

## Pathways to College Success



# Pathways to College Success

*CWI 101 LEADERS*



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Welcome to *Pathways to College Success*!

This open educational resource has been developed for use in CWI 101, a first-semester experience course at the College of Western Idaho. Most higher education institutions include similar orientation courses, and, fortunately, we've been able to rely on two previously existing OER textbooks developed for the same purpose: *Blueprint for Success in College and Career* and *College Success*. As with many OER textbooks, these two textbooks rely in turn on other material (details here). Each chapter includes details on the original source at the end.

Over time, our textbook will be updated with original content from students at our institution. New content will be clearly labeled.

## Our Philosophy

Our textbook remixes these preexisting sources to fit the career pathways model of course learning developed by Liza Long, Department Chair of Integrated Studies, Amy Vassar, CWI 101 Coordinator, and the CWI 101 Advisory Committee. The purpose of a career pathways model is to provide a space for students to hone basic student success skills within the context of career exploration. Students who attend our college expect their education to be closely linked to their career goals, and the career pathways model ensures that alignment happens. We believe our model will foster academic, personal, and professional success for our students.

## How You Can Use This Text

While the textbook has been developed for a career pathways model, this is also a “use-it-as-you-need-it” kind of text. In other words, you don't have to read every word from beginning to end.

Other instructors who wish to use our textbook may select individual chapters as needed.

## Accessibility

Our textbook has been written with accessibility in mind. Instructors can upload the whole text to online learning systems, such as Blackboard, Canvas, and Google Classroom. However, we know that consistent WiFi is a problem in rural areas of Idaho, so the book can be downloaded in multiple formats including PDF and EPUB or MOBI files. It can also be accessed through text-to-speech readers provided through your learning institutions or other common text to speech tools, such as Read Aloud and Dragon. All videos have subtitles/closed captioning. We welcome feedback about ways that we can make our book more accessible.

## A Note about Citations

This text includes a combination of chapters using MLA and APA, maintaining a single format consistency within that particular chapter. Using MLA and APA mimics real-world writing in which both formats are used extensively. While students would never want to combine formats within one paper (using a single format is important in that context), students should have knowledge of both formats that will be used throughout their college career.

## Land Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge the traditional and ancestral lands

of the Shoshone-Bannock, the Shoshone-Paiute, the Coeur d'Alene, the Kootenai, and the Nez Perce tribes on which we are teaching, learning and working today. The struggle for Indigenous rights is deeply connected to human rights. It is important that the stories and traditions from tribal nations are heard, celebrated, and protected.

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PART I

# WHAT'S COLLEGE FOR?



# I. Chapter 1: Passion

DAVE DILLON

*“Ganas. That’s all you need. The desire to learn.”*

– Jaime Escalante

Think about what you are passionate about. It might be family, friends, a significant other, a pet, an upcoming vacation, or what you might have for dinner. Different people are passionate about different things. Ask yourself: Why are you passionate about those things? What makes you passionate about them? Now ask yourself if you are passionate about school.

## *Author’s Story*

I can think of many things I would rather do than sit in a classroom listening to a lecture. I’d rather be relaxing at the beach, traveling to a new place, or playing Mario Kart with my family and friends. But when I was in college, my education was extremely important to me. I had a tremendous amount of passion, which allowed me to succeed. I had the attitude that nothing was going to stand in the way of getting my degree. In my first year in college I took an Introduction to Sociology class that genuinely interested me. It was easy to be passionate about it because

I really liked the subject matter, my professor, and the textbook. I also took Microeconomics. And while I understood its value and importance, I was not as interested in attending and completing the assignments. However, I always knew I needed to find passion in the course if I wanted to be successful and accomplish my goals. One strategy that worked for me was to find situations where I could apply concepts in those less interesting classes to my personal life. For instance, if the lecture and textbook were explaining a Microeconomics concept like total and marginal utility, I would try to apply this to something I could easily relate to. If utility is the satisfaction of the consumption of a product for a consumer, I would think of an example involving Arby's roast beef sandwiches, and blue raspberry slurpees. Making the material meaningful to me allowed me to be passionate about learning something I otherwise would not have been.

*“Brick walls are there for a reason: they let us prove  
how badly we want things.”*

– Randy Pausch

There were other activities I enjoyed more than class, but I knew it was important to find a passion for my classes because it was the key to succeeding in them.

It is common to have other things you would like to do more than sitting in class, doing homework and preparing for exams. But you

still must have passion for the learning and for the class in order to be successful.

My favorite definition of success is from John Wooden: “Success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best you are capable of becoming.”

## Why Are You Here?

Please note: It is OK to not know what your goal is when you start college. In fact, it is extremely common for students not to know what their goal is or what their major is when they begin college, but there is value in identifying your goal(s) as soon as possible.

More questions to ask yourself: Why are you in college, and why are you taking the courses you're taking? If you can answer these questions with solid logic and understand their purpose and how they fit in to being important to your life, you are off to a great start. However, if you are taking classes at someone else's suggestion and you are not genuinely interested in them, you may want to reconsider. I do not wish it to be misconstrued that I recommend you drop out of college, rather I want you to have a plan and passion to be able to achieve your goals. For many people, higher education is a necessary part of their goals.

I see many students in my counseling office who want to be independent, work a full time job, and/or party (rather than go to college). I also see many students who come back a few years later with a renewed passion and value for their education.

For college success, you must attend when the time is right for you. How do you know if it's the right time? Ask yourself if it's the right time for the following students to go to college:

- Monica's goal is to go to a university. She was accepted but couldn't afford it. She enrolls at a community college. She is passionate about attending community college and then transferring to earn a bachelor's degree.
- Christina is a high school graduate. She would like to take a year off of school to work and travel. Her parents gave her an ultimatum, saying that if she wanted to continue to live at home, she had to go to college full-time.
- Javier completed one year of college then got married in his early 20s. He and his spouse raised four children and he has been working for 20 years in an uninteresting, low-paying job. He always wanted to finish college and now finally has the time to go back to school.
- Andy is interested in partying and little else. He knows his college education is important but it is a low priority at this point.

## Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Passion

Sometimes we are motivated by a specific desired outcome of performing a task. Some people play a game because they want to win. In education, some students work hard because they want to receive a good grade or transfer to a prestigious university. Parents of younger children may give a monetary reward for each "A" their student earns. This is extrinsic motivation.

Interest, desire to learn, and enjoyment of a subject are characteristics of intrinsic motivation, or what we call passion. Passion for your education must come from within. If your educational goals (passing a college course, acquiring new skills or attaining a degree) are important enough to you, your motivation can become intrinsic, allowing you to find passion, which will help

you reach your goals. Without passion, you may find yourself struggling, withdrawing from courses, earning poor grades, or dropping out. External rewards of ascending to a certain academic level or acquiring wealth, lose some of their appeal if students do not find the work to get there personally rewarding. These students, who truly embrace their work, are intrinsically motivated – passionate while those who are focused mainly on rewards for high achievement and punishment for poor performance are extrinsically motivated. Trophies, medals, money, new clothes or a new car are examples of extrinsic motivators. One could argue, “the end justifies the means”—that it doesn’t matter if a students’ passion comes internally or externally, as long as they accomplish their goals. However, when the reward is learning itself, the student is on road to long-term success!

*“Only passions, great passions, can elevate the soul to great things.”*

– Denis Diderot

## The Choice Is Yours

I believe one of the best decisions you can make is to attend college if you are passionate about it and it is the right time for you. On the other hand it is better to postpone attending college if you are not passionate about it or feel the time is not right. Please do not misunderstand – I am not discouraging anyone from going to college nor am I encouraging anyone to drop out of college. And I do not expect you to be passionate about every aspect of college. There

were some classes and some requirements that I disliked during my own college experience. My concern, however, is students who start college and are not passionate about it. After a few years and a poor transcript, they meet with a counselor saying they weren't in college for the right reasons, weren't serious about their education, didn't know what they were doing, or... "my parents made me go." There are some suggestions in this book that can assist a passionate student to succeed. But all of the suggestions in the world will not help a student lacking passion. In the end, I want you to be successful and I want you to enjoy college, but I believe these are nearly impossible without passion.

*"Nothing great in the world has ever been accomplished  
without passion."*

– Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

There is a scene from the movie *Serendipity* where Dean's character says, "You know the Greeks didn't write obituaries. They only asked one question after a man died: 'Did he have passion?'" I will leave it up to you to decide if this is true or if it is Hollywood taking a liberty, but either way that quote has stayed with me. You can be successful in college. This textbook is a journey in figuring out how you are going to get there.



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Blueprint for Success in College: Indispensable Study  
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## 2. Chapter 2: What's College For?

ALISE LAMOREAUX, DAVE DILLON

*“Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere.”*

— Chinese Proverb

What's college for? That's a little question with a big answer! A college education comes in many shapes and sizes. In 2020, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, there were 3,982 degree-granting postsecondary institutions in the United States<sup>1</sup>

Associate degrees may be obtained at a community colleges or technical schools and usually require approximately 60 credits. Bachelor's degrees are most often offered by four-year colleges or universities, although some community colleges may offer bachelor's degrees. Most bachelor's degrees will require the completion of approximately 120 credits. Some students may begin at a community college and transfer to a four-year college or

1. <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/how-many-universities-are-in-the-us-and-why-that-number-is-changing>

university to pursue a bachelor's degree while others may start and finish at a four-year college or university. Both associate degrees and bachelor's degrees usually require general education courses and courses focusing on a specific major. A master's degree is an advanced graduate degree that shows a high level of mastery concentrated in a specific subject area. Many master's degree programs require completion of 30 and 60 credits. One distinction between colleges and universities is that colleges do not offer graduate degree programs while universities offer both undergraduate (associate and bachelor's) and graduate degree (master's and doctorate) programs. A doctorate degree is the highest degree available to earn in many fields. Also called a "terminal degree," this signals achieving the highest level of academic mastery in some disciplines.

Colleges and universities may be public, private, religious, small, large, for-profit, community colleges, junior colleges, regional universities, research universities, or international universities. In addition to a degree and an "education," students often pursue college for options, opportunities, knowledge, curiosity, and guidance.

## **How do you view college? What will define college success for you?**

People go to college for a variety of reasons. The type of college you select will help set parameters and expectations for your experiences. Before jumping into the details of going to college, it's important to stop and think about the purpose college has in your life. Traditionally, college was a place young adults went after high school to explore courses and majors before settling into a job path. According to a 2015 University of California at Los Angeles survey, most people currently go to college for one or more of 7

main reasons:<sup>2</sup>Kevin Eagan et al., *The American Freshman: National Norms Fall 2015* (Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA, 2015).

- 1) To be able to get a better job
- 2) To gain a general education and appreciation of ideas
- 3) To become a more cultured person
- 4) To be able to make more money
- 5) To learn more about things that interest me
- 6) To get training for a specific career
- 7) To prepare for graduate or professional school

**Video: Don't Just Follow Your Passion: A Talk for Generation Y, Eunice Hii at TEDxTerryTalks 2012**



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here: <https://cwi.pressbooks.pub/pathwaystocollegesuccess/?p=23#oembed-1>

**What impression does this TED Talk leave you with? Which generation are you?**

A Forbes article from 2019 says that the most commonly cited reason for why Americans value higher education is to get a good job.<sup>3</sup> In the past, learning about things that interested them was listed as the top reason to attend college. When did the change in

2. <https://www.heri.ucla.edu/monographs/TheAmericanFreshman2015.pdf>

3. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/brandonbusteed/2019/04/10/whats-the-purpose-of-college/?sh=73adee94354e>

priority occur? Dan Berrett says the change in priority can be linked to Ronald Reagan, when he was Governor of California.<sup>4</sup>

Economic times were tough in 1967 for California. Everyone needed to “tighten their belts.” At that time, California was known for its excellent higher educational system. In a speech Reagan gave on Feb. 28, 1967, a month into his term as Governor, Reagan assured people that he wouldn’t do anything to harm the quality of their public education system. “But,” he added, “We do believe that there are certain intellectual luxuries that perhaps we could do without.” Taxpayers should not be “subsidizing intellectual curiosity,” he said. By the time Reagan won the presidency, in 1980, practical degrees had become the popular choice. In the 1930s, around the time Reagan went to college, about 8% of students majored in “business and commerce.” When he was elected Governor, that share was 12%. By the time he moved into the White House, more students majored in business than anything else. Business, as a major, has held that top spot ever since.

## What frames your value of education? What kind of return on your investment do you expect from college?

Deciding to go to college has an “**opportunity cost**.” An opportunity cost is based on the economic principle that there are limited resources available and choices must be made. Examples of resources would be things like time and money. If you are spending time doing something, you must give up doing something else you want to do. That is the opportunity cost of your choice. Going to

4. <https://www.wpr.org/reagans-1967-speech-changed-purpose-college-forever-says-journalist>

college will have an opportunity cost in your life. An important question to ask in the beginning of your college venture is: what are you willing to trade off for going to college?

Opportunity costs are tied to the idea of return on investment. Once you make an investment of your time and money in college, what investment are you hoping to get in return? How you define success in relationship to your college experience impacts how you see the concept of return on investment. Some ways to gauge return on investment include: job opportunities after college, immediate financial benefit to earned wages, social network/connections made while attending college, development of communication and other “soft skills,” personal enrichment and/or happiness, and the ability to improve socio-economic circumstances for students’ family and community.

Short-term rewards compared to long-term rewards are another way to look at return on investment. For example, it takes much longer to become a CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of a company than it does to get a well-paid job at the same company. Different skills would be required from the CEO and it may require more investment to acquire those skills. Frances Bronet, the Dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Oregon, conducted a survey of former engineering graduates when she taught at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. She asked former graduates what they felt they had missed in their education. The results were very different depending on how recent their graduation was. Students who had graduated 1 year ago felt that they needed more technical skills. People who had graduated 5 years ago felt that they needed more management skills, and people who had graduated 10-20 years ago felt that they needed more cultural literacy because their work now involved more working with other cultures.

Deciding to go to college is a big decision and choosing a course of study can seem overwhelming to many students. Considering the changing world we live in, knowing what direction to go is not easy.

In the most watched TED talk of all time, educationalist Sir Ken Robinson claimed that “schools kill creativity”, arguing that we grow

out of creativity rather than growing into it. Robinson also argues that “creativity is as important as literacy and we should afford it the same status.”

**Video: Do Schools Kill Creativity? Ken Robinson at TED 2006**



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://cwi.pressbooks.pub/pathwaystocollegesuccess/?p=23#oembed-2>*

What do you think the purpose of college is? Do you think schools “kill” creativity?

Asking yourself the questions below may help you add more depth to your foundation for the purpose for you for college. It is OK if you don’t have answers for some of the questions. You may want to discuss some the questions, your answers, and your goals with a counselor or advisor.

## Personal Inventory Questions

1. Why are you here?
2. Why college, why now?
3. How do you define college?
4. What do you imagine college life to be like?
5. How do you know when you are ready for college?
6. What have you done to prepare for college?
7. What do you think college expects from students?
8. What does going to college mean for your future?
9. Using the list of 7 reasons students attend college provided in this chapter, rank your reasons for going to college.

10. In your opinion, is it a good idea for academic counselors to steer high school kids towards either a 4-year degree or vocational training?
11. Should students be steered towards careers that would be a good “fit” for them?
12. Opportunity Cost Analysis: Create a pie chart identifying how you currently spend your time (daily/weekly).

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<https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/collegetransition/chapter/chapter-1/> License: CC BY: Attribution.

Adaptions: Reformatted. Added learning objectives.  
Modified reasons for going to college. Updated sources.

Robinson, Ken. “Do Schools Kill Creativity?” TED, TED Conferences LLC, Feb. 2006. [https://www.ted.com/talks/ken\\_robinson\\_says\\_schools\\_kill\\_creativity](https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity)

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Hii, Eunice. “Don’t Just Follow Your Passion: A Talk for Generation Y.” TEDxTerryTalks. University of British



Columbia, November 3rd, 2012, Vancouver, BC, Canada.  
<https://youtu.be/sgbzbdxTm4E>. License: All Rights Reserved. License Terms: Standard YouTube license.

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# PART II

# TIME MANAGEMENT



# 3. Time Management Theory

DAVE DILLON

*“You can have it all. Just not all at once.”*

– Oprah Winfrey

My favorite aspect of time is its equality. Regardless of our race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or age, all of us have the same amount of time in a day, week, month and year. Wealthy people cannot buy more time and poor people do not receive less time. A minute for a tall person is the same amount of time for a short person. An hour for a woman is the same amount of time for a man. Regardless of how many languages someone speaks, their sexual orientation, ethnicity, educational background, income or experience, we all have 365 days in a year. Some people will live longer than others, but when comparatively measuring how much time humans have with each other, we all have the same amount.

Time is a popular philosophical concept. You may have heard some of the following sayings:

- Time flies when you are having fun
- That is a waste of time
- Time is money
- We have all the time in the world
- That was an untimely death
- The time is right
- I'm having the time of my life
- Time heals all wounds
- We have some time to kill

What do the sayings mean to you?

Time is also how we keep track of when we're supposed to be and where we're supposed to be (work, home, class, meeting friends and family, etc.). Think about how many measures of time you have in your home (clocks, watches, cell phones, TVs, DVRs, computers, microwaves, ovens, thermostats, etc.). It is obvious time is important to us.

## Time: A Limited and Precious Commodity

We cannot go back in time. If I used my time poorly last Wednesday, I can do nothing to get it back. Other commodities may allow for accumulating more or starting over, but time does not. We cannot “save” time nor earn more time.

