.” – *Mark, Graduate*

“By going to summer school, I was able to take fewer credits during the year and thereby participate in more activities.” – *Grace, Graduate*

“Be proactive in your scheduling... unlike high school, you don’t receive reminders from instructors. – *Charlie, Freshman*

“Schedule late classes... you’re more likely to attend.” – *Jason, Junior*

“Determine all the classes needed for your major right away.” – *Beth, Freshman*

“Meet with your adviser every year so you don’t take the wrong class.” – *Angela, Senior*



STUDYING

“Caution - Don’t be so impressed with your academic skills that you feel that you don’t need to develop good study patterns or habits.” – *Carol, Graduate*

“Read your syllabus carefully... then talk to your professor on any needed clarifications... know when assignments are due... prioritize your work.” – *Al, Graduate*

“Enjoy what you are studying... find value... embrace the challenge.” – *Jeff, Senior*

“What is your studying style? Your high school style of studying might not work in college. i.e., Multitasking (TV, etc) while studying. In college you will need a more focused environment... determine your best time and best place to study.”
– *Andy, Graduate*

“If the instructor provides a study guide, then complete it ASAP.” – *Diana, Senior*

“Don’t just go to the library the week before your test.” – *Danielle, Junior*

“Always know what your grade is throughout the semester.” – *Kim, Sophomore*

“Seek a thorough understanding by understanding the material fundamentally... memorizing will not work like it did in high school.” – *April, Junior*

“Temper your expectations... if you want A’s, then working hard is part of the territory...you will need to study when your friends are going out.” – *Jim, Freshman*

“Trust in yourself that you have the ability to do well... have confidence in yourself.” – *Rachael, Graduate*

STUDYING

“Check syllabuses everyday... keep up with your reading... it’s easy to get behind.” – *Morgan, Junior*

“Don’t stress if you get a B... don’t place your self-worth on getting an A.”
– *Holly, Sophomore*

“During finals, turn off Facebook and other abstractions, such as your smart phone.” – *Whitney, Junior*

“Don’t get ahead of yourself by doing your perceived short cuts.” – *Bob, Graduate*

“It’s better to spend time on fewer problems and really understand the theories behind those problems versus spending time on many problems.” – *Sue, Junior*

“Set study goals and stick to them prior to going out to socialize.” *Megan, Junior*

“If you fail a test, then reach out to your TA or professor... go to their office hours.”
– *Ann, Junior*

“Take advantage of your tutor center... students who go to the tutor center are more likely to do better in classes. Going to tutor center does not mean you’re falling behind... it means that you are putting in more work and that you are more likely to work with your peers and with a study group.” – *Richard, Graduate*

“Don’t be afraid to ask for help through University Services. e.g., Writers Workshop.” – *Michelle, Junior*

“By reading and doing problem sets before the lecture, the lecture then becomes a review session.” – *Brett, Sophomore*

“Find a group of people. i.e., Hang and study with a group of people who are interested in doing well in school... this will create a form of peer pressure... work on problem sets prior to the lecture.” – *Bill, Graduate*



STUDY GROUPS

“Form small study groups with people in your classes.” – *Julie, Junior*

“Work with people within your major... find a close group of people that you can study with.” – *Wesley, Senior*

“Know that other classmates also don’t get it... join study groups.” – *Kara, Junior*

“Develop friendships... can’t do it alone.” – *Jake, Sophomore*

“Develop friendships with people in your major... these connections can help you with your studies.” – *Holly, Freshman*

“I found that studying with friends was not productive.” – *Katherine, Junior*

“By talking to people about the material, you will reinforce your knowledge.” – *Johnathan, Sophomore*

“Try to make friends in your classes... develop study partners... teaching each other is the best way to prepare for an exam.” – Marge, Junior

“Don’t be afraid to ask for help. i.e., Form study groups... know that there are other people who are struggling just as much as you are.” – Lindsay, Graduate



ATTENDING CLASSES

“Take very good notes... record and rewrite notes... tests can be based on class notes.” – *Jessica, Junior*

“Don’t skip too many classes... you will miss important knowledge that is not found in your text books.” – *John, Graduate*

“When studying, go through your notes and write out questions that can be answered from your notes... then review those questions.” – Matt, Sophomore

“Develop study strategies... develop study patterns such as... taking notes even though you think you can do without taking notes or write summaries of what you read.” – *Justin, Junior*

“Take your classes seriously. Go to classes every day... you are paying for them.” – *Brandon, Senior*

“Go to class... if you mess up one semester, it messes up your GPA for good. Come prepared and work. It’s not as easy as high school.” – Dave, Sophomore

“Go to class every day... even if it is a blow off class or it’s on a Friday.” – *Al, Senior*

“Keep all your material from prior years so you can look at your notes.” – *Jo, Senior*

“If you’re in a class that is difficult or you are having a hard time staying motivated, go to every class... don’t skip classes... even if you hate everything about the class and are not doing all the homework, you could still be okay... it’s not worth it to skip classes.” – *Kyle, Senior*

ATTENDING CLASSES

“I volunteered to type notes for the hearing impaired... this greatly helped my own studies.” – *Chelsea, Junior*

“If you know the class is difficult, then record the lectures... first ask the instructor if it’s okay... follow your notes while listening to the lecture.” – *Ryan, Senior*

“The consequence of missing classes is bad grades.” – *Zachary, Graduate*

“Make sure you attend your classes... if you’re in between grades, this could be the difference between earning the higher grade.” – *Austin, Freshman*

“Actively participate and engage in your classes by attending all your classes, by doing your work on time, and by visiting with your professors during their office hours.” – *Tyler, Graduate*

“Have good study habits. i.e., Take notes and don’t take your computer to your classes.” – *Justin, Freshman*

“Study your notes everyday... don’t let just before midterms be the first time that you study your notes.” – *Melissa, Junior*



TIME MANAGEMENT

“Try to get on a normal sleep schedule... wake-up early... you can get a lot of work done early rather than sleeping late... get up at 7:30 am... try to get your work done by 10 am so you can go out at night.” – *Ann, Junior*

“Finish your work before going out... having fun one night is not worth the feeling of being overwhelmed.” – *Morgan, Sophomore*

“Time management involves establishing some structure in your schedule... make sure you get into a routine... establish a schedule on when to study.” – Sam, Senior

“To get A’s, you must stay ahead or keep up to date... what really makes things stressful is when you fall behind.” – *Aaron, Sophomore*

“Always do your work on the ‘front end’ because everything comes crashing (due dates and tests) at the end of the semester... so front load as much work as possible. i.e., Read the material or complete the problems prior to your classes... and do papers a couple weeks before they’re due.” – Brian, Senior

“Although it depends on the person, I do better by having less free time... having a part time job forces structure... work no more than 20 work hours a week.” – *Ben, Senior*

“Write out a schedule for yourself and put it in writing. e.g., When you will go to the library? Stick to it.” – *Erica, Senior*

“When organizing your schedule, plan for long stretches of time between classes... this will provide reading time between classes.” – *Trevor, Freshman*

“If you have free time between classes... study rather than taking a nap.” – *Lu, Senior*

TIME MANAGEMENT

“The busier you are, the better your time management skills... so join clubs that share your ambitions or get a part time job.” – *Laura, Sophomore*

“If you always plan to stay in and study, then you’ll miss opportunities to develop friendships. Be honest with yourself about what you can really accomplish... if you are really not going to study that evening and you are going to watch TV, then accept that social invitation and go out and enjoy yourself. Part of being honest with yourself is knowing that everyone needs to maintain their own balance between academics and a social life.” – *Kate, Senior*

“Take a class on time management.” – *Sydney, Junior*

“Prioritize your time... there will be temptations to do what you’re not supposed to do... most importantly, get your stuff done. e.g., Create ‘to do’ lists.” – *Em, Junior*

“The earlier you start studying for your tests, the better... the more it will click... the more information you will retain.” – *Bryan, Junior*

“The problem with lots of free time is that you waste time with things like watching TV or Netflix... with less free time, you are forced to be more prudent on how you use your time... always remember, academics come first.” – Tiffany, Graduate

“Manage your time... don’t mess around on your computer... it can be a time waster.” – *Caleb, Sophomore*

“Don’t waste time watching TV. Don’t go out too much or overextend yourself in other areas.” – *Garrett, Freshman*

“On time management, use the time between your classes to study instead of wasting it. i.e., Read and study during the one or two hours between classes.” Jordan, Sophomore

“Focus on studies... procrastination is at the heart of failure.” – *Isaac, Freshman*

TIME MANAGEMENT

“It’s easy to get behind... go over notes from classes every day... try not to cram for tests... it never goes well.” – *Jesse, Sophomore*