*“If you had a bank that credited your account each morning with \$86,400, but carried no balance from day to day and allowed you to keep no cash in your account, and every evening cancelled whatever part of the amount you had failed to use during the day, what would you do? Draw out every cent, of course! Well, you have such a bank, and its name is time. Every morning it credits you with 86,400 seconds. Every night it writes off as lost whatever of these you have failed to invest to good purpose. It carries no balance; it allows no overdrafts. Each day it opens a new account with you. Each night it burns the record of the day. If you fail to use the day's deposit, the loss is yours. There is no going back. There is no drawing against the morrow. You must live in the*

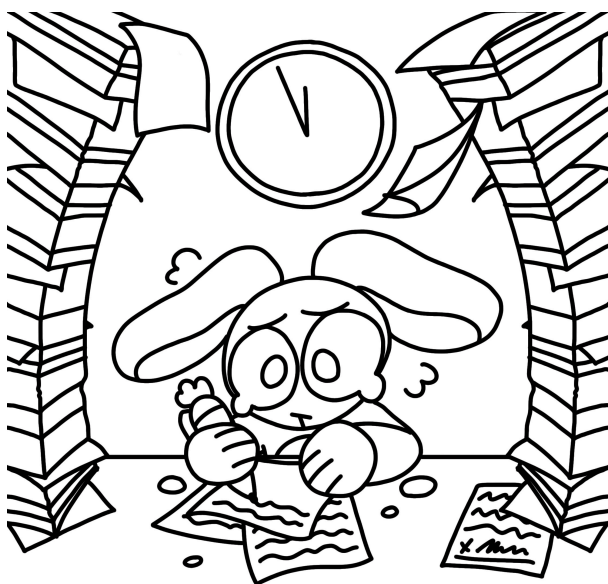
*present – on today's deposit. Invest it so as to get the  
utmost in health and happiness and success."*

– Anonymous

Technically, time cannot be managed, but we label it time management when we talk about how people use their time. We often bring up efficiency and effectiveness when discussing how people spend their time, but we cannot literally manage time because time cannot be managed. What we can do though, is find better ways to spend our time, allowing us to accomplish our most important tasks and spend time with the people most important to us.

Human babies do not come with instruction manuals. There is nothing to follow to know how we are supposed to spend our time. Most of us spend our time doing a combination of what interests us, what is important to us and what we feel we “have” to do.

What is your relationship with time? Are you usually early, right on time or late? Do you find yourself often saying, “I wish I had more time?” Are you satisfied with your relationship with time or would you like to change it? What are your cultural and family values related to time?



Hop to It!

## The Value of Time

It is also important to determine how much your time is worth to you. If someone were to negotiate for an hour of your time, how much would that be worth to you? We often equate time with money. Many of us work in positions where we are paid by the hour; this gives us some gauge of what we are worth to our employers. Some items we purchase because we think they are of good value for their price. Others we pass on. Are some hours of your day more important or more valuable than others? Why? Are you more productive in the morning or in the evening? Once people realize how valuable time is, they often go to great lengths to protect it because they understand its importance. How much would you pay for an additional hour in a day? What would you do with that time? Why?



What is the value of your time? How much is an hour of your time worth? If someone were to pay you \$10 to do a job, how much time would that be worth? \$20? \$50?

How Do I Allocate My Time?

*“Lack of direction, not lack of time is the problem. We all have 24 hour days.”*

– Zig Ziglar

Most of us know there are 24 hours in a day, but when I ask students how many hours are in a week, many do not know the answer. There are 168 hours in a week (24 hours multiplied by seven days). I don't believe that it is imperative that students know how many hours are in a week, but it helps when we start to look at how much time we have in a week, how we want to spend our time and how we actually spend our time.

One challenge for many students is the transition from the structure of high school to the structure of college. In high school, students spend a large portion of their time in class (approximately 30 hours in class per week), while full-time college students may spend only one-third of that time in class (approximately 12 hours in class per week). Further, college students are assigned much more homework than high school students. Think about how many times one of your high school teachers gave you something to read during class. In college, students are given more material to read with the expectation that it is done outside of class.

This can create challenges for students who are unable to set aside proper study time for each of their courses. Keep in mind for full-time students: your college educational day should not be shorter than your high school day.

Hourly Recommendations (per Week)

Work	Units	Study Time	Total
40	6	12	58
30	9	18	57
20	12	24	56

I use this table frequently in counseling appointments, classes and orientations. It's a guide for students that provides an idea of how much time students spend with work and school, and what experts recommend for a specific amount of work hours that correlates with a specific number of units. I like to ask students how they spend their week. Students always know their work hours and their class times. These are easy to place in a schedule or on a calendar because they are predetermined. But study time is the one area that consistently is left out of a student's schedule. It takes initiative to include it in a student's busy week and self-discipline to stick to it. Here's a tip: Write your study time into your schedule or calendar. It's important to do this because it's easy to skip a study session or say to yourself, "I'll do it later." While there would likely be an immediate consequence if you do not show up for work, there is not one if you fail to study on Tuesday from 3pm-4pm. That consequence may take place later, if the studying is not made up.

It is widely suggested that students need to study approximately two hours for every hour that they spend in class in order to be successful.<sup>1</sup> Thus, if I am taking a class that meets on Mondays and Wednesdays from 4pm-5:30pm (three hours per week), I would want to study outside of class six hours per week. This is designed as a guide and is not an exact science. You might need to spend more time than what is recommended if you are taking a subject you find challenging, have fallen behind in or if you are taking short-term classes. This would certainly be true if I were to take a physics class. Since I find learning physics difficult, I might have to spend three

1. Jeffery Young, "Homework? What Homework?," *Chronicle of High Education*, 2002, A35-A37, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Homework-What-Homework-/2496>.

or four hours of study time for each hour of class instruction. You also might need to study more than what is recommended if you are looking to achieve better grades. Conversely, you might need to spend less time if the subject comes easy to you (such as sociology does for me) or if there is not a lot of assigned homework.

Keep in mind that 20 hours of work per week is the maximum recommended for full-time students taking 12 semester units in a term. For students working full-time (40 hours a week), no more than six units is recommended. The total is also a very important category. Students often start to see difficulty when their total number of hours between work and school exceeds 60 per week. The amount of sleep decreases, stress increases, grades suffer, job performance decreases and students are often unhappy.

How do you spend your 168 hours in a week?

- Child Care
- Class
- Community Service / Volunteer
- Commuting / Transportation
- Eating / Food Preparation
- Exercise
- Family
- Friends
- Household / Child Care Duties
- Internet / Social Media / Phone / Texting
- Party
- Recreation / Leisure
- Relationship
- Sleeping
- Spirituality / Prayer / Meditation
- Study
- Video Games
- Watching TV or Movies, Netflix, Youtube
- Work / Career

There is also the time it takes for college students to adjust to college culture, college terminology, and college policies. Students may need to learn or relearn how to learn and some students may need to learn what they need to know. What a student in their first college semester needs to know may be different than what a student in their last college semester needs to know. First semester students may be learning where classrooms are, building hours and locations for college resources, and expectations of college students. Students in their last semester may be learning about applying for their degree, how to confirm they have all of their requirements completed for their goal, and commencement information. Whatever it is students may need to learn, it takes time.

## Fixed Time vs. Free Time

Sometimes it helps to take a look at your time and divide it into two areas: fixed time and free time. Fixed time is time that you have committed to a certain area. It might be school, work, religion, recreation or family. There is no right or wrong to fixed time and everyone's is different. Some people will naturally have more fixed time than others. Free time is just that—it is free. It can be used however you want to use it; it's time you have available for activities you enjoy. Someone might work 9am-2pm, then have class 3pm-4:30pm, then have dinner with family 5pm-6pm, study 6pm-7pm and then have free time from 7pm-9pm. Take a look at a typical week for yourself. How much fixed time do you have? How much free time? How much fixed and free time would you like to have?

# Identifying, Organizing and Prioritizing Goals

The universal challenge of time is that there are more things that we want to do and not enough time to do them.

I talk to students frequently who have aspirations, dreams, goals and things they want to accomplish. Similarly, I ask students to list their interests at the beginning of each of my classes and there is never a shortage of items. But I often talk to students who are discouraged by the length of time it is taking them to complete a goal (completing their education, reaching their career goal, buying a home, getting married, etc.). And every semester there are students that drop classes because they have taken on too much or they are unable to keep up with their class work because they have other commitments and interests. There is nothing wrong with other commitments or interests. On the contrary, they may bring joy and fulfillment, but do they get in the way of your educational goal(s)? For instance, if you were to drop a class because you required surgery, needed to take care of a sick family member or your boss increased your work hours, those may be important and valid reasons to do so. If you were to drop a class because you wanted to binge watch a Netflix series, or spend more time on TikTok, Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, you may have more difficulty justifying that decision, but it is still your decision to make. Sometimes students do not realize the power they have over the decisions they make and how those decisions can affect their ability to accomplish the goals they set for themselves.

I am no exception. I have a long list of things that I want to accomplish today, tomorrow, next week, next month, next year and in my lifetime. I have many more things on my list to complete than the time that I will be alive.

## Identifying Goals

Recently, there has been a lot of attention given to the importance of college students identifying their educational objective and their major as soon as possible. Some high schools are working with students to identify these goals earlier. If you are interested in career identification, you may wish to look into a career decision making course offered by your college. You may also wish to make an appointment with a counselor, and/or visit your college's Career Center and/or find a career advice book such as *What Color is Your Parachute?* by Richard N. Bolles.

Goal identification is a way to allow us to keep track of what we would like to accomplish as well as a mechanism to measure how successful we are at achieving our goals. This video gives modern practical advice about the future career market.

Video: *Success in the New Economy*, Kevin Fleming and Brian Y. Marsh, Citrus College:



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here: <https://cwi.pressbooks.pub/pathwaystocollegesuccess/?p=27#oembed-1>

# Educational Planning

There has also been focused attention on the importance of educational planning.

Education plans developed with a counselor help students determine and explore a program of study and have proven to facilitate student success.<sup>2</sup>

Students can follow educational plans like a road map so they can see how to complete required classes in the most efficient and logical order based on their educational goals.

Educational planning may appear to be simple: identifying the program of study and then figuring out which courses are required to complete it.



*Graphics courtesy of Greg Stoup, Rob Johnstone, and Priyadarshini Chaplot of The RP Group*

However, it can often be extremely complex. Many students have multiple goals. One student might be interested in more than one of

2. “Advancing Student Success in the California Community Colleges,” California Community Colleges (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office: Recommendations of the California Community Colleges Student Success Task Force, 2012), [http://www.californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/portals/0/executive/studentsuccesstaskforce/sstf\\_final\\_report\\_1-17-12\\_print.pdf](http://www.californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/portals/0/executive/studentsuccesstaskforce/sstf_final_report_1-17-12_print.pdf).

these goals: earn multiple degrees, transfer to a four-year college or university, prepare for graduate school, start a minor, or complete requirements for several transfer schools.

Students also have different strengths. Some might be strong in English. Some students excel in math. Others might be strong in science, arts and humanities, or social sciences. Educational planning takes these strengths (and weaknesses) into consideration. Students are encouraged to take English and math early<sup>3</sup>, as statistics show that those students will be more successful. But the order of courses taken for students with different strengths could vary even if the students have the same goal. There is not a one-size-fits-all solution.

Educational planning may be further complicated by availability of courses a college or university offers, the process in which a student may be able to register for those courses and which sections fit into students' schedules. Transcript evaluations (if students have attended previous colleges or universities), assessment of appropriate English or math levels and prerequisite clearance procedures may also contribute to the challenge of efficient educational planning.

Further, students have different priorities. Some students want to complete their goals in a certain amount of time. Other students may have to work full-time and take fewer units each semester. Educational planning might also consider student interests, skills, values, personality, or student support referrals. Grade point average requirements for a student's degree, transfer or specific programs are also considered in educational planning.<sup>4</sup>

3. J. Weissman, C. Bulakowski, and M.K. Jumisko, "Using Research to Evaluate Developmental Education Programs and Policies," in *Implementing Effective Policies for Remedial and Developmental Education: New Directions for Community Colleges*, ed. J. M. Ignash (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 100, 73-80.
4. Beth Smith et al., "The Role of Counseling Faculty and Delivery of



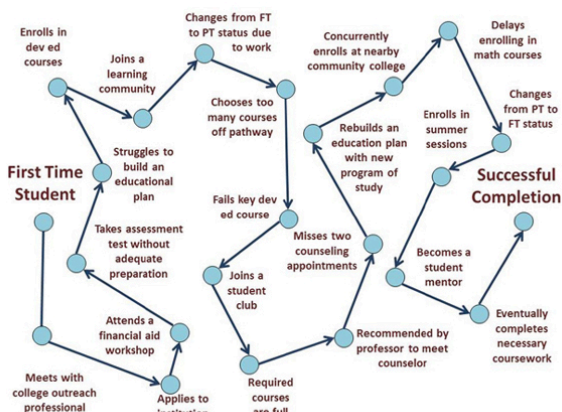
While some students may know what they want to do for their career, and have known since they were five years old, many students are unsure of what they want to do. Often, students aren't sure how to choose their major. A major is an area of concentration in which students will specialize at a college or university. Completing a major requires passing courses in the chosen concentration and degrees are awarded that correlate with students' majors. For instance, my bachelor's degree in Sociology means that my major was Sociology.

It is OK to not know what major you want to pursue when you start college, but I suggest careful research to look into options and narrow them down to a short list of two or three. Talking with a counselor, visiting your college's Career Center, or taking a college success class may help with your decisions.

Seventy percent of students change their major at least once while in college and most will change their major at least three times. It is important for students to find the best major for them, but these changes may make previous educational plans obsolete.

The simple concept and road map often ends up looking more like this:

Counseling Services in the California Community Colleges,”  
(California: The Academic Senate for California Community  
Colleges).



Graphics courtesy of Greg Stoup, Rob Johnstone, and Priyadarshini Chaplot of The RP Group

Due to the complicated nature of educational planning, a counselor can provide great value for students with assistance in creating an educational plan, specifically for each individual student. If you have not done so already, I highly recommend you meet with a counselor and continue to do so on a frequent basis (once per semester if possible).

## How To Start Reaching Your Goals

Without goals, we aren't sure what we are trying to accomplish, and there is little way of knowing if we are accomplishing anything. If you already have a goal-setting plan that works well for you, keep it. If you don't have goals, or have difficulty working towards them, I encourage you to try this.

Make a list of all the things you want to accomplish for the next day. Here is a sample to do list:

- Go to grocery store

- Go to class
- Pay bills
- Exercise
- Social media
- Study
- Eat lunch with friend
- Work
- Watch TV
- Text friends

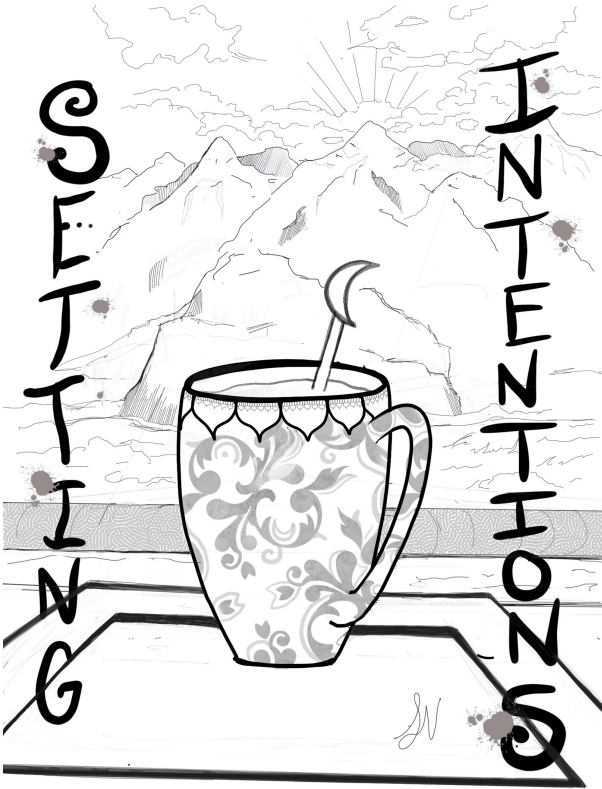
Your list may be similar to this one or it may be completely different. It is yours, so you can make it however you want. Do not be concerned about the length of your list or the number of items on it.

*“Obstacles are things a person sees when he takes his eyes off his goal.”*

– E. Joseph Cossman

You now have the framework for what you want to accomplish the next day. Hang on to that list. We will use it again.

Now take a look at the upcoming week, the next month and the next year. Make a list of what you would like to accomplish in each of those time frames. If you want to go jet skiing, travel to Europe, or get a bachelor's degree, write it down. Pay attention to detail. The more detail within your goals the better. Ask yourself this question: what is necessary to complete your goals?



With those lists completed, take into consideration how the best goals are created. Commonly called “SMART” goals, it is often helpful to apply criteria to your goals. SMART is an acronym for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely. Perform a web search on the Internet to find out more about “SMART” goals. Are your goals SMART goals? For example, a general goal would be, “Achieve an ‘A’ in my anatomy class.” But a more specific, measurable, and timely goal would say, “I will schedule and study for one hour each day at the library from 2pm-3pm for my anatomy class in order to achieve an ‘A’ and help me gain admission to

nursing school.” Whether goals are attainable or realistic may vary from person to person.

Now revise your lists for the things you want to accomplish in the next week, month and year by applying the SMART goal techniques. The best goals are usually created over time and through the process of more than one attempt, so spend some time completing this. Do not expect to have “perfect” goals on your first attempt. Also, keep in mind that your goals do not have to be set in stone. They can change. And since over time things will change around you, your goals should also change.

Another important aspect of goal setting is accountability. Someone could have great intentions and set up SMART goals for all of the things they want to accomplish. But if they don’t work towards those goals and complete them, they likely won’t be successful. It is easy to see if we are accountable in short-term goals. Take the daily to-do list for example. How many of the things that you set out to accomplish, did you accomplish? How many were the most important things on that list? Were you satisfied? Were you successful? Did you learn anything for future planning or time management? Would you do anything differently? The answers to these questions help determine accountability.

Long-term goals are more difficult to create and it is more challenging for us to stay accountable. Think of New Year’s Resolutions. Gyms are packed and mass dieting begins in January. By March, many gyms are empty and diets have failed. Why? Because it is easier to crash diet and exercise regularly for short periods of time than it is to make long-term lifestyle and habitual changes.

Randy Pausch was known for his lecture called “The Last Lecture,” now a bestselling book. Diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer, Pausch passes along some of his ideas for best strategies for uses of time in his lesser known lecture on time management. I don’t believe there is someone better suited to teach about time management than someone trying to maximize their last year, months, weeks and days of their life.

Video: *Time Management*, Randy Pausch.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://cwi.pressbooks.pub/pathwaystocollegesuccess/?p=27#oembed-2>

## Organizing Goals

Place all of your goals, plans, projects and ideas in one place. Why? It prevents confusion. We often have more than one thing going on at a time and it may be easy to become distracted and lose sight of one or more of our goals if we cannot easily access them. Create a goal notebook, goal poster, goal computer file—organize it any way you want—just make sure it is organized and that your goals stay in one place.