“Have a study pattern... get organized... use a planner to mark down all important due dates.” – *Anne, Junior*

“Maintain a study schedule... study every day even if you don’t have homework... try to keep up with everything.” – Cameron, Junior

“Go to every class and study... don’t wait until the last minute to do a paper... you will do better if you do a little every day because you will have time to think about it.” – Olivia, Junior

“Don’t get sucked into the idea that you have all this time.” – *Sean, Freshman*

“Organization skills... having more independence in college means you must effectively manage your own time.” – *Sarah, Junior*

“If you look at the actual amount of work, it usually requires less work than you think to do well.” – *Brandon, Graduate*

“At the beginning of each semester, give yourself a goal of what you need to accomplish. At the end of each week or month, measure what you have accomplished against those goals.” – *Tyler, Graduate*

“Time Management... a lot of things going on in life... must budget time wisely by designating three hours a day to study even if don’t have assigned homework.” – *Hunter, Senior*

“Treat academics as a work week... this will make things less stressful and will have a positive impact on your social life.” – Jack, Sophomore

TIME MANAGEMENT

“Be more productive... get to campus early and do your work there.” – *Lu, Junior*

“Do readings on time... don’t wait until the week of the test.” – *Paul, Sophomore*

“Study every day... even if it’s only for an hour.” – *Mitch, Senior*

“Don’t schedule classes too early, such as 8 am... schedule them after 11 am.”
– *Cody, Sophomore*

“It’s important to get involved with groups on campus... this way you will be more productive with your overall use of your time and be more likely to do better in school as opposed to partying.” – Austin, Graduate

“Don’t wait to do a 10 page paper the day before its due... rather, do one page a day leading up to the due date.” – Kyle, Freshman

“Stay on top of things... if you fall behind, it’s hard to catch up.” – Jan, Freshman

“Prioritize... get the most important things done first... join study groups.” – *Cal Senior*

“Focus on classes... extracurricular activities should not be prioritized.” – *Sue, Junior*

“Use a planner... plan when to study... set aside good chunks of time.” – *Vic, Senior*

“Prioritize what you need to do well, i.e., You don’t have to read all the pages of every assigned reading.” – *Senior, Nicole*

“Don’t play a lot of video games.” – Dustin, Freshman

“As long as you can prioritize, you will have an enjoyable social life.” – *Jim, Sophomore*

TIME MANAGEMENT

“Don’t over commit yourself to non-school activities... you are here to go to school.” – *Noah, Graduate*

“Be consistent... don’t cram the night before for a test or paper.... rather, spread out the work so you are not overwhelmed... keep up on your assignments... don’t put off things to the last minute.” – *Tony, Graduate*

“On a paper, project, or preparing for a test, start earlier on it than you think you should.” – *Luke, Graduate*

“Don’t over stress yourself... you must allocate time in your for down time.” – *Scott, Sophomore*

“Focus on what you are working on... don’t get distracted with events, people, etc... set blocks of time each day to study.” – *Luis, Sophomore*

“For each class syllabus, use Google calendar to document due dates.” – *Angela, Junior*

“On time management, if you only have a 20 minute break between classes, then spend it reading.” – *Blake, Graduate*

“Best advice - think about school as a job - work from 9 to 5 pm... this helps in maintaining balance in your life.” – *Jamie, Graduate*

“Everyone is different in terms of the time of day that they are most productive. i.e., Are you a morning or a night person?” – *Amy, Graduate*

“Be proactive... get stuff done... don’t leave or wait until the night before it’s due to start the work... to do this is painful.” – *Crystal, Senior*

TIME MANAGEMENT

“Plan... if you’re going out Thursday to party, then do a lot of work Monday through Thursday.” – *Julia, Junior*

“Establish your priorities and make a list of goals... then make decisions based on this list... always have this list in front of you.” – *Danielle, Senior*

“Don’t wait until the day prior to the due date to start working on it.”
– *Lucas, Freshman*

“Use self-control... know your limits. i.e., Limit yourself to 30 minute breaks on Facebook or YouTube.” – *Corey, Sophomore*

“By studying on a regular basis, you reduce your stress level during finals.”
– *Erika, Freshman*

“Try not to go out during the week... even if friends pressure you... first do your work.” – *Briana, Sophomore*



BALANCING ACADEMICS

“Don’t procrastinate...manage your time... don’t watch TV during the day if you want to go out at night.” – *Tyler, Freshman*