### *Author's Story*

I learned this lesson the hard way. Some years ago, I used sticky notes all the time. I think they are a great invention and believe they help me stay organized. But one day when I was looking for a phone number I realized that I had sticky notes at work, sticky notes at home and sticky notes in my car. I had so many sticky notes in multiple places that I couldn't easily find the information I needed. Everyone has

a preference of how clean or messy his or her work area is, but if you're spending time looking for things, it is not the best use of your time. I now keep all of my sticky notes in one place. Further, I always use one and only one point of entry for anything that goes on my calendar. I have also found many advances in technology to assist with organization of information. But I still use physical sticky notes.

## Use Technology to your Advantage

Software and apps are now available to help with organization and productivity. Check out Evernote, One Note, or Stickies.

## Break Goals into Small Steps

I ask this question of students in my classes: If we decided today that our goal was to run a marathon and then went out tomorrow and tried to run one, what would happen? Students respond with: (jokingly) “I would die,” or “I couldn’t do it.” How come? Because we might need training, running shoes, support, knowledge, experience and confidence—often this cannot be done overnight. An academic goal might be obtaining an A grade on a mid-term essay for a writing class. Small steps might include getting started, planning time for smaller tasks, researching, writing a draft, visiting a writing support service, having a friend proofread, revising. Instead of giving up and thinking it’s impossible because the task is too big for which to prepare, it’s important to develop smaller steps or tasks that can be

started and worked on immediately. Once all of the small steps are completed, you'll be on your way to accomplishing your big goals.

What steps would you need to complete the following big goals?

- Buying a house
- Finding a long term partner
- Attaining a bachelor's degree
- Destroying the Death Star

## Prioritizing Goals

Why is it important to prioritize? Let's look back at the sample list. If I spent all my time completing the first seven things on the list, but the last three were the most important, then I would not have prioritized very well.

It would have been better to prioritize the list after creating it and then work on the items that are most important first. You might be surprised at how many students fail to prioritize.

After prioritizing, the sample list now looks like this:

- Go to class
- Work
- Study
- Pay bills
- Exercise
- Eat lunch with friend
- Go to grocery store
- Text friends
- Social media
- Watch TV

One way to prioritize is to give each task a value. A = Task related to goals; B = Important—Have to do; C = Could postpone. Then, map



out your day so that with the time available to you, work on your A goals first. You'll now see below our list has the ABC labels. You will also notice a few items have changed positions based on their label. Keep in mind that different people will label things different ways because we all have different goals and different things that are important to us. There is no right or wrong here, but it is paramount to know what is important to you, and to know how you will spend the majority of your time with the things that are the most important to you.

A Go to class

A Study

A Exercise

B Work

B Pay bills

B Go to grocery store

C Eat lunch with friend

C Text friends

C Social media

C Watch TV

## Do the Most Important Things First

You do not have to be a scientist to realize that spending your time on “C” tasks instead of “A” tasks won’t allow you to complete your goals. The easiest things to do and the ones that take the least amount of time are often what people do first. Checking Facebook or texting might only take a few minutes but doing it prior to studying means we’re spending time with a “C” activity before an “A” activity.

People like to check things off that they have done. It feels good. But don’t confuse productivity with accomplishment of tasks that aren’t important. You could have a long list of things that you

completed, but if they aren't important to you, it probably wasn't the best use of your time.

Perform an internet search for "Time Management Matrix Images." The matrix (also referred to in the Randy Pausch video), shows how to categorize your tasks and will help prioritize your goals, tasks, and assignments. Take a look at the matrix and quadrants and identify which quadrant your activities would fall into.

Quadrant I (The quadrant of necessity): Important and Urgent

Only crisis activities should be here. If you have included exams and papers here, you are probably not allowing yourself enough time to fully prepare. If you continue at this pace you could burn out!

Quadrant II (The quadrant of quality and personal leadership): Important and Not Urgent

This is where you define your priorities. What's important in your life? What will keep you balanced? For example, you may know that good nutrition, sleep, recreation and maintaining healthy social relationships are important but do you consciously make time for them in your daily or weekly routine? This may be where school fits. Where would time for class, homework, study time, required reading, preparing for exams fit in your overall priorities? Quadrant II includes your "A" goals. Managing your life and the lifestyle will help you manage your time.

Quadrant III (The quadrant of deception): Not Important and Urgent

While you may feel that activities, such as texting, need your attention right away, too much time spent on Quadrant III activities can seriously reduce valuable study time. This may leave you feeling pulled in too many directions at once.

Quadrant IV (The quadrant of waste): Not Important and Not Urgent

Quadrants three and four include your "C" goals. If you're spending many hours on Quadrant IV activities, you're either having a great deal of fun or spending a lot of time procrastinating!

Remember, the objective is balance. You may notice I placed social media and texting into this category. You could make a case that social media, texting, Netflix, and Youtube are important, but how often are they urgent? Ultimately, it is up to you to decide what is important and urgent for yourself, but for the context of this textbook, your classes, assignments, preparation, and studying should almost universally be more urgent and important than social media and texting.

Here is an adapted version of the matrix, with an emphasis on quadrant II.

	Urgent	Not Urgent	
Important	Crying baby Kitchen fire Some calls 1	Exercise Vocation Planning 2	By Rorybowman – Own work, Public Domain, <a href="https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2135450">https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2135450</a>
Not Important	3 Interruptions Distractions Other calls	4 Trivia Busy work Time wasters	

## Conclusion

Managing time well comes down to two things. One is identifying (and then prioritizing) goals and the other is having the discipline to be able to work towards accomplishing them. We all have the same

amount of time in a day, week, month and year, yet some people are able to accomplish more than others. Why is this? Often, it is because they are able to set goals, prioritize them and then work on them relentlessly and effectively until they are complete.

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Pausch, Randy. "Randy Pausch Lecture: Time Management." YouTube, uploaded by Carnegie Mellon University, 6 Feb. 2008. Located at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTugjssqOT0>  
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Fleming, Kevin and Marsh Brian Y. "Success in the

New Economy". Vimeo, uploaded by Citrus College, 2017. Located at: <https://vimeo.com/67277269> License: All Rights Reserved.

Version History: Minor edits and updates for more currency, cohesiveness, inclusiveness, alignment, and cultural responsiveness, July, 2021.



PART III

# COMMUNICATION





## 4. Communication and Technology

### Questions to Consider:

- Is technology vital to your ability to communicate well?
- Are there rules to follow when using communication technology?
- How do you take control of your online communication?

**“Now we know that once computers connected us to each other, once we became tethered to the network, we really didn’t need to keep computers busy. They keep us busy.”**

– Sherry Turkle<sup>7</sup>

### Is Technology Vital to Your Ability to Communicate Well?

Over a billion people use chat rooms, mailing lists, instant messengers, social network services, newsgroups, games, wikis, blogs, and more in order to share social relationships and organize collective action. Everything is connected: people, information, events, and places, all the more so with the advent of online social media. You live in a world where the traditional forms of education, conversations, relationships, and social activity in general have been transformed by the ubiquitous presence of technology. Digital media affects every student’s life and that of their families, friends, and the wider community. Most of you have grown up while this transformation has taken place. The new technologies have created dramatic changes in the relationship between people and

information. Though you will come across people who don't want to believe that these new technologies are here to stay, we, as humans, will never be able to separate ourselves from our own inventions, and trying to do so is perhaps only a step backward in an evolutionary sense. Therefore it is important that we learn to adapt our behavior to include the new inventions. Technology, after all, is an extension of the human mind, and the new technologies are only tools we have created over years of fashioning new ways to do things.

We continue to move from simple to complex tools. Advancements of technology go hand in hand with changes in communication options. The telegraph was replaced with landlines, those went out of style as the cordless phone became available, and this phone eventually morphed to a cell phone. When the Internet became accessible by cell phone, cell phones became devices that revolutionized personal communication.

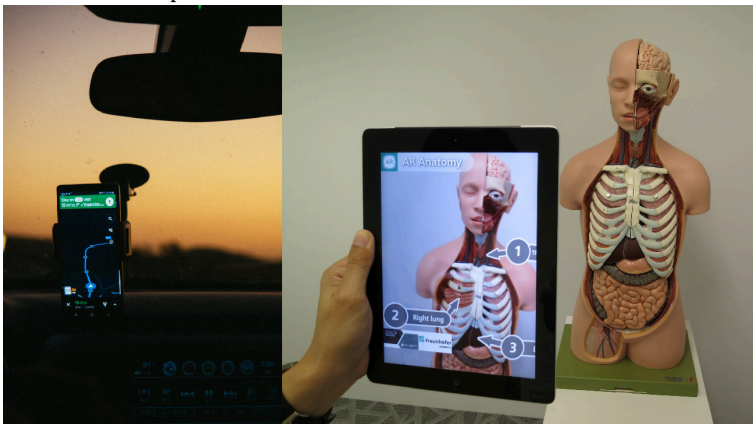


Figure 8.3 Just as mobile device roadmaps have replaced paper ones, augmented reality may replace our typical means interacting with the world. From learning about anatomy to cooking a meal to assembling a child's toy, we may reach a point in which we can't imagine living without AR. (Credit Zedinteractive / Pixabay)

The following activity is a good way for you to reflect on your own use of technology. It is always interesting to step back and actually

see what platforms you use and how much time you spend using them.

## ACTIVITY

Share your personal story about when you started using social media. Include what social media you use, how you use it, and how much time you spend doing so. At the end of this story, discuss what you might like to see in the future of social media. What other communication technologies do you wish were available to you, and why?

## Are There Rules to Follow When Using Communication Technology?

Did you find anything significant about how you use social media? When you carefully looked at how much time you spent on the different platforms, were you surprised? It is probably a good thing to sometimes step back and take a look at how we use our communication tools, and even more importantly, we need to ask ourselves if we are using them to our advantage and not just to pass the time.

### *Netiquette*

Just as it is important to know your responsibilities in using communication technologies, it is necessary for you to understand that there is a code of honor and etiquette to go along with them.

Here are a few pointers on how to go about being active on the Internet without offending or annoying others.

1. Don't write emails, post to social media sites, or talk in chat rooms in ALL CAPS. CAPS can be interpreted as screaming or talking in a very loud voice.
2. Don't make fun of others.
3. Apologize if someone was offended and did not "hear" what you were saying in the way you meant it.
4. When stating a strong opinion, it is not a bad idea to use the abbreviation of IMHO (in my humble opinion). It might keep people from reacting strongly right back at you.
5. Remember, no one can hear your tone of voice or see your facial expression, so use words carefully to get your message across.
6. Be respectful of your audience with the level of familiarity used.

### *College Netiquette*

While these Netiquette guidelines are applicable in nearly every environment, communication in college may have additional or more stringent rules to consider. Always be particularly mindful of how you communicate in any official environments, such as online courses, course discussion boards, and even on social media specifically related to your college, such as a club or team page.

For example, if your political science class requires students to post in a discussion forum after each night's reading, students may have the opportunity to argue about issues or politics. Vibrant discussion, and even argument, may be acceptable, but personal attacks or insults won't advance the discussion and could result in more significant consequences. Just as you wouldn't—and couldn't—become overly animated in an in-class argument, online

arguments should remain civil. The goal is to make your points with evidence and reason, not emotion and assertiveness.

Finally, just as a note of caution, college codes of conduct regarding communication often apply to *any* interaction between members of the community, whether or not they occur on campus or in a campus online environment. Any inappropriate, offensive, or threatening comments or messages may have severe consequences.

Our communication in college conveys how we feel about others and how we'd like to interact with them. Unless you know for certain they don't like it, you should use professional or semi-formal communication when interacting with college faculty and staff. For example, if you need to send a message explaining something or making a request, the recipient will likely respond more favorably to it if you address them properly and use thoughtful, complete sentences.

In a similar manner, you can make or break relationships with your classmates depending on how you communicate with them. Consider the following scenario:

Demetrius sends an email to several classmates about the details of a group assignment. He asks about availability and about which member of the group will take responsibility for which aspect of the project. He's received four responses addressing availability, but no one volunteers for the responsibilities. Demetrius replies to all with an attempt at creating a division of responsibilities by typing different names next to each role. He uses ALL CAPS to make sure his classmates notice the suggestions. Lee responds immediately. They don't like being forced into a specific role, and think Demetrius should have waited until the first group session instead of forcing his opinion on the group. Shirisha jumps in to mention that she's upset Demetrius chose to put her in a non-speaking role of recording secretary.

What mistake did Demetrius make? How might he have handled the situation more smoothly?

## ACTIVITY

You most likely have considerable experience on a variety of social media platforms. Can you add three more suggestions for how to navigate these sites politely and with consideration for others?

Now, add three suggestions specifically related to considerate communication in online educational environments.

### How Do You Control Your Online Communication Strategies?

**“Whether digital media will be beneficial or destructive in the long run doesn’t depend on the technologies, but on the literacy of those who use them.”**

— *Howard Rheingold*

What is important is that we have to decide what we are going to do with the new communication tools for our future. We need to understand when to log on and when to log off. These days you sometimes find yourself being bombarded with new technologies and social media platforms, and you don’t know how you will keep up with them all. You have multiple sites sending you continuous notifications and find yourself scrambling to look at them and perhaps respond. Perhaps turning off those notifications will free up your mind a bit. Sitting at your desk in your dorm room and trying to do an assignment for a class can be difficult if your phone is blinking messages at you continuously.

It is probably important sometimes to take the focus away from the media itself and look at oneself. What is happening to our minds, our sense of self, and our ways of representing ourselves to others when we spend a significant portion of our time on various online sites? How do we mediate our relationships differently? What kinds

of signals do we send, knowingly and unknowingly? Are we shaping the media we use, or is it shaping us? Sometimes we hide behind our on-screen identities as well as navigate social media sites in ways that make us communicate with people that are like ourselves. Do we use these new communication tools appropriately?

The following activity might help clarify how well you utilize your social media platforms.

## ANALYSIS QUESTION

Go outside your usual comfort zone and friend group. Find someone with whom you disagree, and think about how what they said had an effect on you. Did they use correct etiquette when saying what they said? If you respond, what would you do to make certain your response was heard correctly and was not offensive?

### *Ways to Take Control of Your Online Communication*

Howard Rheingold, a technology guru who coined the term “virtual community” in 1993, has been thinking and writing about the changes that technology has been making over the years. He has come to the opinion that in order for us to deal with the new communication opportunities, we must learn about what he calls “mindful participation.”<sup>8</sup> Rheingold doesn’t suggest, as many others do, that these new technologies are bad for us. He offers ways to engage online that keep us in control of our actions and make us a bit more productive about our use of online platforms. He believes in social media literacy and suggests that learning the following five literacies will make our life on the Internet more productive, less stressful, and ultimately more enjoyable. If social media is our most often used form of communication, then the following five literacies

should help us manage our time online and keep us in control of the tools we use for purposes of communication.

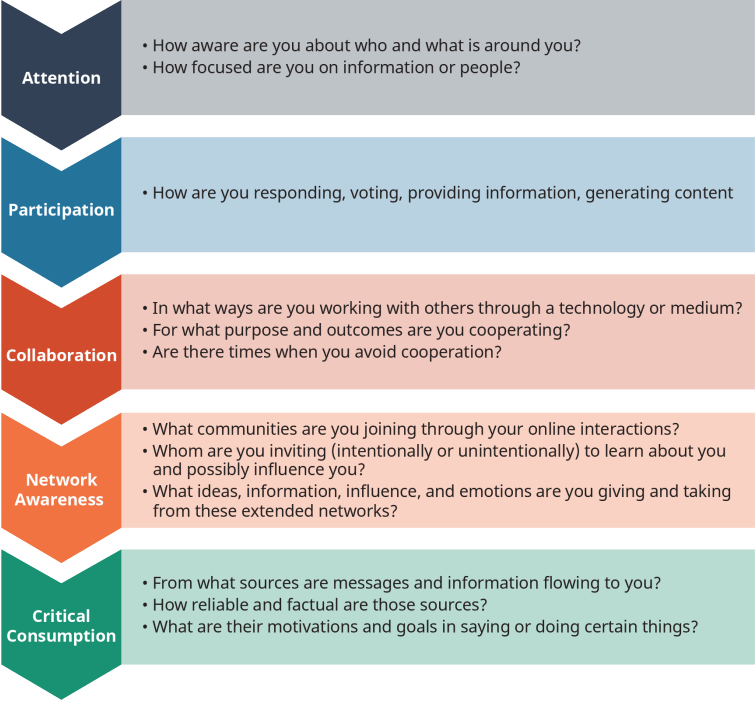


Figure 8.4 Howard Rheingold explores ways we can consider our use and consumption of media technologies, such as social media, in terms of five literacy areas. Asking ourselves questions will lead us to thoughtfully consider how an online environment may be changing us and our relationships. (Credit: Modification of work by Howard Rheingold.)

*Attention*

**Attention** is the first literacy and is the fundamental building block of how individuals think. It is sometimes difficult to focus our attention since our minds tend to wander in a random manner. It is therefore essential that you become more aware of how you



are directing your attention. Consider being in a lecture hall and trying to focus on the professor and what she is saying. Is your full attention there? Are you also scrolling through some social media feed while listening to the lecture? When you are in your dorm room working on a class assignment, are you also watching your social media notifications, listening to music, talking to your roommate, and clicking on various ads on a website? On what is your attention most focused? Probably on everything and consequently on nothing. Learning how to pay attention to what is most important at the moment will help you fine-tune your skills.



Figure 8.5 Paying attention in class, in the face of many distractions, takes effort and awareness. The benefits, both for the class and for the long-term ability to retain your focus, will be extremely valuable. (Credit: Pixabay / Pexels)

## *Participation*

And even though you might be really good at using online applications and connecting with friends, that does not necessarily

mean that you always understand the implications of your participation or that you are actually participating.

**Participation**, the next literacy, is much broader as it recognizes the vast population of users that are connected. Participation is connecting with the tool, not people. It is a way of becoming an active citizen and not just a passive consumer. There are multiple ways to participate on a variety of social media platforms. In fact, you probably don't realize that clicking on a "like," making a short comment on a picture, or whatever else one does on a site is actually participating. Of course, the effect of your participation can vary, but it can also be very powerful. You participate when you post, fill out a survey, start your own blog, respond to others' blogs, or just watch a video on YouTube. All of these actions are a form of participation.

In college, participation with communication environments and other resources is often essential for success and for your grade. If you use learning management systems, online homework systems, polling or attendance software, or other educational media, you need to understand the levels and types of participation, as well as the implications of each. As with social media platforms, learning technology can be a powerful tool, and you'll likely engage with it throughout your academic and even your professional career.

## *Collaboration*

The third literacy, **collaboration**, refers to your being able to work together using technology. Doing things together gives us more power than doing them alone. Think of all the times Twitter was used by multitudes of people to pass on information about major storms. When there was a bombing in Paris, people went to Twitter to let those people in the streets who'd been displaced know they had apartments and homes that they would open up to them. Of course, there are many collective intelligence projects, such as helping Coke come up with a new flavor, or GoFundMe sites to

help people in need of money for health reasons. The collaborative efforts of people communicating around a big project are endless and a perfect way to use communication technologies. Tools allowing collaboration allow you to share resources and work as a team, and build on each other's ideas.

## ACTIVITY

Think of a time when you collaborated with others to get something done. This could be organizing a party, planning transportation to an event, doing a school project, building a stage for a play, or any other activity that was done as a group. What forms of communication did you use to work as a team? How did the environment and the other people in the group influence tools and methods you used? Complete the table below to illustrate the challenges, opportunities, and communication approaches you might use (or have used) for each situation.

Challenges	Opportunities	Communication Methods and Tools
Group project for an on campus (traditional) course.		
Group project for an online-only course.		
Planning an event with your extended family.		
Planning an event with your friends/peers.		

Table 8.1

## *Network Awareness*

Network awareness is the fourth literacy. Technological networks now allow us to have a greater number of people we can contact. These networks multiply human capacity for social networking and allow connection in a matter of seconds. You can become a member of newsgroups, virtual communities, gossip sites, forums, and other organizations. Making use of these possibilities expands your ability to contribute to the vast stores of information on the Internet. At the same time, you should be conscious of the people whom you're inviting to hear you and influence you. Have you ever been intrigued, angered, or persuaded by a friend of a friend (someone you don't know at all) who commented on a social media posting? If so, you are in a relationship with that stranger, and they are affecting you.



Figure 8.6 Do you follow influencers? What is their impact on you?  
(Credit: The Lazy Artist / Pexels)

## *Critical Consumption*

The last literacy, critical consumption, helps us to discern what is true and what is not. We have to learn how to differentiate fact from fiction. Humans have a difficult time trusting people in everyday life; this also translates to the millions of people on the Internet using social media. Before believing what others have written, communicating with them, or using a tool, it is wise to do some detective work. Check the claims, the author's background, sources, and accuracy.

Critical consumption is closely related to Informational Literacy, which is discussed in Chapter 7 on Thinking.

## *Evolving Our Strategies to Match Our Evolving Technologies*

Communication has changed because of the way we are using technology. Yes, we still write and talk, but where and how? There are myriad social media platforms that you can use for communication, from Snapchat to Twitter, each with its own set of rules and limitations. These platforms have completely changed many of the ways we transfer ideas and information, find romantic partners, keep in touch with friends and family, connect with our professors and classmates, make plans with teammates, look for employment, and so much more.

When using a device for communication, there are fewer nonverbal cues we can pick up on, only what the other person is posting or showing. In certain situations, such as talking on the phone, a person can't see hand gestures but can still hear a tone of voice. When typing, however, there is no tone of voice or hand gesture or body language. Sometimes typing may not convey the same message as saying what you're feeling.

Social media has made it easier to keep in contact with many people, but it also creates missed opportunities for new

relationships since we are too often looking down at our phones instead of talking with the person standing next to us.

## ANALYSIS QUESTION

Technology has definitely had an effect on our society. Think about how it has this effect.

- Is that cell phone in your pocket something that has made life better?
- Are we empowering those who most often don't have access to power in our society?
- Or are we further alienating them?
- Does the ability to access global communications create people who are more open and free with their ideas?
- Is an email to a colleague in another country more significant than a snail mail letter?
- Are there any new platforms or apps that you are reluctant to try?

Socialization is an integral part of human behavior, and over time new technologies have made networking and communication more complex. The tools you have available for communication within your networks are powerful and fulfilling, but they can also stand in the way of real-time thinking, doing, relating, and communicating. The past twenty years have seen an explosion in new tools and means of communication, but the next twenty may see similarly rapid growth and change. Adaptability may be as important a skill as any method specific to a certain platform. The key is mindfully participating and knowing when to use and when not to use the new technological tools available to us, which may require learning and acceptance. In this way your communication with others will be positive and allow you to be productive in all aspects of your life.

## GET CONNECTED

Information is processed and transferred faster than ever. Social media has become the place where people obtain information. This could be news on YouTube, shocking events on IGTV, or even fake rumors on Facebook spread from friends of friends. It almost seems that information can't travel fast enough today, but it's vital to take everything you see with a grain of salt and evaluate the information given based on what it is, its source, context, and credibility.

- The Verge published a how-to guide on checking facts and sources online.
- Social networking addiction occurs when people become so dependent on Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook, and related platforms that all of their communication seems to take place within these virtual places. Many researchers conclude that addiction to social media is much stronger than an addiction to cigarettes or alcohol.
- Six Ways Social Media Changed the Way We Communicate discusses how our ability and need to share and consume information quickly can lead to changes in our relationships and ourselves. The article also provides related links.

## Footnotes

- 7Turtle, Sherry. *Alone Together*. New York: Basic Books. 2011.
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# 5. The Context of Communication

## Questions to Consider:

- Does my form of communication change in certain situations?
- Do I use an altered style of talking when I am with different people?
- What role does listening play in communication?

## Does My Form of Communication Change in Certain Situations?

The circumstances surrounding a message provide the context. These include the setting you are in, the culture that guides you and whomever you are communicating with, and the purpose of the communication to begin with. Context also includes the values people have, appropriateness of the message, the timing you choose to convey your message, and the reason behind your wanting to communicate. This means considering your audience, the place, the time, and all other variables that impact communicating constructively.



Figure 8.7 Your career area, work environment, its accepted style of



dress, and the relationships with your colleagues or clients all add context to your communication. (Credit (both photos): Lynconf Games / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Generally, all communication happens for a reason. When you are communicating with people, are you always on the same wavelength? Are you wide-awake and your roommate almost asleep? Is the baseball game really important to you but totally boring to the person you are talking with? It is important that everyone involved understands the context of the conversation. Is it a party, which lends itself to frivolous banter? Is the conversation about something serious that occurred? What are some of the relevant steps to understanding context? First of all, pay attention to timing. Is there enough time to cover what you are trying to say? Is it the right time to talk to the boss about a raise? What about the location? Should your conversation take place in the elevator, over email, in a chat room? Is everyone in the conversation involved for the same reason?

The following is an activity that might help you understand what is meant by context.

## ANALYSIS QUESTION

Consider the context of a family dinner. You are at the table with siblings, cousins, parents, aunts and uncles, and grandparents. A wide variety of age groups are present around the dinner table. Are there any rules about how you behave in this circumstance? What are they?

Then put yourself in the context of a chat room with people you might know and some that you do not know. Are there rules for communicating in that situation? What are they?

Sometimes we have misconceptions about what is going on in a group situation. Perhaps we think that everyone there knows what

we are talking about. Or we think we know everyone's opinions on an issue or situation. Or we come into the conversation already thinking we are right and they are wrong. Communication in these instances can go very wrong. Why? We aren't listening or even preparing ourselves adequately for the conversation we hope to have. So often we are only concerned about what we have to say to an individual or a group and we don't step back long enough to reflect on what our message might mean to them. We seem to not care about how the message will be received and are often surprised by how poorly the communication actually went. Why? Because we didn't step back and think, "Hmmm, my aunt is a really religious person and probably would be offended by a conversation about sexual intimacy." Or, "My father is having a bit of financial trouble, and this might not be the right time to bring up money I need for a new car."

## Do I Use an Altered Style of Talking When I Am With Different People?

There are so many instances in our lives when we think about our needs first and blurt out what we are thinking, leading to some critical misunderstandings. It is really important not only to be concerned about our need to communicate, but to take into consideration with whom we are communicating, when and where we are communicating, and how we are going to do so in a positive way. First, you should step back and think about what you want to say and why. Then reflect on with whom you are attempting to communicate.

## WHAT STUDENTS SAY

1. Of the following methods, which is your preferred method of communication?
  - a. In person/face-to-face
  - b. Voice call
  - c. Video call
  - d. Email
  - e. Texting (including texting apps)
  - f. Social media environments
2. Which element of communication do you find most challenging?
  - a. Understanding the audience/situation and using the best form/tone to fit it
  - b. Speaking in front of a group of people
  - c. Writing papers or reports
  - d. Listening and interpreting
3. When writing a paper for a course, which aspect do you find most challenging?
  - a. Coming up with an original idea/thesis/research question
  - b. Finding sources and background information
  - c. Evaluating the quality of sources or data
  - d. Organizing the paper
  - e. Writing/editing the paper
  - f. Writing the bibliography/works cited list

You can also take the anonymous What Students Say surveys to add your voice to this textbook. Your responses will be included in updates.

Students offered their views on these questions, and the results are displayed in the graphs below.

Of the following methods, which is your preferred method of communication?

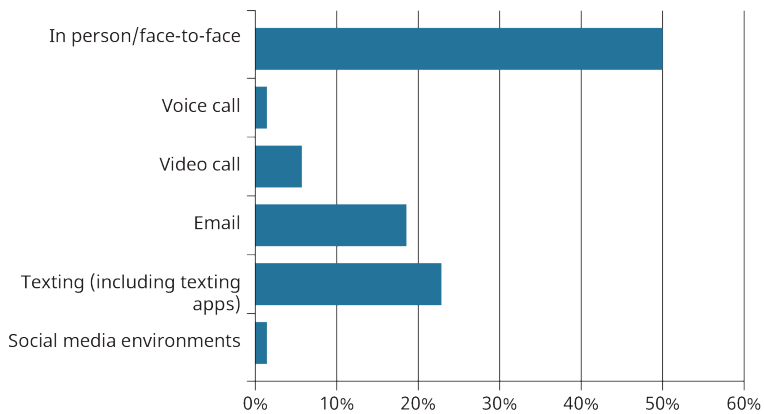


Figure 8.8

**Which element of communication do you find most challenging?**

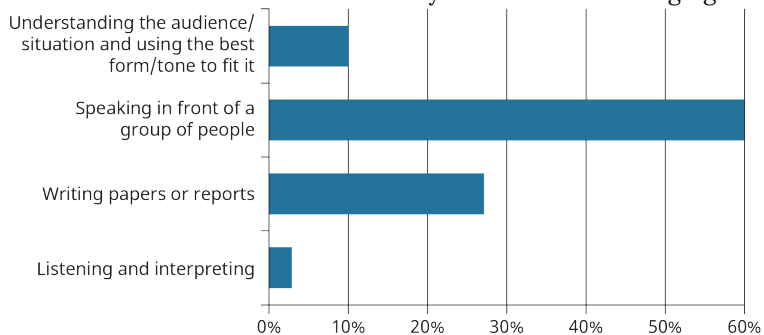


Figure 8.9

**When writing a paper for a course, which aspect do you find most challenging?**

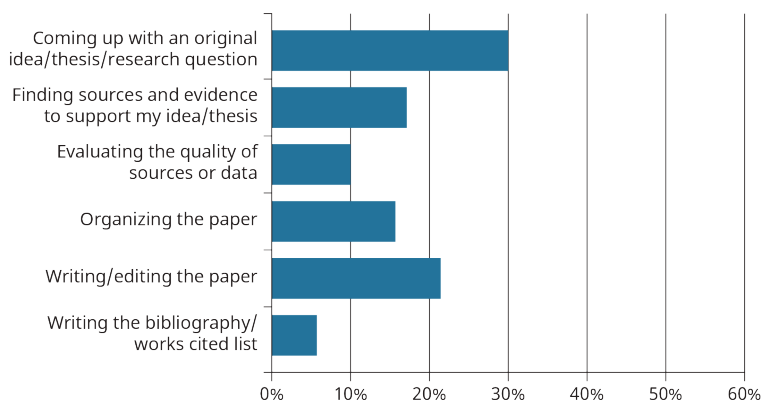


Figure 8.10

## *Emotional Intelligence*

We've talked about emotional intelligence when it comes to listening. Recognizing your own emotions and those of others will help you avoid miscommunication as well. When you are aware of your own emotional state and you have the skills to address and adjust, your communication with others will improve. You're less likely to blurt out an angry retort to a perceived criticism, for example.

You're better able to manage communication when you recognize someone else's emotions, as well. A conversation can veer into hostile territory if someone feels attacked, or perhaps simply because they've had an emotional experience related to the conversation that you don't understand. Taking note of other people's emotional responses during a conversation and listening and speaking with empathy will help you manage the situation.

When conversations begin to feel heated, it's a good idea to pause and ask yourself why. If it's you who are feeling defensive and angry, make an effort to recognize the source of your frustration and try to take a step back, perhaps leaving the conversation until you're

better able to control your emotions and communicate in a way that's more clearheaded and calm.

If it's someone else who's emotional, again, ask yourself why. Can you see reasons that this person may feel attacked, belittled, or usurped? If you can recognize their emotion and address it, you may be able to get the communication back on solid footing.

## ACTIVITY

Think of what context and what communication tool you would consider in the following situations:

1. You need to let your professor know you won't be able to hand in your assignment on time. What will you say, when and where will you say it, and what form of communication will you use and why?
2. Your roommate wants to have friends over for a party and you aren't sure you are up for that. What and how do you tell your roommate?
3. The weekend is full of activities, but you are expected home for a family gathering. How do you let your parents know you aren't coming?

## Listening Is a Communication Action

Our communication includes both sending and, especially, receiving messages. Unfortunately, we often don't take the time to focus on the latter part. Often we are already thinking about what we are going to say next and not listening to what is being said to us. This lack of focus occurs in intense, oppositional discussions, but it can also be common in one-on-one conversations and when someone is

confiding in us. When we listen, we need to embrace the concept of empathy, meaning you understand what a person might be feeling, and understand why that person's actions made sense to them at the time. This way our ideas can be communicated in a way that makes sense to others, and it helps us understand others when they communicate with us.

Even though it is silent, listening is communication. We can often “hear” what is being said but don't really listen well enough to discern what is meant by the person trying to communicate with us. In order to listen effectively, we should consider it an active process, in the same way we think about speaking or messaging.

So what does active listening entail? There are some strategies you can use to help you become a good listener. First of all, stop talking. You can't listen if you are talking. Secondly, turn off the television, put your phone in your pocket, silence the music and, if needed, go somewhere quiet, so you can actually focus on what is being said. Next, have empathy for the person talking to you. In other words, don't begin thinking of ways to answer. Even if someone has a problem (with you or something else), avoid trying to immediately solve it; consider whether the person speaking to you really wants advice or action, or might simply want to be seen and heard. Finally, before you say anything as a reply, repeat what you heard so the other person can confirm that you heard them correctly. You would be amazed at how well these strategies work to help avoid misunderstandings and confusion.



Figure 8.11 Being a good listener takes practice and focus. To help, try to eliminate distraction and avoid giving too much advice or telling your own related stories. Even if you're only listening to a brief summary after running into someone in the hallway, do your best to internalize what they're saying. (Credit: University of the Fraser Valley / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Think about all the times you have gone through a drive-through for food or coffee. The scenario is most often the same, right? You order, let's say, medium fries, a burger with no cheese or onions, and a large soft drink. You then listen to the person inside the restaurant say back to you, "You want medium fries, a quarter pounder with no cheese or onions, and a large Coke." If that is the right order, you say yes and move on to pay. This can be seen as active listening on both sides. The following activity can help you reflect on active listening.

## ANALYSIS QUESTION

This is an activity of self-analysis. As said above, listening and hearing are not the same thing, and the difference can often lead to



faulty communication. Think back on a time when your attempt at communicating with someone (face-to-face or online) didn't go the way you intended. The message you were trying to convey wasn't received in the way you meant it, and this led to some discord between you and whomever you were "talking" to. Write down what happened. Then think a bit about what could have been done differently. Was the problem yours? Did you send a message that wasn't very clear? Did the receiver of this message not really "listen" to what you were saying? What got in the way of what should have been just a simple bit of communication between you and someone else?

As said earlier, emotions are frequently involved in communication. It would be nice if everything was logical and everyone was always coming from that place of no emotion. But that's not how it works in most instances. People have opinions, needs, desires, and outcomes they are looking for; feelings that can be hurt; and differing attitudes. The list could go on and on. What is important is that we need to be aware of our own emotions, and those of others, when attempting to communicate. Consider other people's feelings as well as your own. Have empathy. And in the midst of trying to do that, listen, don't just hear!

# 6. Group Projects and Teamwork

LIZA LONG

Do you dread group projects? Maybe you've had a bad experience with one in the past, or you are concerned that you may have to do all the work. But in fact, group projects (also called project-based learning) model the real-world environment of the workplace



*Photo by Jason Goodman on Unsplash*

and help you to practice a variety of durable skills including communication, conflict management, collaboration, leadership, and time management

In fact, studies have shown that group projects can have a positive impact on student success in college. Here are a just a few of the benefits researchers have found for students who participate in group projects or project-based learning.

- **Improved learning outcomes:** Research has shown that group projects can lead to better learning outcomes compared to individual assignments. In group projects, students are more likely to engage in deeper learning, engage in meaningful discussions, and retain information better (Brindley et al., 2009).
- **Development of transferable skills:** Group projects can help students develop transferable skills, such as communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills, which are valuable in both personal and professional life (Ornellas et al, 2019; Garnjost & Lawter, 2019).

- **Increased motivation and engagement:** Group projects can increase student motivation and engagement, as students are more likely to be invested in the project when they feel that their contributions matter (Hira & Anderson, 2021).
- **Higher student satisfaction:** Students who participate in group projects tend to report higher levels of satisfaction with their course and the learning experience (Lee et al., 2014).
- **Improved grades:** Studies have shown that students who participate in group projects tend to perform better academically compared to those who do individual assignments (Shimazoe & Aldrich, 2010).

As you can see, group projects can be an effective teaching strategy in college because group work can lead to improved learning outcomes, development of transferable skills, increased motivation and engagement, higher student satisfaction, and improved grades.

That's why I assign a group project in my English 211 Literary Analysis course. Students work together to produce *Beginnings and Endings: A Critical Edition*. They each take different roles as part of the publication process. This open education resource is now used in college classrooms around the world, and students who participate in the project are able to add a publication credit to their résumés. The publication demonstrates how a group working together can create something much larger than an individual could create alone.

"Working on *Beginnings and Endings* was something I never thought I'd be doing even just a year ago," said one of my students, Liberal Arts major, Helen Neves. "Contributing to the publication with my group ended up being something both educational and fun. Knowing that future Literary Analysis students will see our work made the project even more exciting and worth the effort."