“When socializing, don’t conform to a norm because you feel you need to... find your sweet spot... use caution when getting involved with a group that likes to party a lot.” – Ethan, Senior

“If you’re going out every night, it’s a problem... it will be difficult to achieve a high GPA.” – *Vanessa, Freshman*

“Don’t let partying engulf you... maintain a balance between studying and having fun.” – *Jason, Sophomore*

“Take it easy with partying... studying comes first.” – *Tiffany, Junior*

“Try not to go out during the weekdays.” – *Jared, Sophomore*

“No matter what, if you have studying to do, then don’t go out.” – *Ted, Sophomore*

“Have fun but not too much... enjoy yourself.” – *Kristen, Senior*

“Have a balance between social and academic lives so you don’t get too stressed.” – *Kate, Senior*

“Balance social life with academic life... don’t stay in your room all the time and miss out on the social part of college.” – *Amber, Freshman*

“Be careful about who you hang out with... don’t waste time with people who are not like- minded in your studying priorities.” – Brooke, Junior



WHERE TO STUDY

“Find a location where you are good at studying.” – *Erik, Senior*

“Find a place to study so you don’t get distracted.” – *Dalton, Freshman*

“Must be proactive. i.e., Study in an environment with no distractions, such as library. Go where everyone else has the same goal.” – Mason, Junior

“Find a good studying environment that works for you.” – *George, Freshman*

“On campus, I’m more productive.” – *Dillon, Senior*

“Find a quiet place to study... do your readings prior to class...this way, you will get more out of your classes.” – *Meghan, Junior*

“Find your ‘nook’... where you study best.” – *April, Senior*

“Pick your best study locations, where there are no distractions.”
– *Kara, Freshman*

“Find a good study location... some people need noise, others don’t.”
– *Ana, Sophomore*



WORKING WITH PROFESSORS

“Go to your instructor’s office hours... don’t just ask questions to a problem; ask questions that demonstrate your wanting to know more about the topic area. This will put you in a position to build good relationships with your professors.”
– *Dominique, Graduate*

“Be more open to the idea that this is a community of people... not just a job for the professor or a chore for yourself; rather, a community where you are both growing together. This dynamic will enable both of you to better understand each other; moreover, it opens up discussions with the professor on things other than grades/classes.” – *Henry, Junior*

“Use your TAs and professors’ office hours as much as possible... they will provide you insights on how to use your book or what to look for in a test, etc.”
– *Karen, Junior*

“People should realize that instructors are adults... that students are on equal ground with the professors... that the professors are just as much people too... this perspective will enable you to feel comfortable in approaching them.” – *Sal, Senior*

“Seek out help where you need it... don’t put everything on your shoulders... connect with teachers and classmates.” – *Cory, Graduate*

“Use Instructors’ office hours... don’t be afraid to ask questions... they are there to help you. Too many students fear that professors will say: ‘You have not kept up with the materials or you should know that.’ Don’t worry about it... it’s the professor’s job is to help you.” – *Rachael, Junior*

WORKING WITH PROFESSORS

“Meet with your professor outside of your class time so they know your face / name. Why? If you need an extension for a paper, etc... it makes it a lot easier for the professor to grant your request.” – *Kendra, Sophomore*

“Form friendships with instructors. This can be important... instructors can advise you on what classes to take... they can ask you to conduct research for them or they can be a reference for you.” – *Gabriela, Graduate*

“Unlike high school, you must maintain relationships with your professors... you must seek them out... go to their office hours.” – *Kim, Graduate*

“Develop a solid relationship with your profs... they are your partners. Too many students see instructors as their boss; your instructors are your biggest resource.” – *Tom, Sophomore*

“Meet with professor during office hours... especially with your big classes... professors will view you differently... they will carry you... becomes more like H.S... receive 1:1 attention... you can make a big class feel small... you don't feel so overwhelmed.” – *Joe, Junior*

“Don't let your need to be independent or your not wanting to feel vulnerable or stupid stop you from visiting with your adviser or instructors.” – *Eric, Junior*

“Definitely try to use office hours... even if you don't have a specific question... even if it seems awkward. i.e., Ask the professor or TA about their research. One day you might need them in your corner... life events happen, such as illnesses or family issues and therefore, you might need to miss an exam or take a week off... for this, you will need their support. Also, they can provide you with advice on how to best navigate their class.” – Dylan, Graduate