To learn more about how to make sure your group projects are a positive and productive experience, watch this short video.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://cwi.pressbooks.pub/pathwaystocollegesuccess/?p=149#oembed-1>

Then “jump in” to your Shark Tank discussion, and have fun working with your group to propose a new product or service in your field of study. You will find that you don’t have to dread group work. By treating group projects as practice for the workplace, you’ll be setting yourself up for success in your future career.

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PART IV

# READING AND NOTETAKING





## 7. Reading and Notetaking: Introduction



Figure 5.1 Each of us reads and records information in our own way.

### Student Survey

These questions will help you determine how the chapter concepts relate to you right now. As we are introduced to new concepts and practices, it can be informative to reflect on how your understanding changes over time. We'll revisit these questions at the end of the chapter to see whether your feelings have changed.

On a scale of 1 (I need significant improvement) to 4 (I'm doing great), reflect on how you're doing right now on these statements:

1. I am reading on a college level.
2. I take good notes that help me study for exams.
3. I understand how to manage all the reading I need to do for college.
4. I recognize the need for different notetaking strategies for different college subjects.

You can also take the Chapter 5 survey anonymously online.

## STUDENT PROFILE

“Before I came to college, I always loathed reading from the textbook, taking notes during class, and even listening to lectures. I’ve since learned that in most cases I should do what my teacher suggests. I have a course that requires me to read two textbook chapters each week. Taking notes on the chapters is optional, making it easy to brush off these assignments. But there are reasons that professors tell students to read and do other classwork. They believe it is valuable information for a student to learn. Note taking in class may become tedious and, in some cases, feel redundant. But you can’t recall a whole class from memory. There is not much time to learn the contents of a class in one semester, and it can feel overwhelming. It’s important to take notes because writing them helps you remember.”

—**Christopher Naldini**, Westchester Community College

## About this Chapter

In this chapter we will explore two skills you probably think you already understand—reading and notetaking. But the goal is to make sure you’ve honed these skills well enough to lead you to success in college. By the time you finish this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Discuss the way reading differs in college and how to successfully adapt to that change.
- Demonstrate the usefulness of strong notetaking for college students.

Reading and consuming information are increasingly important today because of the amount of information we encounter. Not only do we need to read critically and carefully, but we also need to read with an eye to distinguishing fact from opinion and identifying solid sources. Reading helps us make sense of the world—from simple reminders to pick up milk to complex treatises on global concerns, we read to comprehend, and in so doing, our brains expand. An interesting study from Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, used MRI scans to track the brain conductivity while participants were reading. The researchers assert that a biological change to your brain actually happens when you read, and it lingers. If you want to read the study, published in the journal *Brain Connectivity*, you can find it online at <https://openstax.org/l/brainconnectivity>.

In academic settings, as we deliberately work to become stronger readers and better notetakers, we are both helping our current situation and enhancing our abilities to be successful in the future. Seems like a win-win. Take advantage of all the study aids you have at hand, including human, electronic, and physical resources, to increase your performance in these crucial skill sets.

Why? You need to read. It improves your thinking, your vocabulary, and your ability to make connections between disparate parts, which are all parts of critical thinking. Educational researchers Anne Cunningham and Keith Stanovich discovered after extensive study with college students that “reading volume [how much you read] made a significant contribution to multiple measures of vocabulary, general knowledge, spelling, and verbal fluency.”

Research continues to assess and support the fact that one of the most significant learning skills necessary for success in any field is reading. You may have performed this skill for decades already, but learning to do it more effectively and practicing the skill consistently is critical to how well you do in all subjects. If reading *isn't your thing*, strive to make that your challenge. Your academic journey, your personal well-being, and your professional endeavors will all benefit from your reading. Put forth the effort and

make it your thing. The long-term benefits will far outweigh the sacrifices you make now.

# 8. The Nature and Types of Reading

## Questions to consider:

- What are the pros and cons of online reading?
- How can distinguishing between reading types help you academically and personally?
- How can you best prepare to read for college?

Research supports the idea that reading is good for you. Students who read at or above reading level throughout elementary and secondary school have a higher chance of starting—and more importantly, finishing—college. Educational researchers convincingly claim that reading improves everything from grades to vocabulary (Cunningham 2).

If you don't particularly enjoy reading, don't despair. We read for a variety of reasons, and you may just have to step back and take a bigger picture of your reading habits to understand why you avoid engaging in this important skill. The myriad distractions we now face as well as the intense information overload we can suffer on a daily basis in all aspects of our lives can combine to make it difficult to slow down to read, an activity that demands at least a modicum of attention in a way that most television and music do not. You may need to adjust your schedule for more reading time, especially in college, because every class you take will expect you to read more pages than you probably have in the past.

## Types of Reading

We may read small items purely for immediate information, such

as notes, e-mails, or directions to an unfamiliar location. You can find all sorts of information online about how to fix a faucet or tie a secure knot. You won't have to spend too much time reading these sorts of texts because you have a specific goal in mind for them, and once you have accomplished that goal, you do not need to prolong the reading experience. These encounters with texts may not be memorable or stunning, but they don't need to be. When we consider why we read longer pieces—outside of reading for pleasure—we can usually categorize the reasons into about two categories: 1) reading to introduce ourselves to new content, and 2) reading to more fully comprehend familiar content.

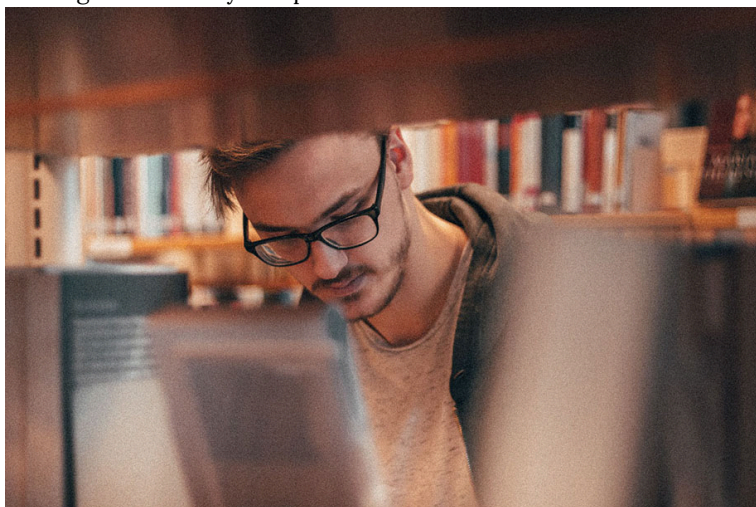


Figure 5.2 A bookstore or library can be a great place to explore. Aside from books and resources you need, you may find something that interests you or helps with your course work.

### *Reading to Introduce New Content*

Glenn felt uncomfortable talking with his new roommates because he realized very quickly that he didn't know anything about their major—architecture. Of course he knew that it had something to do

with buildings and construction sites, but the field was so different from his discipline of biology that he decided he needed to find out more so he could at least engage in friendly conversation with his roommates. Since he would likely not go into their field, he didn't need to go into full research mode. When we read to introduce new content, we can start off small and increase to better and more sophisticated sources. Much of our further study and reading depends on the sources we originally read, our purpose for finding out about this new topic, and our interest level.

Chances are, you have done this sort of exploratory reading before. You may read reviews of a new restaurant or look at what people say about a movie you aren't sure you want to spend the money to see at the theater. This reading helps you decide. In academic settings, much of what you read in your courses may be relatively new content to you. You may have heard the word *volcano* and have a general notion of what it means, but until you study geology and other sciences in depth, you may not have a full understanding of the environmental origins, ecological impacts, and societal and historic responses to volcanoes. These perspectives will come from reading and digesting various material. When you are working with new content, you may need to schedule more time for reading and comprehending the information because you may need to look up unfamiliar terminology and you may have to stop more frequently to make sure you are truly grasping what the material means. When you have few ways to connect new material to your own prior knowledge, you have to work more diligently to comprehend it.

## APPLICATION

Try an experiment with a group of classmates. Without looking on the Internet, try to brainstorm a list of 10 topics about which all of you may be interested but for which you know very little or

nothing at all. Try to make the topics somewhat obscure rather than ordinary—for example, the possibility of the non-planet Pluto being reclassified again as opposed to something like why we need to drink water.

After you have this random list, think of ways you could find information to read about these weird topics. Our short answer is always: Google. But think of other ways as well. How else could you read about these topics if you don't know anything about them? You may well be in a similar circumstance in some of your college classes, so you should listen carefully to your classmates on this one. Think beyond pat answers such as "I'd go to the library," and press for what that researcher would do once at the library. What types of articles or books would you try to find? One reason that you should not always ignore the idea of doing research at the physical library is because once you are there and looking for information, you have a vast number of other sources readily available to you in a highly organized location. You also can tap into the human resources represented by the research librarians who likely can redirect you if you cannot find appropriate sources.

### *Reading to Comprehend Familiar Content*

Reading about unfamiliar content is one thing, but what if you do know something about a topic already? Do you really still need to keep reading about it? Probably. For example, what if during the brainstorming activity in the previous section, you secretly felt rather smug because you know about the demotion of the one-time planet Pluto and that there is currently quite the scientific debate going on about that whole de-planet-ation thing. Of course, you didn't say anything during the study session, mostly to spare your classmates any embarrassment, but you are pretty familiar with Pluto-gate. So now what? Can you learn anything new?

Again—probably. When did Pluto's qualifications to be considered a planet come into question? What are the qualifications for being



considered a planet? Why? Who even gets to decide these things? Why was it called *Pluto* in the first place? On Amazon alone, you can find hundreds of books about the once-planet Pluto (not to be confused with the Disney dog also named Pluto). A Google search brings up over 34 million options for your reading pleasure. You'll have plenty to read, even if you do know something or quite a bit about a topic, but you'll approach reading about a familiar topic and an unfamiliar one differently.

With familiar content, you can do some initial skimming to determine what you already know in the book or article, and mark what may be new information or a different perspective. You may not have to give your full attention to the information you know, but you will spend more time on the new viewpoints so you can determine how this new data meshes with what you already know. Is this writer claiming a radical new definition for the topic or an entirely opposite way to consider the subject matter, connecting it to other topics or disciplines in ways you have never considered?

When college students encounter material in a discipline-specific context and have some familiarity with the topic, they sometimes can allow themselves to become a bit overconfident about their knowledge level. Just because a student may have read an article or two or may have seen a TV documentary on a subject such as the criminal mind, that does not make them an expert. What makes an expert is a person who thoroughly studies a subject, usually for years, and understands all the possible perspectives of a subject as well as the potential for misunderstanding due to personal biases and the availability of false information about the topic.

# 9. Effective Reading Strategies

## Questions to consider:

- What methods can you incorporate into your routine to allow adequate time for reading?
- What are the benefits and approaches to active reading?
- Do your courses or major have specific reading requirements?

## Allowing Adequate Time for Reading

You should determine the reading requirements and expectations for every class very early in the semester. You also need to understand why you are reading the particular text you are assigned. Do you need to read closely for minute details that determine cause and effect? Or is your instructor asking you to skim several sources so you become more familiar with the topic? Knowing this reasoning will help you decide your timing, what notes to take, and how best to undertake the reading assignment.

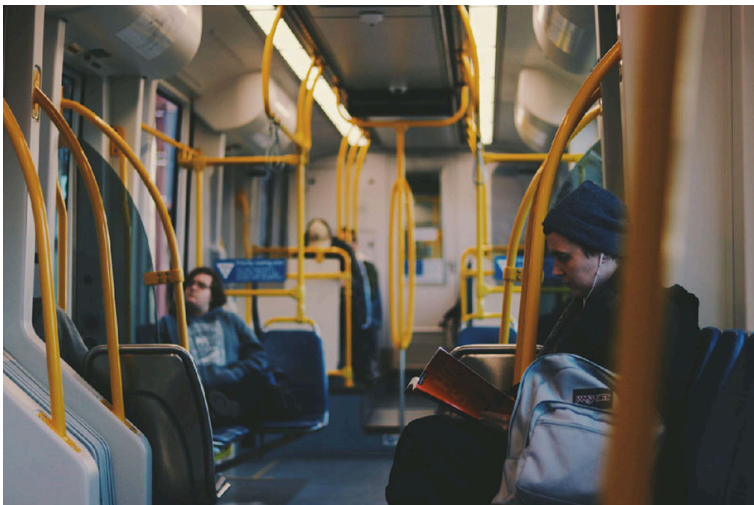


Figure 5.3 If you plan to make time for reading while you commute, remember that unexpected events like delays and cancellations could impact your concentration.

Depending on the makeup of your schedule, you may end up reading both primary sources—such as legal documents, historic letters, or diaries—as well as textbooks, articles, and secondary sources, such as summaries or argumentative essays that use primary sources to stake a claim. You may also need to read current journalistic texts to stay current in local or global affairs. A realistic approach to scheduling your time to allow you to read and review all the reading you have for the semester will help you accomplish what can sometimes seem like an overwhelming task.

When you allow adequate time in your hectic schedule for reading, you are investing in your own success. Reading isn't a magic pill, but it may seem like it when you consider all the benefits people reap from this ordinary practice. Famous successful people throughout history have been voracious readers. In fact, former U.S. president Harry Truman once said, "Not all readers are leaders, but all leaders are readers." Writer of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, inventor, and also former U.S. president Thomas Jefferson claimed "I cannot live without books" at a time when

keeping and reading books was an expensive pastime. Knowing what it meant to be kept from the joys of reading, 19th-century abolitionist Frederick Douglass said, “Once you learn to read, you will be forever free.” And finally, George R. R. Martin, the prolific author of the wildly successful *Game of Thrones* empire, declared, “A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies . . . The man who never reads lives only one.”

You can make time for reading in a number of ways that include determining your usual reading pace and speed, scheduling active reading sessions, and practicing recursive reading strategies.

## Determining Reading Speed and Pacing

To determine your reading speed, select a section of text—passages in a textbook or pages in a novel. Time yourself reading that material for exactly 5 minutes, and note how much reading you accomplished in those 5 minutes. Multiply the amount of reading you accomplished in 5 minutes by 12 to determine your average reading pace (5 times 12 equals the 60 minutes of an hour). Of course, your reading pace will be different and take longer if you are taking notes while you read, but this calculation of reading pace gives you a good way to estimate your reading speed that you can adapt to other forms of reading.

Example Reading Times			
Reader	Pages Read in 5 Minutes	Pages per Hour	Approximate Hours to Read 500 Pages
Marta	4	48	10 hours, 30 minutes
Jordi	3	36	13 hours
Estevan	5	60	8 hours, 20 minutes

So, for instance, if Marta was able to read 4 pages of a dense novel for her English class in 5 minutes, she should be able to read about

48 pages in one hour. Knowing this, Marta can accurately determine how much time she needs to devote to finishing the novel within a set amount of time, instead of just guessing. If the novel Marta is reading is 497 pages, then Marta would take the total page count (497) and divide that by her hourly reading rate (48 pages/hour) to determine that she needs about 10 to 11 hours overall. To finish the novel spread out over two weeks, Marta needs to read a little under an hour a day to accomplish this goal.

Calculating your reading rate in this manner does not take into account days where you're too distracted and you have to reread passages or days when you just aren't in the mood to read. And your reading rate will likely vary depending on how dense the content you're reading is (e.g., a complex textbook vs. a comic book). Your pace may slow down somewhat if you are not very interested in what the text is about. What this method *will* help you do is be realistic about your reading time as opposed to waging a guess based on nothing and then becoming worried when you have far more reading to finish than the time available.

Chapter 3, "Time Management and Prioritization," offers more detail on how best to determine your speed from one type of reading to the next so you are better able to schedule your reading.

## Scheduling Set Times for Active Reading

Active reading takes longer than reading through passages without stopping. You may not need to read your latest sci-fi series actively while you're lounging on the beach, but many other reading situations demand more attention from you. Active reading is particularly important for college courses. You are a scholar actively engaging with the text by posing questions, seeking answers, and clarifying any confusing elements. Plan to spend at least twice as long to read actively than to read passages without taking notes or otherwise marking select elements of the text.

To determine the time you need for active reading, use the same calculations you use to determine your traditional reading speed and double it. Remember that you need to determine your reading pace for all the classes you have in a particular semester and multiply your speed by the number of classes you have that require different types of reading.

Example Active Reading Times				
Reader	Pages Read in 5 Minutes	Pages per Hour	Approximate Hours to Read 500 Pages	Approximate Hours to Actively Read 500 Pages
Marta	4	48	10 hours, 30 minutes	21 hours
Jordi	3	36	13 hours	26 hours
Estevan	5	60	8 hours, 20 minutes	16 hours, 40 minutes

## Practicing Recursive Reading Strategies

One fact about reading for college courses that may become frustrating is that, in a way, it never ends. For all the reading you do, you end up doing even more rereading. It may be the same content, but you may be reading the passage more than once to detect the emphasis the writer places on one aspect of the topic or how frequently the writer dismisses a significant counterargument. This rereading is called recursive reading.

For most of what you read at the college level, you are trying to make sense of the text for a specific purpose—not just because the topic interests or entertains you. You need your full attention to decipher everything that’s going on in complex reading material—and you even need to be considering what the writer of the piece may *not* be including and why. This is why reading for comprehension is recursive.

Specifically, this boils down to seeing reading not as a formula

but as a process that is far more circular than linear. You may read a selection from beginning to end, which is an excellent starting point, but for comprehension, you'll need to go back and reread passages to determine meaning and make connections between the reading and the bigger learning environment that led you to the selection—that may be a single course or a program in your college, or it may be the larger discipline, such as all biologists or the community of scholars studying beach erosion.

People often say writing is rewriting. For college courses, reading is rereading.

Strong readers engage in numerous steps, sometimes combining more than one step simultaneously, but knowing the steps nonetheless. They include, not always in this order:

- bringing any prior knowledge about the topic to the reading session,
- asking yourself pertinent questions, both orally and in writing, about the content you are reading,
- inferring and/or implying information from what you read,
- learning unfamiliar discipline-specific terms,
- evaluating what you are reading, and eventually,
- applying what you're reading to other learning and life situations you encounter.

Let's break these steps into manageable chunks, because you are actually doing quite a lot when you read.



Figure 5.4 The six elements of recursive reading should be considered as a circular, not linear, process.

## Accessing Prior Knowledge

When you read, you naturally think of anything else you may know about the topic, but when you read deliberately and actively, you make yourself more aware of accessing this prior knowledge. Have you ever watched a documentary about this topic? Did you study some aspect of it in another class? Do you have a hobby that is somehow connected to this material? All of this thinking will help you make sense of what you are reading.



## APPLICATION

Imagining that you were given a chapter to read in your American history class about the Gettysburg Address, write down what you already know about this historic document. How might thinking through this prior knowledge help you better understand the text?

### *Asking Questions*

Humans are naturally curious beings. As you read actively, you should be asking questions about the topic you are reading. Don't just say the questions in your mind; write them down. You may ask: Why is this topic important? What is the relevance of this topic currently? Was this topic important a long time ago but irrelevant now? Why did my professor assign this reading?

You need a place where you can actually write down these questions; a separate page in your notes is a good place to begin. If you are taking notes on your computer, start a new document and write down the questions. Leave some room to answer the questions when you begin and again after you read.

### Inferring and Implying

When you read, you can take the information on the page and *infer*, or conclude responses to related challenges from evidence or from your own reasoning. A student will likely be able to infer what material the professor will include on an exam by taking good notes throughout the classes leading up to the test.

Writers may *imply* information without directly stating a fact for a variety of reasons. Sometimes a writer may not want to come out explicitly and state a bias, but may imply or hint at his or her

preference for one political party or another. You have to read carefully to find implications because they are indirect, but watching for them will help you comprehend the whole meaning of a passage.

## Learning Vocabulary

Vocabulary specific to certain disciplines helps practitioners in that field engage and communicate with each other. Few people beyond undertakers and archeologists likely use the term *sarcophagus* in everyday communications, but for those disciplines, it is a meaningful distinction. Looking at the example, you can use context clues to figure out the meaning of the term *sarcophagus* because it is something undertakers and/or archeologists would recognize. At the very least, you can guess that it has something to do with death. As a potential professional in the field you're studying, you need to know the lingo. You may already have a system in place to learn discipline-specific vocabulary, so use what you know works for you. Two strong strategies are to look up words in a dictionary (online or hard copy) to ensure you have the exact meaning for your discipline and to keep a dedicated list of words you see often in your reading. You can list the words with a short definition so you have a quick reference guide to help you learn the vocabulary.

## Evaluating

Intelligent people always question and evaluate. This doesn't mean they don't trust others; they just need verification of facts to understand a topic well. It doesn't make sense to learn incomplete or incorrect information about a subject just because you didn't take the time to evaluate all the sources at your disposal. When early

explorers were afraid to sail the world for fear of falling off the edge, they weren't stupid; they just didn't have all the necessary data to evaluate the situation.

When you evaluate a text, you are seeking to understand the presented topic. Depending on how long the text is, you will perform a number of steps and repeat many of these steps to evaluate all the elements the author presents. When you evaluate a text, you need to do the following:

- Scan the title and all headings.
- Read through the entire passage fully.
- Question what main point the author is making.
- Decide who the audience is.
- Identify what evidence/support the author uses.
- Consider if the author presents a balanced perspective on the main point.
- Recognize if the author introduced any biases in the text.

When you go through a text looking for each of these elements, you need to go beyond just answering the surface question; for instance, the audience may be a specific field of scientists, but could anyone else understand the text with some explanation? Why would that be important?

## *ANALYSIS QUESTION*

Think of an article you need to read for a class. Take the steps above on how to evaluate a text, and apply the steps to the article. When you accomplish the task in each step, ask yourself and take notes to answer the question: Why is this important? For example, when you read the title, does that give you any additional information that will help you comprehend the text? If the text were written for a different audience, what might the author need to change to accommodate that group? How does an author's bias distort an

argument? This deep evaluation allows you to fully understand the main ideas and place the text in context with other material on the same subject, with current events, and within the discipline.

## *Applying*

When you learn something new, it always connects to other knowledge you already have. One challenge we have is applying new information. It may be interesting to know the distance to the moon, but how do we apply it to something we need to do? If your biology instructor asked you to list several challenges of colonizing Mars and you do not know much about that planet's exploration, you may be able to use your knowledge of how far Earth is from the moon to apply it to the new task. You may have to read several other texts in addition to reading graphs and charts to find this information.

That was the challenge the early space explorers faced along with myriad unknowns before space travel was a more regular occurrence. They had to take what they already knew and could study and read about and apply it to an unknown situation. These explorers wrote down their challenges, failures, and successes, and now scientists read those texts as a part of the ever-growing body of text about space travel. Application is a sophisticated level of thinking that helps turn theory into practice and challenges into successes.

## **Preparing to Read for Specific Disciplines in College**

Different disciplines in college may have specific expectations, but you can depend on all subjects asking you to read to some degree. In this college reading requirement, you can succeed by learning to read actively, researching the topic and author, and recognizing

how your own preconceived notions affect your reading. Reading for college isn't the same as reading for pleasure or even just reading to learn something on your own because you are casually interested.

In college courses, your instructor may ask you to read articles, chapters, books, or *primary sources* (those original documents about which we write and study, such as letters between historic figures or the Declaration of Independence). Your instructor may want you to have a general background on a topic before you dive into that subject in class, so that you know the history of a topic, can start thinking about it, and can engage in a class discussion with more than a passing knowledge of the issue.

If you are about to participate in an in-depth six-week consideration of the U.S. Constitution but have never read it or anything written about it, you will have a hard time looking at anything in detail or understanding how and why it is significant. As you can imagine, a great deal has been written about the Constitution by scholars and citizens since the late 1700s when it was first put to paper (that's how they did it then). While the actual document isn't that long (about 12–15 pages depending on how it is presented), learning the details on how it came about, who was involved, and why it was and still is a significant document would take a considerable amount of time to read and digest. So, how do you do it all? Especially when you may have an instructor who drops hints that you may also *love* to read a historic novel covering the same time period . . . in your *spare time*, not required, of course! It can be daunting, especially if you are taking more than one course that has time-consuming reading lists. With a few strategic techniques, you can manage it all, but know that you must have a plan and schedule your required reading so you *are* also able to pick up that recommended historic novel—it may give you an entirely new perspective on the issue.

## Strategies for Reading in College Disciplines

No universal law exists for how much reading instructors and institutions expect college students to undertake for various disciplines. Suffice it to say, it's a LOT.

For most students, it is the volume of reading that catches them most off guard when they begin their college careers. A full course load might require 10–15 hours of reading per week, some of that covering content that will be more difficult than the reading for other courses.

You cannot possibly read word-for-word every single document you need to read for all your classes. That doesn't mean you give up or decide to only read for your favorite classes or concoct a scheme to read 17 percent for each class and see how that works for you. You need to learn to skim, annotate, and take notes. All of these techniques will help you comprehend more of what you read, which is why we read in the first place. We'll talk more later about annotating and notetaking, but for now consider what you know about skimming as opposed to active reading.

### Skimming

Skimming is not just glancing over the words on a page (or screen) to see if any of it sticks. Effective skimming allows you to take in the major points of a passage without the need for a time-consuming reading session that involves your active use of notations and annotations. Often you will need to engage in that painstaking level of active reading, but skimming is the first step—not an alternative to deep reading. The fact remains that neither do you need to read everything nor could you possibly accomplish that given your limited time. So learn this valuable skill of skimming as an

accompaniment to your overall study tool kit, and with practice and experience, you will fully understand how valuable it is.

When you skim, look for guides to your understanding: headings, definitions, pull quotes, tables, and context clues. Textbooks are often helpful for skimming—they may already have made some of these skimming guides in bold or a different color, and chapters often follow a predictable outline. Some even provide an overview and summary for sections or chapters. Use whatever you can get, but don't stop there. In textbooks that have some reading guides, or especially in text that does not, look for introductory words such as *First* or *The purpose of this article . . .* or summary words such as *In conclusion . . .* or *Finally*. These guides will help you read only those sentences or paragraphs that will give you the overall meaning or gist of a passage or book.

Now move to the meat of the passage. You want to take in the reading as a whole. For a book, look at the titles of each chapter if available. Read each chapter's introductory paragraph and determine why the writer chose this particular order. Depending on what you're reading, the chapters may be only informational, but often you're looking for a specific argument. What position is the writer claiming? What support, counterarguments, and conclusions is the writer presenting?

Don't think of skimming as a way to buzz through a boring reading assignment. It is a skill you should master so you can engage, at various levels, with all the reading you need to accomplish in college. End your skimming session with a few notes—terms to look up, questions you still have, and an overall summary. And recognize that you likely will return to that book or article for a more thorough reading if the material is useful.

## Active Reading Strategies

Active reading differs significantly from skimming or reading for

pleasure. You can think of active reading as a sort of conversation between you and the text (maybe between you and the author, but you don't want to get the author's personality too involved in this metaphor because that may skew your engagement with the text).

When you sit down to determine what your different classes expect you to read and you create a reading schedule to ensure you complete all the reading, think about when you should read the material strategically, not just how to *get it all done*. You should read textbook chapters and other reading assignments *before* you go into a lecture about that information. Don't wait to see how the lecture goes before you read the material, or you may not understand the information in the lecture. Reading before class helps you put ideas together between your reading and the information you hear and discuss in class.

Different disciplines naturally have different types of texts, and you need to take this into account when you schedule your time for reading class material. For example, you may look at a poem for your world literature class and assume that it will not take you long to read because it is relatively short compared to the dense textbook you have for your economics class. But reading and understanding a poem can take a considerable amount of time when you realize you may need to stop numerous times to review the separate word meanings and how the words form images and connections throughout the poem.

## The SQ3R Reading Strategy

You may have heard of the **SQ3R** method for active reading in your early education. This valuable technique is perfect for college reading. The title stands for **S**urvey, **Q**uestion, **R**ead, **R**ecite, **R**evue, and you can use the steps on virtually any assigned passage. Designed by Francis Pleasant Robinson in his 1961 book *Effective*



*Study*, the active reading strategy gives readers a systematic way to work through any reading material.

**Survey** is similar to skimming. You look for clues to meaning by reading the titles, headings, introductions, summary, captions for graphics, and keywords. You can survey almost anything connected to the reading selection, including the copyright information, the date of the journal article, or the names and qualifications of the author(s). In this step, you decide what the general meaning is for the reading selection.

**Question** is your creation of questions to seek the main ideas, support, examples, and conclusions of the reading selection. Ask yourself these questions separately. Try to create valid questions about what you are about to read that have come into your mind as you engaged in the Survey step. Try turning the headings of the sections in the chapter into questions. Next, how does what you're reading relate to you, your school, your community, and the world?

**Read** is when you actually read the passage. Try to find the answers to questions you developed in the previous step. Decide how much you are reading in chunks, either by paragraph for more complex readings or by section or even by an entire chapter. When you finish reading the selection, stop to make notes. Answer the questions by writing a note in the margin or other white space of the text.

You may also carefully underline or highlight text in addition to your notes. Use caution here that you don't try to rush this step by haphazardly circling terms or the other extreme of underlining huge chunks of text. Don't over-mark. You aren't likely to remember what these cryptic marks mean later when you come back to use this active reading session to study. The text is the source of information—your marks and notes are just a way to organize and make sense of that information.

**Recite** means to speak out loud. By reciting, you are engaging other senses to remember the material—you read it (visual) and you said it (auditory). Stop reading momentarily in the step to answer your questions or clarify confusing sentences or paragraphs. You

can recite a summary of what the text means to you. If you are not in a place where you can verbalize, such as a library or classroom, you can accomplish this step adequately by *saying* it in your head; however, to get the biggest bang for your buck, try to find a place where you can speak aloud. You may even want to try explaining the content to a friend.

**Review** is a recap. Go back over what you read and add more notes, ensuring you have captured the main points of the passage, identified the supporting evidence and examples, and understood the overall meaning. You may need to repeat some or all of the SQR3 steps during your review depending on the length and complexity of the material. Before you end your active reading session, write a short (no more than one page is optimal) summary of the text you read.

## Reading Primary and Secondary Sources

Primary sources are original documents we study and from which we glean information; primary sources include letters, first editions of books, legal documents, and a variety of other texts. When scholars look at these documents to understand a period in history or a scientific challenge and then write about their findings, the scholar's article is considered a secondary source. Readers have to keep several factors in mind when reading both primary and secondary sources.

Primary sources may contain dated material we now know is inaccurate. It may contain personal beliefs and biases the original writer didn't intent to be openly published, and it may even present fanciful or creative ideas that do not support current knowledge. Readers can still gain great insight from primary sources, but readers need to understand the context from which the writer of the primary source wrote the text.

Likewise, secondary sources are inevitably another person's

perspective on the primary source, so a reader of secondary sources must also be aware of potential biases or preferences the secondary source writer inserts in the writing that may persuade an incautious reader to interpret the primary source in a particular manner.

For example, if you were to read a secondary source that is examining the U.S. Declaration of Independence (the primary source), you would have a much clearer idea of how the secondary source scholar presented the information from the primary source if you also read the Declaration for yourself instead of trusting the other writer's interpretation. Most scholars are honest in writing secondary sources, but you as a reader of the source are trusting the writer to present a balanced perspective of the primary source. When possible, you should attempt to read a primary source in conjunction with the secondary source. The Internet helps immensely with this practice.

## WHAT STUDENTS SAY

1. What is the most influential factor in how thoroughly you read the material for a given course?
  - a. How engaging the material is or how much I enjoy reading it.
  - b. Whether or not the course is part of my major.
  - c. Whether or not the instructor assesses knowledge from the reading (through quizzes, for example), or requires assignments based on the reading.
  - d. Whether or not knowledge or information from the reading is required to participate in lecture.
2. What best describes your reading approach for required texts/materials for your classes?
  - a. I read all of the assigned material.
  - b. I read most of the assigned material.
  - c. I skim the text and read the captions, examples, or

summaries.

3. What best describes your notetaking style?

- a. I use a systematic method such as the Cornell method or something similar.
- b. I highlight or underline all the important information.
- c. I create outlines and/or note-cards.
- d. I use an app or program.
- e. I write notes in my text (print or digital).
- f. I don't have a style. I just write down what seems important.
- g. I don't take many notes.

You can also take the anonymous What Students Say surveys to add your voice to this textbook. Your responses will be included in updates.

Students offered their views on these questions, and the results are displayed in the graphs below.

What is the most influential factor in how thoroughly you read the material for a given course?

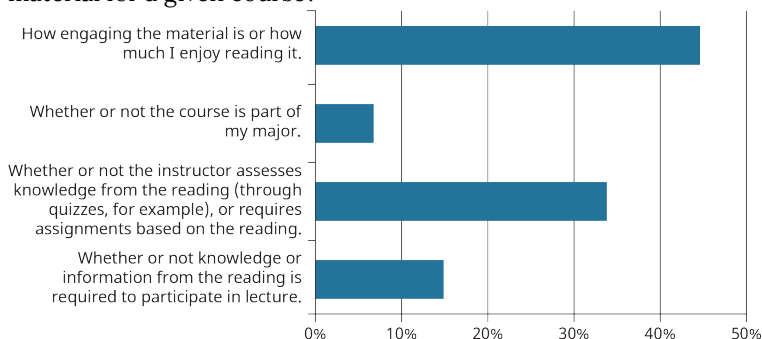


Figure 5.5

What best describes your reading approach for required texts/materials for your classes?

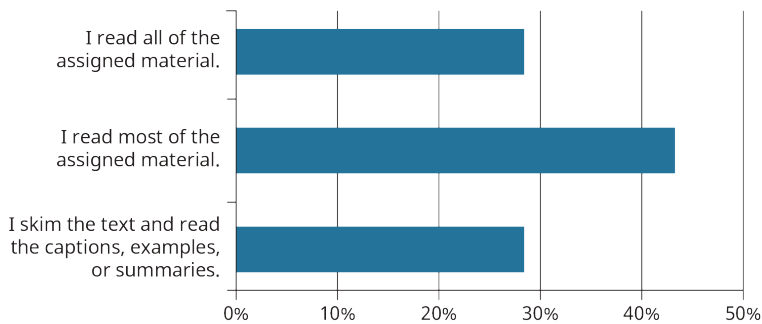


Figure 5.6

### What best describes your notetaking style?

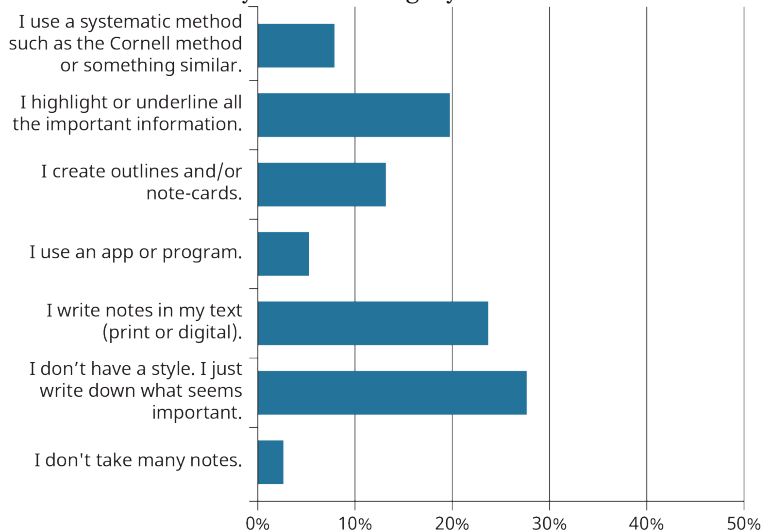


Figure 5.7

## Researching Topic and Author

During your preview stage, sometimes called pre-reading, you can easily pick up on information from various sources that may help you understand the material you're reading more fully or place it

in context with other important works in the discipline. If your selection is a book, flip it over or turn to the back pages and look for an author's biography or note from the author. See if the book itself contains any other information about the author or the subject matter.

The main things you need to recall from your reading in college are the topics covered and how the information fits into the discipline. You can find these parts throughout the textbook chapter in the form of headings in larger and bold font, summary lists, and important quotations pulled out of the narrative. Use these features as you read to help you determine what the most important ideas are.