“Definitely develop relationships with your professors... one day you might need a reference letter from them.” – *Nick, Sophomore*

WORKING WITH PROFESSORS

“Keep in touch with your professors so that you can maintain relationships with them... even if you are not in their class that semester.” – *Morgan, Sophomore*

“Don’t think that by meeting with a professor that this is not ideal. On the contrary, by meeting with your professors they can clarify things and guide you.”
– *John, Senior*

“If you’re having issues, then talk with your professor... they are there to help.”
– *Nicole, Senior*

“Instructors are happy to engage with students... be respectful of their time... don’t ask if it’s already clearly stated on the syllabus.” – *Brian, Graduate*

“Go to office hours... meet with TAs and professors... make those connections... build key relationships... in doing so, you will begin to feel more comfortable asking questions and not feeling dumb... they become your partner.” – *Kevin, Senior*

“Get to know the professors by going to office hours... if you are struggling in class, they will see that you are taking their class seriously... if they know your name, they will be more understanding.” – *Kayla, Junior*

“Don’t be flippant with the syllabus and your classes... be clear on your instructor’s expectations of you.” – *Megan, Graduate*

“Go to office hours... it shows that you are interested... that you are taking initiative in their class. Don’t be embarrassed to ask questions.” – *Justin, Senior*

“Make contact with your instructors. i.e., Email your professors links on topics that they might find of interest. Go to their office hours... not just when you have a problem or a question... visit them to have a conversation about a topic that both of you might find to be interesting. They could turn out to be your mentor.”
– *Alyssa, Graduate*

WORKING WITH PROFESSORS

“Go to office hours and have prepared questions for the TAs or professors... beyond the scope of the exam or homework, show a real interest in the subject.”

– Jessica, Junior

“Don’t be a silent class member... don’t be afraid to talk to a faculty member... faculty are not as intimidating as you think... by talking to them, you never know where it will take you. i.e., Conducting research for them.” – Dave, Graduate

“Freshman year is the easiest time to get to know your professors... don’t wait until your senior year to develop relationships with professors. In your senior year, you will need them for reference letters, etc.” – Sierra, Graduate

“Take every opportunity to talk to your instructors and build relationships, so that they will be more inclined to help you. If you are on the border of a grade, you might receive a higher grade.” – Austin, Senior

“Be respectful of your instructor by reading the syllabus... know their hours... don’t just show up... have specific reasons for why you’re there.”

– Melissa, Freshman

“Get involved in clubs... great way to make friends with people who you have a common interest.” – Mason, Graduate



JOINING ORGANIZATIONS

“Think about participating in extracurricular activities... this is an opportunity to make friends... almost every school has a “plan day” where you can sign up for activities... don’t skip this day.” – *Maria, Senior*

“Don’t bite off more than you can chew... get involved, but don’t get involved in everything... it’s all about finding a balance where you can excel.” - *Ken, Freshman*

“Get involved with groups, organizations, and societies within your chosen field.” – *Keith, Senior*

“Get involved within your major... join clubs or apply for summer internships.” – *Dillon, Sophomore*

“Join groups... establish relationships... join groups that are within your major.” – *Oscar, Senior*

“Get involved in activities that you are interested in... this way you are more likely to meet people that you are truly interested in.” – *Ethan, Graduate*

“You must put yourself out there to make friends. e.g., Join clubs.” – *Julie, Sophomore*

“On socializing, get out of your comfort zone. i.e., Join organizations that you never thought you would... you might meet lasting friends.” – *Francisco, Junior*

“Join an organization... allows you to network and find out what classes to take or not to take.” – *Dillon, Sophomore*

“Join clubs... this makes the campus smaller.” – *Luis, Senior*

JOINING ORGANIZATIONS

“Know about the organization before you join it because it may take more of your time than you realize.” – *Brenda, Junior*

“Join professional organizations... this will help you when you’re applying for jobs after college.” – *Wesley, Sophomore*

“The best way to get to know people is to follow your interest. i.e., Join groups or causes that you are interested in... this is the healthiest means to build friendships.” – *Veronica, Senior*

“Make sure you get involved in activities early-on.” – *Haley, Senior*

“Join clubs and organizations so you can develop your organizational and communication skills and make friends.” – April, Graduate

“Find a group. e.g., Frat or Sorority that you are comfortable with; however, make sure you can set time aside to devote to these groups... understand your commitments before making more of them.” – *Chris, Sophomore*