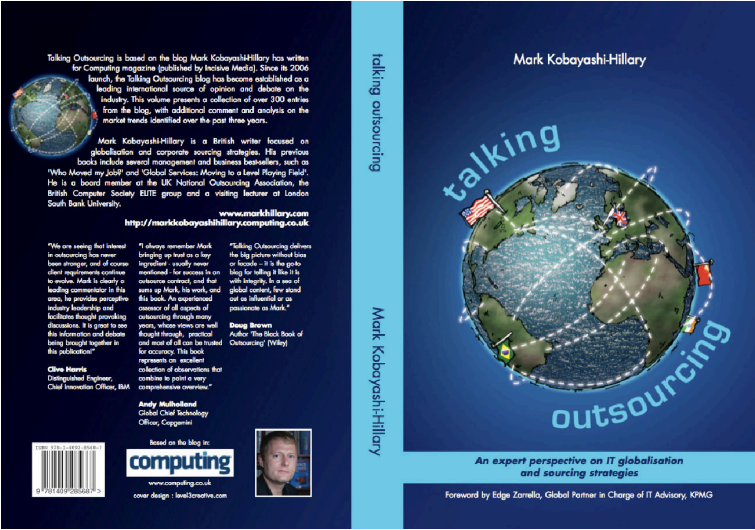


Figure 5.8 Learning about the book you're reading can provide good context and information. Look for an author's biography and forward on the back cover or in the first few pages. (Credit: Mark Hillary / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Remember, many books use quotations about the book or author as testimonials in a marketing approach to sell more books, so these may not be the most reliable sources of unbiased opinions, but it's a start. Sometimes you can find a list of other books the author has

written near the front of a book. Do you recognize any of the other titles? Can you do an Internet search for the name of the book or author? Go beyond the search results that want you to buy the book and see if you can glean any other relevant information about the author or the reading selection. Beyond a standard Internet search, try the library article database. These are more relevant to academic disciplines and contain resources you typically will not find in a standard search engine. If you are unfamiliar with how to use the library database, ask a reference librarian on campus. They are often underused resources that can point you in the right direction.

## Understanding Your Own Preset Ideas on a Topic

Laura really enjoys learning about environmental issues. She has read many books and watched numerous televised documentaries on this topic and actively seeks out additional information on the environment. While Laura's interest can help her understand a new reading encounter about the environment, Laura also has to be aware that with this interest, she also brings forward her preset ideas and biases about the topic. Sometimes these prejudices against other ideas relate to religion or nationality or even just tradition. Without evidence, thinking the way we always have is not a good enough reason; evidence can change, and at the very least it needs honest review and assessment to determine its validity. Ironically, we may not want to learn new ideas because that may mean we would have to give up old ideas we have already mastered, which can be a daunting prospect.

With every reading situation about the environment, Laura needs to remain open-minded about what she is about to read and pay careful attention if she begins to ignore certain parts of the text because of her preconceived notions. Learning new information can be very difficult if you balk at ideas that are different from what you've always thought. You may have to force yourself to listen to a

different viewpoint multiple times to make sure you are not closing your mind to a viable solution your mindset does not currently allow.

## ANALYSIS QUESTION

Can you think of times you have struggled reading college content for a course? Which of these strategies might have helped you understand the content? Why do you think those strategies would work?



# 10. Taking Notes

## **Questions to consider:**

- How can you prepare to take notes to maximize the effectiveness of the experience?
- What are some specific strategies you can employ for better notetaking?
- Why is annotating your notes after the notetaking session a critical step to follow?

Beyond providing a record of the information you are reading or hearing, notes help you organize the ideas and help you make meaning out of something about which you may not be familiar, so notetaking and reading are two compatible skill sets. Taking notes also helps you stay focused on the question at hand. Nanami often takes notes during presentations or class lectures so she can follow the speaker's main points and condense the material into a more readily usable format. Strong notes build on your prior knowledge of a subject, help you discuss trends or patterns present in the information, and direct you toward areas needing further research or reading.



Figure 5.9 Strong notes build on your prior knowledge of a subject, help you discuss trends or patterns present in the information, and direct you toward areas needing further research or reading.

It is not a good habit to transcribe every single word a speaker utters—even if you have an amazing ability to do that. Most of us don't have that court-reporter-esque skill level anyway, and if we try, we would end up missing valuable information. Learn to listen for main ideas and distinguish between these main ideas and details

that typically support the ideas. Include examples that explain the main ideas, but do so using understandable abbreviations.

Think of all notes as potential study guides. In fact, if you only take notes without actively working on them after the initial notetaking session, the likelihood of the notes helping you is slim. 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! That sort of defeats the purpose, don't you think? This information about memory loss was first brought to light by 19th-century German psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus. Fortunately, you do have the power to thwart what is sometimes called the Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve by reinforcing what you learned through review at intervals shortly after you take in the material and frequently thereafter.

If you are a musician, you'll 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.

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. Well-written notes help you organize your thoughts, enhance your memory, and participate in class discussion, and they prepare you to respond successfully on exams. With all that riding on your notes, it would behoove you to learn how to take notes properly and continue to improve your notetaking skills.

## ANALYSIS QUESTION

Do you currently have a preferred way to take notes? When did you start using it? Has it been effective? What other strategy might work for you?

### Preparing to Take Notes

Preparing to take notes means more than just getting out your laptop or making sure you bring pen and paper to class. You'll do a much better job with your notes if you understand why we take notes, have a strong grasp on your preferred notetaking system, determine your specific priorities depending on your situation, and engage in some version of efficient shorthand.

Like handwriting and fingerprints, we all have unique and fiercely independent notetaking habits. These understandably and reasonably vary from one situation to the next, but you can only improve your skills by learning more about ways to take effective notes and trying different methods to find a good fit.

The very best notes are the ones you take in an organized manner that encourages frequent review and use as you progress through a topic or course of study. For this reason, you need to develop a way to organize all your notes for each class so they remain together and organized. As old-fashioned as it sounds, a clunky three-ring binder is an excellent organizational container for class notes. You can easily add to previous notes, insert handouts you may receive in class, and maintain a running collection of materials for each separate course. If the idea of carrying around a heavy binder has you rolling your eyes, then transfer that same structure into your computer files. If you don't organize your many documents into some semblance of order on your computer, you will waste significant time searching for improperly named or saved files.

You may be interested in relatively new research on what is the more effective notetaking strategy: handwriting versus typing directly into a computer. While individuals have strong personal opinions on this subject, most researchers agree that the format of student notes is less important than what students do with the notes they take afterwards. Both handwriting notes and using a computer for notetaking have pros and cons.

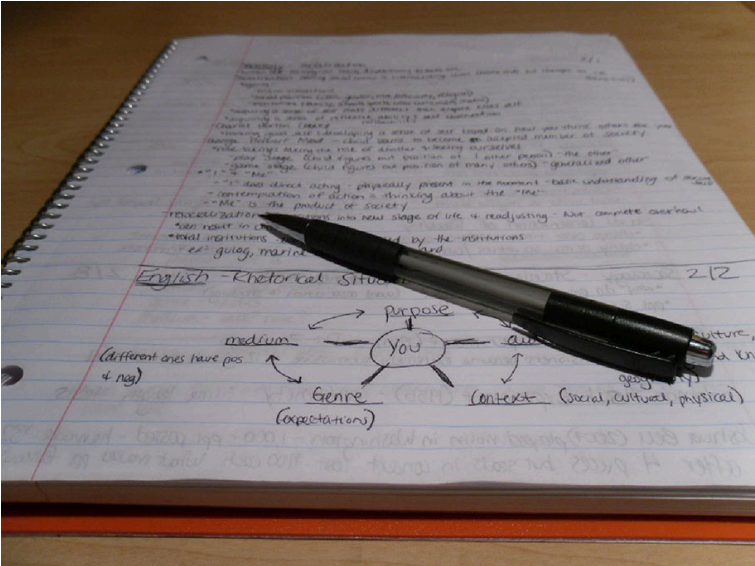


Figure 5.10 The best notes are the ones you take in an organized manner. Frequent review and further annotation are important to build a deep and useful understanding of the material. (Credit: English106 / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

*Managing Notetaking Systems (Computer, Paper/Pen, Note Cards, Textbook)*

Whichever of the many notetaking systems you choose (and new ones seem to come out almost daily), the very best one is the one that you will use consistently. The skill and art of notetaking is not

automatic for anyone; it takes a great deal of practice, patience, and continuous attention to detail. Add to that the fact that you may need to master multiple notetaking techniques for different classes, and you have some work to do. Unless you are specifically directed by your instructor, you are free to combine the best parts of different systems if you are most comfortable with that hybrid system.

Just to keep yourself organized, all your notes should start off with an identifier, including at the very least the date, the course name, the topic of the lecture/presentation, and any other information you think will help you when you return to use the notes for further study, test preparation, or assignment completion. Additional, optional information may be the number of notetaking sessions about this topic or reminders to cross-reference class handouts, textbook pages, or other course materials. It's also always a good idea to leave some blank space in your notes so you can insert additions and questions you may have as you review the material later.

## Notetaking Strategies

You may have a standard way you take all your notes for all your classes. When you were in high school, this one-size-fits-all approach may have worked. Now that you're in college, reading and studying more advanced topics, your general method may still work some of the time, but you should have some different strategies in place if you find that your method isn't working as well with college content. You probably will need to adopt different notetaking strategies for different subjects. The strategies in this section represent various ways to take notes in such a way that you are able to study after the initial notetaking session.

## *Cornell Method*

One of the most recognizable notetaking systems is called the *Cornell Method*, a relatively simple way to take effective notes devised by Cornell University education professor Dr. Walter Pauk in the 1940s. In this system, you take a standard piece of note paper and divide it into three sections by drawing a horizontal line across your paper about one to two inches from the bottom of the page (the summary area) and then drawing a vertical line to separate the rest of the page above this bottom area, making the left side about two inches (the recall column) and leaving the biggest area to the right of your vertical line (the notes column). You may want to make one page and then copy as many pages as you think you'll need for any particular class, but one advantage of this system is that you can generate the sections quickly. Because you have divided up your page, you may end up using more paper than you would if you were writing on the entire page, but the point is not to keep your notes to as few pages as possible. The Cornell Method provides you with a well-organized set of notes that will help you study and review your notes as you move through the course. If you are taking notes on your computer, you can still use the Cornell Method in Word or Excel on your own or by using a template someone else created.

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

Figure 5.11 The Cornell Method provides a straightforward, organized, and flexible approach

Now that you have the notetaking format generated, the beauty of the Cornell Method is its organized simplicity. Just write on one side of the page (the right-hand notes column)—this will help later when you are reviewing and revising your notes. During your notetaking session, use the notes column to record information over the main points and concepts of the lecture; try to put the ideas into your own words, which will help you not transcribe the speaker’s words verbatim. Skip lines between each idea in this column. Practice the shortcut abbreviations covered in the next section and avoid writing



in complete sentences. Don't make your notes too cryptic, but you can use bullet points or phrases equally well to convey meaning—we do it all the time in conversation. If you know you will need to expand the notes you are taking in class but don't have time, you can put reminders directly in the notes by adding and underlining the word *expand* by the ideas you need to develop more fully.

As soon as possible after your notetaking session, preferably within eight hours but no more than twenty-four hours, read over your notes column and fill in any details you missed in class, including the places where you indicated you wanted to expand your notes. Then in the recall column, write any key ideas from the corresponding notes column—you can't stuff this smaller recall column as if you're explaining or defining key ideas. Just add the one- or two-word main ideas; these words in the recall column serve as cues to help you remember the detailed information you recorded in the notes column.

Once you are satisfied with your notes and recall columns, summarize this page of notes in two or three sentences using the summary area at the bottom of the sheet. This is an excellent time to get with another classmate or a group of students who all heard the same lecture to make sure you all understood the key points. Now, before you move onto something else, cover the large notes column, and quiz yourself over the key ideas you recorded in the recall column. Repeat this step often as you go along, not just immediately before an exam, and you will help your memory make the connections between your notes, your textbook reading, your in-class work, and assignments that you need to succeed on any quizzes and exams.

Academic Essay Elements	
Topic	<b>Topic</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Establishes context</li> <li>– Limits scope of essay</li> <li>– Introduces Issue/Problem</li> </ul>
Thesis	<b>Thesis</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Central argument or point of paper</li> <li>– Arrives early in paper—usually toward end of first paragraph (maybe a bit later in longer papers)</li> <li>– Focused, clear, and specific</li> <li>– Reflects writer's position on the topic/issue</li> </ul>
Supporting Details	<b>Supporting Detail Paragraphs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Each paragraph has a specific topic</li> <li>– Clarify, explain, illustrate, expand on topic</li> <li>– Provide EVIDENCE—quotes, data, references <u>Cite everything properly!</u></li> </ul>
Conclusion	<b>Conclusion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Tie back to intro/thesis</li> <li>– Show how details supported the argument</li> <li>– Why is it important?</li> <li>– Point to implications/outcomes, but don't introduce entirely new ideas</li> </ul>
Use the structure, but don't follow it too rigidly. The most important pieces are a strong thesis and good evidence to back it up. The conclusion should not just summarize—take it a little further.	

Figure 5.12 This sample set of notes in the Cornell Method is designed to make sense of a large amount of information. The process of organizing the notes can help you retain the information more effectively than less consistent methods.

The main advantage of the Cornell Method is that you are setting yourself up to have organized, workable notes. The neat format helps you move into study-mode without needing to re-copy less organized notes or making sense of a large mass of information you aren't sure how to process because you can't remember key ideas or what you meant. If you write notes in your classes without any sort of system and later come across something like “Napoleon—short” in the middle of a glob of notes, what can you do at this point? Is

that important? Did it connect with something relevant from the lecture? How would you possibly know? You are your best advocate for setting yourself up for success in college.

## *Outlining*

Other note organizing systems may help you in different disciplines. You can take notes in a formal outline if you prefer, using Roman numerals for each new topic, moving down a line to capital letters indented a few spaces to the right for concepts related to the previous topic, then adding details to support the concepts indented a few more spaces over and denoted by an Arabic numeral. You can continue to add to a formal outline by following these rules.

You don't absolutely have to use the formal numerals and letter, but you have to then be careful to indent so you can tell when you move from a higher level topic to the related concepts and then to the supporting information. The main benefit of an outline is how organized it is. You have to be on your toes when you are taking notes in class to ensure you keep up the organizational format of the outline, which can be tricky if the lecture or presentation is moving quickly or covering many diverse topics.

The following formal outline example shows the basic pattern:

- I. Dogs (*main topic—usually general*)
  - A. German Shepherd (*concept related to main topic*)
    - 1. Protection (*supporting info about the concept*)
    - 2. Assertive
    - 3. Loyal
  - B. Weimaraner (*concept related to main topic*)
    - 1. Family-friendly (*supporting info about the concept*)
    - 2. Active
    - 3. Healthy
- II. Cats (*main topic*)

Siamese

You would just continue on with this sort of numbering and indenting format to show the connections between main ideas, concepts, and supporting details. Whatever details you do not capture in your notetaking session, you can add after the lecture as you review your outline.

*Chart or table*

Similar to creating an outline, you can develop a chart to compare and contrast main ideas in a notetaking session. Divide your paper into four or five columns with headings that include either the main topics covered in the lecture or categories such as How?, What?, When used?, Advantages/Pros, Disadvantages/Cons, or other divisions of the information. You write your notes into the appropriate columns as that information comes to light in the presentation.

---

Example of a Chart to Organize Ideas and Categories			
Structure	Types	Functions in Body	Additional Notes
Carbohydrates			
Lipids			
Proteins			
Nucleic Acid			

---

This format helps you pull out the salient ideas and establishes an organized set of notes to study later. (If you haven't noticed that this *reviewing later* idea is a constant across all notetaking systems, you should...take note of that.) Notes by themselves that you never reference again are little more than scribbles. That would be a bit like compiling an extensive grocery list so you stay on budget when

you shop, work all week on it, and then just throw it away before you get to the store. You may be able to recall a few items, but likely won't be as efficient as you could be if you had the notes to reference. Just as you cannot read all the many books, articles, and documents you need to peruse for your college classes, you cannot remember the most important ideas of all the notes you will take as part of your courses, so you must review.

### *Concept Mapping and Visual Notetaking*

One final notetaking method that appeals to learners who prefer a visual representation of notes is called *mapping* or sometimes *mind mapping* or *concept mapping*, although each of these names can have slightly different uses. Variations of this method abound, so you may want to look for more versions online, but the basic principles are that you are making connections between main ideas through a graphic depiction; some can get rather elaborate with colors and shapes, but a simple version may be more useful at least to begin. Main ideas can be circled or placed in a box with supporting concepts radiating off these ideas shown with a connecting line and possibly details of the support further radiating off the concepts. You can present your main ideas vertically or horizontally, but turning your paper long-ways, or in landscape mode, may prove helpful as you add more main ideas.

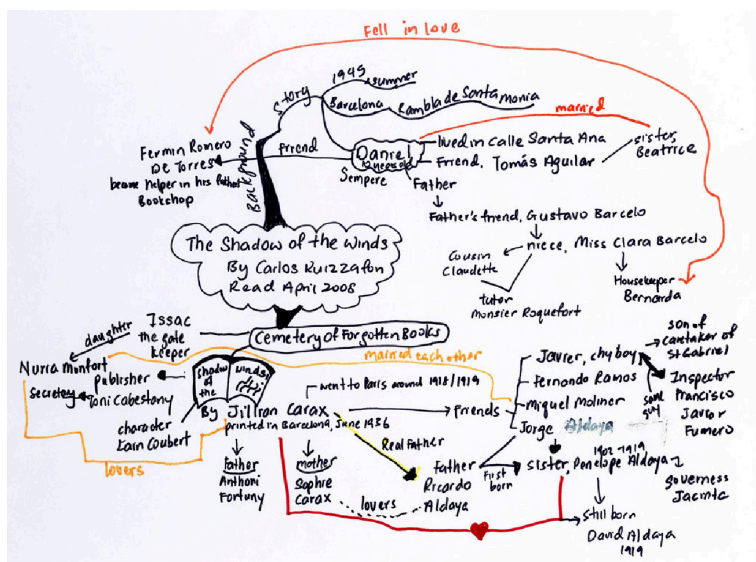


Figure 5.13 Concept mapping, sometimes referred to as mind mapping, can be an effective and very personalized approach to capturing information. (Credit: ArtistIvanChew / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

You may be interested in trying visual notetaking or adding pictures to your notes for clarity. Sometimes when you can't come up with the exact wording to explain something or you're trying to add information for complex ideas in your notes, sketching a rough image of the idea can help you remember. According to educator Sherrill Knezel in an article entitled "The Power of Visual Notetaking," this strategy is effective because "When students use images and text in notetaking, it gives them two different ways to pull up the information, doubling their chances of recall." Don't shy away from this creative approach to notetaking just because you believe you aren't an artist; the images don't need to be perfect. You may want to watch Rachel Smith's TEDx Talk called "Drawing in Class" to learn more about visual notetaking.

You can play with different types of notetaking suggestions and find the method(s) you like best, but once you find what works for

you, stick with it. You will become more efficient with the method the more you use it, and your notetaking, review, and test prep will become, if not easier, certainly more organized, which can delete decrease your anxiety.