“If you are not good at organizing social events for yourself, then going Greek will provide you with many social events; however, being involved in these groups means losing some of your autonomy.” – *Autumn, Junior*

“Take advantage of opportunities at school... you must search things out... they won’t fall into your lap... look at clubs.” – Phil, Senior

*“Don’t let peer pressure force you to do something outside of who you are.”
– Kelly, Graduate*

“Don’t be afraid to try new things... you are here for more than just your classes... people in clubs are welcoming. e.g., Join a sailing club or start an organization.” – Jeremy, Sophomore



SOCIAL LIFE

“Have fun, but be prepared to deal with what comes with it.” – *Venessa, Graduate*

“Try to meet people from different cultures.” – *Travis, Junior*

“Don’t accept the myth of experimentation... stay close to your values.” – *Ken, Senior*

“Keep an open mind about people so that you can make unsuspecting friends by not closing doors.” – *Sydney, Freshman*

“Be yourself... stay with what’s comfortable for you. i.e. Don’t party if that’s not who you are.” – *Natalie, Freshman*

“In your classes, interact with people and make friends.” – *Adam, Senior*

“Get a good group of friends and you will be fine.” – *Hunter, Freshman*

“Pick friends that are on the same page as you... so you can get out of college what you want.” – *Haley, Junior*

“It’s good to eat with people... good time for socialization.” – *Bill, Freshman*

“Everyone is looking to develop friends... don’t feel embarrassed.” – *Emma, Junior*

“Keep your dorm room door open... don’t exclude yourself... take time to meet people prior to Thanksgiving. After Thanksgiving, groups and friendships have formed.” – *Dylan, Graduate*

“Don’t be friends with people who always party.” – *Tim, Senior*

SOCIAL LIFE

“On social life, consider trying things that you are not comfortable doing; however, know when to step back.” – *Tony, Graduate*

“If someone has different values from you, then don’t be friends with them.”
– *Nathan, Senior*

“Make friends during orientation, in your classes, and at the dorm.”
– *Taylor, Junior*

“Put yourself out there to make new friends... expand your social groups to identify where you fit in... try different organizations.” – *Kim, Sophomore*

“Don’t let yourself be pressured into something that is not you or that you don’t want to do...if you don’t like a group of people, then find another.”
– *Laurie, Graduate*

“Find people (friends) that you are comfortable with so that you are not doing things out of peer pressure.” – *Jen, Sophomore*

“Continue to search for new friends... be patient... you will lose out on new relationships if you say: ‘you’re set’.” – *Nicole, Sophomore*

“On social life, plan for the consequences of your actions... if you go out Saturday night, then you will lose part of Sunday.” – *Rob, Graduate*

“Be open when meeting someone... don’t judge a book by its cover.”
– *Brandon, Freshman*



SAFETY

“Be aware of your surroundings... don’t be oblivious. i.e., If you’re in a poorer neighborhood and you’re unknowingly flaunting elements of your wealth, or demonstrating class based arrogance, then you could be mugged.”

– *Rachel, Graduate*

“On safety, don’t travel alone.” – *Hannah, Graduate*

“Never be too trusting... cell phones or wallets can be stolen... always take the least amount of stuff with you when you go out.” – *Brandon, Junior*

“Make sure that you are with friends when walking around at night... especially if you are drinking.” – *Kay, Graduate*

“Have a phone number of a cab company with you.” – *Tyler, Junior*

“If you get confronted by a police officer, don’t lie. You will get twice the punishment. By being straightforward with police officers, they will be more lenient.”

– *Jim, Junior*

“Be safe... make sure someone knows where you are at all times.” – *Case, Senior*

“Take advantage of safe rides and safe walks.” – *Karen, Freshman*

“Be smart, be cautious, and don’t get carried away with partying. It’s a privilege to party.” – *Henry, Junior*

“If you’re out late at night, make sure that you are with a friend.” – *Patricia, Junior*

SAFETY

“For safety, I carry mace. Don’t travel alone at night... have a buddy system... take the free student cab service... take self-defense classes.” – *Sophia, Senior*

“Stay on campus as much as possible.” – *Brenda, Junior*

“It’s always better to walk at night with a buddy.” – *Dan, Junior*

“Don’t take campus security for granted; things can still happen.” – *Claire, Junior*

“Make full use of the campus shuttle systems... let your friends know where you are... keep the dorm room locked... keep your cell phone near you.” – *Julie, Senior*

“Walk in groups... pay attention to your surroundings... don’t listen to an iPod at night.” – *Holly, Graduate*

“If you walk with a backpack at night, you are a target for attack.”
– *Kendra, Senior*

“Be aware of where you are at all times and try not to be alone. Don’t wear your hair in a tail.” – *Bianca, Senior*

“Go to parties with friends and leave with them.” – *Lisa, Graduate*

“Travel with friends... adopt a ‘no man left behind’ mentality.”
– *Autumn, Graduate*

“Be careful of frats during the first two weekends of every semester, because they are considered ‘red alert’ weekends which means higher percentage of rapes.” – *Kay, Senior*



ALCOHOL AWARENESS

“Always be careful with how much you have to drink.” – *Brain, Junior*

“Be smart. i.e., Limit your alcohol consumption.” – *Steve, Senior*

“Go out in groups... go with people you know and leave with people you know... don’t take an open drink... don’t leave your drink alone.” – *Sam, Junior*

“Don’t drink and stay away from caffeine... eat lots of veggies.” – *Sarah, Senior*

“Go to programs on how to protect yourself. e.g. Alcohol abuse” – *Victoria, Junior*

“Know your drinking limits.” – *Nicole, Senior*

“Use caution or stay away from drinking.” – *Kevin, Sophomore*

“You don’t need to get wasted to have a good time.” – *Tom, Sophomore*

“Be responsible... you don’t have to say yes to everything... you can say no.”
– *Eric, Senior*



DATING

“Dating can wait until you are out of college.” – *Austin, Graduate*

“On dating, be open... there are a lot of great and interesting people out there... don’t get too hung up on one person.” – *Eric, Freshman*

“Don’t get involved in relationships in your first year because you will miss out on a lot of stuff... you won’t meet as many people.” – *Brianna, Sophomore*

“Be careful... make sure you know the person prior to dating.” – *Kyle, Sophomore*

“If dating, make friends outside of the circle you both hang in. Why? If you break up, you will still have friends.” – *Amber, Senior*

“If you want to date someone, be prepared for a serious relationship. There is not a lot of casual dating in college.” – *Brianna, Junior*

“No need to rush into everything, such as partying and dating. These things come with more risks and opportunities to make mistakes. – *Steve, Sophomore*

“On dating, enjoy yourself and have fun, but don’t get pressured into something you don’t want to do.” – *Aaron, Graduate*

“Don’t completely trust a guy. i.e., ‘I want to marry you’ – don’t always take that seriously.” – *Danielle, Junior*

“Don’t rush into a relationship... you don’t need a relationship to validate yourself.” – *Dylan, Sophomore*



THINGS IN GENERAL

“At the Dean of Students office, you can speak to the dean about family issues.”
– *Tiffany, Junior*

“Exercise to get rid of nervous energy.” – *Mary, Senior*

“Go to bed early and get up early.” – *Julia, Senior*

“Don’t let the big lecture hall intimidate you.” – *Cameron, Senior*

“Don’t wear high heels on campus.” – *Jordan, Freshman*

“Jump on opportunities... be proactive... take ‘walks’ so you can get to know the geography of the campus... explore how to get around.” – *Ryan, Freshman*

“Find internship opportunities through your college.” – *Logan, Senior*

“Don’t get too stressed out... loosen up and live a bit.” – *Jared, Senior*

“Must get your sleep; otherwise, you will walk around in a haze.” – *Joe, Freshman*

“Attend new student orientations with your parents.” – *Jesse, Junior*

“A car is a big hassle; it is easier to not have a car.” – *Julia, Sophomore*

“Set up a budget plan... even if you don’t stick to it.” – *Adam, Graduate*

“Speak with the alumni office and ask them to identify a mentor for you in your field of study. This mentor can help you in deciding which courses to take and in finding a job.” – *Andrea, Junior*

HOW CAN YOU DEVELOP YOUR SOUL?

*By being true to the beat of your drum
until your heart stops beating –*

*For only by doing this can you be at peace
with your inner self and it is within this
peace that your soul develops.*

Notice of Feedback

If you have feedback, insights, or advice that you would like to share with fellow students, please send them to info@BestPracticesToGraduate.org. Your response might be included in the next edition. To respect your privacy, your last name and associated college will not be referenced.

About the Author

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Best Practices To Graduate defines five best practices to help college students attend classes and complete study sessions so they can graduate. BestPracticesToGraduate.org

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