### *Practicing Decipherable Shorthand*

Most college students don't take a class in shorthand, once the domain of secretaries and executive assistants, but maybe they should. That almost-lost art in the age of computers could come in very handy during intense notetaking sessions. Elaborate shorthand systems do exist, but you would be better served in your college notetaking adventures to hone a more familiar, personalized form of shorthand to help you write more in a shorter amount of time. Seemingly insignificant shortcuts can add up to ease the stress notetaking can induce—especially if you ever encounter an “I’m not going to repeat this” kind of presenter! Become familiar with these useful abbreviations:

Shortcut symbol	Meaning
w/, w/o, w/in	with, without, within
&	and
#	number
b/c	because
X, $\sqrt{\phantom{x}}$	incorrect, correct
Diff	different, difference
etc.	and so on
ASAP	as soon as possible
US, UK	United States, United Kingdom
info	information
Measurements: ft, in, k, m	foot, inch, thousand, million
¶	paragraph or new paragraph
Math symbols: =, +, >, <, $\div$	equal, plus, greater, less, divided by
WWI, WWII	World Wars I and II
impt	important
?, !, **	denote something is very significant; don't over use

Do you have any other shortcuts or symbols that you use in your notes? Ask your parents if they remember any that you may be able to learn.

## Annotating Notes After Initial Notetaking Session

Annotating notes after the initial notetaking session may be one of the most valuable study skills you can master. Whether you are



highlighting, underlining, or adding additional notes, you are reinforcing the material in your mind and memory.

Admit it—who can resist highlighting markers? Gone are the days when yellow was the star of the show, and you had to be very careful not to press too firmly for fear of obliterating the words you were attempting to emphasize. Students now have a veritable rainbow of highlighting options and can color-code notes and text passages to their hearts' content. Technological advances may be important, but highlighter color choice is monumental! Maybe.

The only reason to highlight anything is to draw attention to it, so you can easily pick out that ever-so-important information later for further study or reflection. One problem many students have is not knowing when to stop. If what you need to recall from the passage is a particularly apt and succinct definition of the term important to your discipline, highlighting the entire paragraph is less effective than highlighting just the actual term. And if you don't rein in this tendency to color long passages (possibly in multiple colors) you can end up with a whole page of highlighted text. Ironically, that is no different from a page that is not highlighted at all, so you have wasted your time. Your mantra for highlighting text should be *less is more*. Always read your text selection first before you start highlighting anything. You need to know what the overall message is before you start placing emphasis in the text with highlighting.

Another way to annotate notes after initial notetaking is underlying significant words or passages. Albeit not quite as much fun as its colorful cousin highlighting, underlining provides precision to your emphasis.

Some people think of annotations as only using a colored highlighter to mark certain words or phrases for emphasis. Actually, annotations can refer to anything you do with a text to enhance it for your particular use (either a printed text, handwritten notes, or other sort of document you are using to learn concepts). The annotations may include highlighting passages or vocabulary, defining those unfamiliar terms once you look them up, writing questions in the margin of a book, underlining or circling key terms,

or otherwise marking a text for future reference. You can also annotate some electronic texts.

Realistically, you may end up doing all of these types of annotations at different times. We know that repetition in studying and reviewing is critical to learning, so you may come back to the same passage and annotate it separately. These various markings can be invaluable to you as a study guide and as a way to see the evolution of your learning about a topic. If you regularly begin a reading session writing down any questions you may have about the topic of that chapter or section and also write out answers to those questions at the end of the reading selection, you will have a good start to what that chapter covered when you eventually need to study for an exam. At that point, you likely will not have time to reread the entire selection especially if it is a long reading selection, but with strong annotations in conjunction with your class notes, you won't need to do that. With experience in reading discipline-specific texts and writing essays or taking exams in that field, you will know better what sort of questions to ask in your annotations.

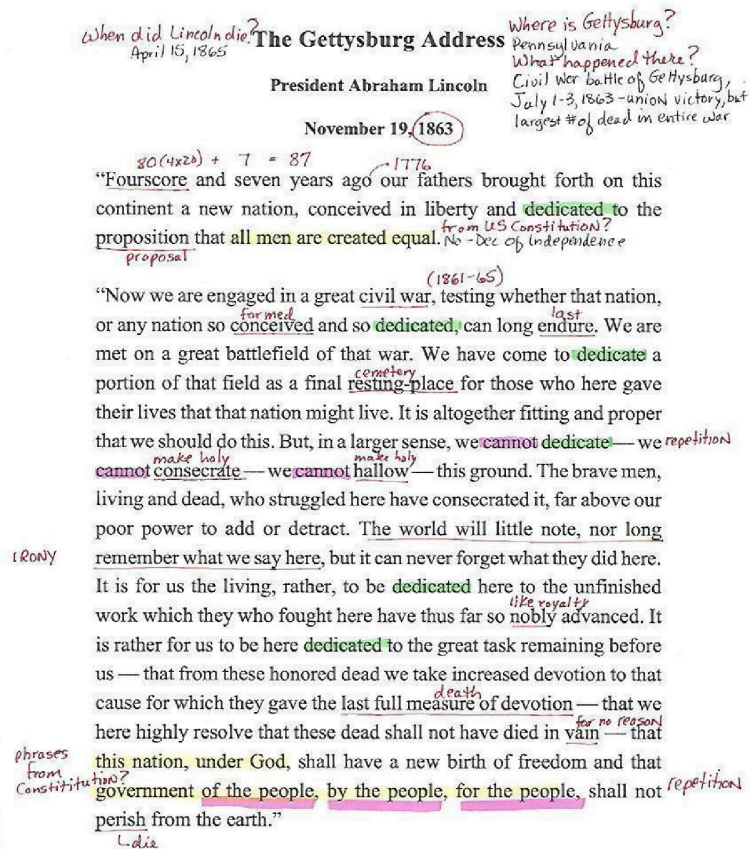


Figure 5.14 Annotations may include highlighting important topics, defining unfamiliar terms, writing questions in, underlining or circling key terms, or otherwise marking a text for future reference. Whichever approach you choose, try not to overdo it; neat, organized, and efficient notes are more effective than crowded or overdone notes.

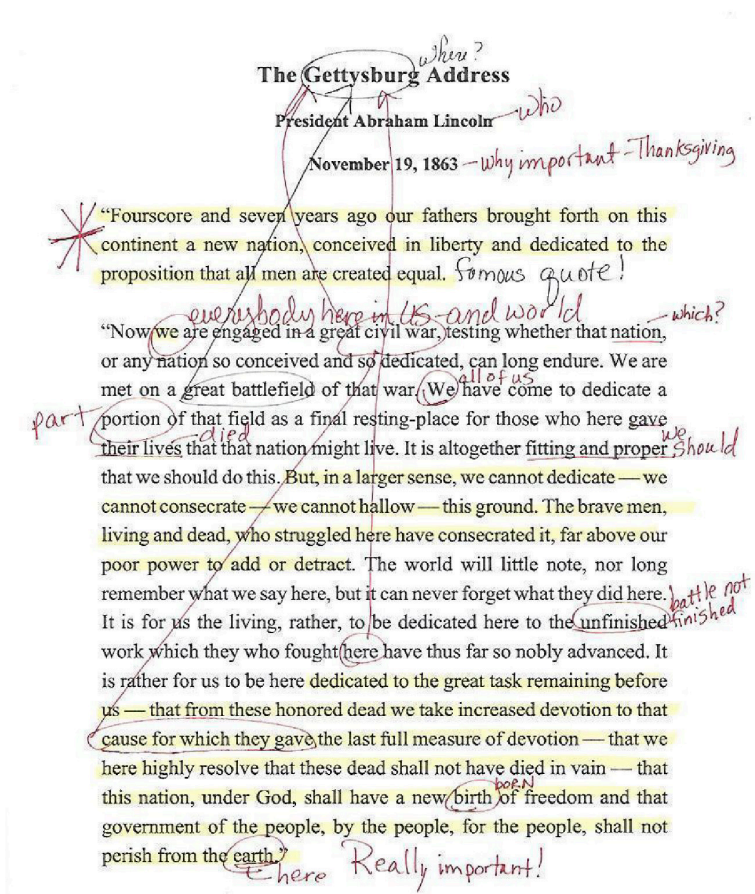


Figure 5.15 While these notes may be meaningful to the person who took them, they are neither organized nor consistent. For example, note that some of the more commonly used terms, like “we” and “unfinished,” are defined, but less common ones — “consecrate” and “hallow” — are not.

What you have to keep in the front of your mind while you are annotating, especially if you are going to conduct multiple annotation sessions, is to not overdo whatever method you use. Be judicious about what you annotate and how you do it on the page, which means you must be neat about it. Otherwise, you end up with

a mess of either color or symbols combined with some cryptic notes that probably took you quite a long time to create, but won't be worth as much to you as a study aid as they could be. This is simply a waste of time and effort.

You cannot eat up every smidgen of white space on the page writing out questions or summaries and still have a way to read the original text. If you are lucky enough to have a blank page next to the beginning of the chapter or section you are annotating, use this, but keep in mind that when you start writing notes, you aren't exactly sure how much space you'll need. Use a decipherable shorthand and write only what you need to convey the meaning in very small print. If you are annotating your own notes, you can make a habit of using only one side of the paper in class, so that if you need to add more notes later, you could use the other side. You can also add a blank page to your notes before beginning the next class date in your notebook so you'll end up with extra paper for annotations when you study.

Professional resources may come with annotations that can be helpful to you as you work through the various documentation requirements you'll encounter in college as well. Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL) provides an annotated sample for how to format a college paper according to guidelines in the Modern Language Association (MLA) manual that you can see, along with other annotations.

### *Adding Needed Additional Explanations to Notes*

Marlon was totally organized and ready to take notes in a designated course notebook at the beginning of every philosophy class session. He always dated his page and indicated what the topic of discussion was. He had various colored highlighters ready to denote the different note purposes he had defined: vocabulary in pink, confusing concepts in green, and note sections that would need additional explanations later in yellow. He also used his own

shorthand and an impressive array of symbols to indicate questions (red question mark), highly probable test material (he used a tiny bomb exploding here), additional reading suggestions, and specific topics he would ask his instructor before the next class. Doing everything so precisely, Marlon's methods seemed like a perfect example of how to take notes for success. Inevitably though, by the end of the hour-and-a-half class session, Marlon was frantically switching between writing tools, near to tears, and scouring his notes as waves of yellow teased him with uncertainty. What went wrong?

As with many of us who try diligently to do everything we know how to do for success or what we think we know because we read books and articles on success in between our course work, Marlon is suffering from trying to do too much simultaneously. It's an honest mistake we can make when we are trying to save a little time or think we can multitask and kill two birds with one stone.

Unfortunately, this particular error in judgement can add to your stress level exponentially if you don't step back and see it for what it is. Marlon attempted to take notes in class as well as annotate his notes to get them ready for his test preparation. It was too much to do at one time, but even if he could have done all those things during class, he's missing one critical point about notetaking.

As much as we may want to hurry and get it over with, notetaking in class is just the beginning. Your instructor likely gave you a pre-class assignment to read or complete before coming to that session. The intention of that preparatory lesson is for you to come in with some level of familiarity for the topic under consideration and questions of your own. Once you're in class, you may also need to participate in a group discussion, work with your classmates, or perform some other sort of lesson-directed activity that would necessarily take you away from taking notes. Does that mean you should ignore taking notes for that day? Most likely not. You may just need to indicate in your notes that you worked on a project or whatever other in-class event you experienced that date.

Very rarely in a college classroom will you engage in an activity

that is not directly related to what you are studying in that course. Even if you enjoyed every minute of the class session and it was an unusual format for that course, you still need to take some notes. Maybe your first note could be to ask yourself why you think the instructor used that unique teaching strategy for the class that day. Was it effective? Was it worth using the whole class time? How will that experience enhance what you are learning in that course?

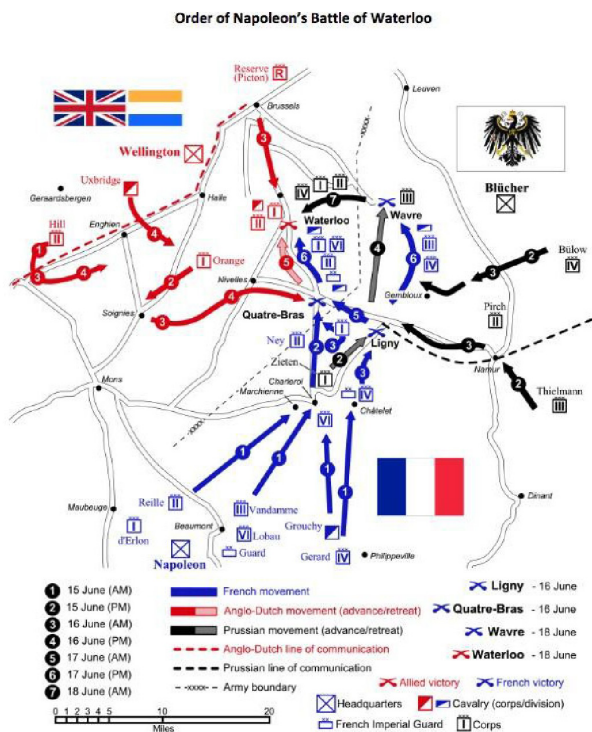
If you use an ereader or ebooks to read texts for class or read articles from the Internet on your laptop or tablet, you can still take effective notes. Depending on the features of your device, you have many choices. Almost all electronic reading platforms allow readers to highlight and underline text. Some devices allow you to add a written text in addition to marking a word or passage that you can collect at the end of your notetaking session. Look into the specific tools for your device and learn how to use the features that allow you to take notes electronically. You can also find apps on devices to help with taking notes, some of which you may automatically have installed when you buy the product. Microsoft's OneNote, Google Keep, and the Notes feature on phones are relatively easy to use, and you may already have free access to those.

### *Taking Notes on Non-Text Items (i.e., Tables, Maps, Figures, etc.)*

You may also encounter situations as you study and read textbooks, primary sources, and other resources for your classes that are not actually texts. You can still take notes on maps, charts, graphs, images, and tables, and your approach to these non-text features is similar to when you prepare to take notes over a passage of text. For example, if you are looking at the following map, you may immediately come up with several questions. Or it may initially appear overwhelming. Start by asking yourself these questions:

What is the main point of this map?

- Who is the intended audience?
- Where is it?
- What time period does it depict?
- What does the map's legend (the explanation of symbols) include?
- What other information do I need to make sense of this map?



Source: Wikipedia Creative Commons, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order\\_of\\_battle\\_of\\_the\\_Waterloo\\_campaign](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_battle_of_the_Waterloo_campaign)

Figure 5.16 Graphics, charts, graphs, and other visual items are also important to annotate. Not only do they often convey important information, but they may appear on exams or in other situations where you'll need to use or demonstrate knowledge. Credit:



“Lpankonin” / Wikipedia Commons / Attribution 3.0 Generic (CC BY 3.0)

You may want to make an extra copy of a graphic or table before you add annotations if you are dealing with a lot of information. Making sense of all the elements will take time, and you don't want to add to the confusion.

### *Returning to Your Notes*

Later, as soon as possible after the class, you can go back to your notes and add in missing parts. Just as you may generate questions as you're reading new material, you may leave a class session or lecture or activities with many questions. Write those down in a place where they won't get lost in all your other notes.

The exact timing of when you get back to the notes you take in class or while you are reading an assignment will vary depending on how many other classes you have or what other obligations you have in your daily schedule. A good starting place that is also easy to remember is to make every effort to review your notes within 24 hours of first taking them. Longer than that and you are likely to have forgotten some key features you need to include; must less time than that, and you may not think you need to review the information you so recently wrote down, and you may postpone the task too long.

Use your phone or computer to set reminders for all your note review sessions so that it becomes a habit and you keep on top of the schedule.

Your personal notes play a significant role in your test preparation. They should enhance how you understand the lessons, textbooks, lab sessions, and assignments. All the time and effort you put into first taking the notes and then annotating and organizing the notes will be for naught if you do not formulate an effective and

efficient way to use them before sectional exams or comprehensive tests.

The whole cycle of reading, notetaking in class, reviewing and enhancing your notes, and preparing for exams is part of a continuum you ideally will carry into your professional life. Don't try to take short cuts; recognize each step in the cycle as a building block. Learning doesn't end, which shouldn't fill you with dread; it should help you recognize that all this work you're doing in the classroom and during your own study and review sessions is ongoing and cumulative. Practicing effective strategies now will help you be a stronger professional.

## ACTIVITY

What resources can you find about reading and notetaking that will actually help you with these crucial skills? How do you go about deciding what resources are valuable for improving your reading and notetaking skills?

The selection and relative value of study guides and books about notetaking vary dramatically. Ask your instructors for recommendations and see what the library has available on this topic. The following list is not comprehensive, but will give you a starting point for books and articles on notetaking in college.

- *College Rules!: How to Study, Survive, and Succeed in College*, by Sherri Nist-Olejnik and Jodi Patrick Holschuh. More than just notetaking, this book covers many aspects of transitioning into the rigors of college life and studying.
- *Effective Notetaking*, by Fiona McPherson. This small volume has suggestions for using your limited time wisely before, during, and after notetaking sessions.
- *How to Study in College*, by Walter Pauk. This is the book that introduced Pauk's notetaking suggestions we now call the

Cornell Method. It is a bit dated (from the 1940s), but still contains some valuable information.

- *Learn to Listen, Listen to Learn 2: Academic Listening and Note-taking*, by Roni S. Lebauer. The main point of this book is to help students get the most from college lectures by watching for clues to lecture organization and adapting this information into strong notes.
- *Study Skills: Do I Really Need this Stuff?*, by Steve Piscitelli. Written in a consistently down-to-earth manner, this book will help you with the foundations of strong study skills, including time management, effective notetaking, and seeing the big picture.
- “What Reading Does for the Mind,” by Anne Cunningham and Keith Stanovich, 1998, <https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/cunningham.pdf>
- Adler, Mortimer J. and Charles Van Doren. *How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading*. NY: Simon & Schuster, 1940.
- Berns, Gregory S., Kristina Blaine, Michael J. Prietula, and Brandon E. Pye. *Brain Connectivity*. Dec 2013. ahead of print <http://doi.org/10.1089/brain.2013.0166>



PART V

# MEMORY, STUDYING, AND TEST TAKING



## II. Studying, Memory, and Test Taking: Introduction



Figure 6.1 How we study is as important as what we study. The environment is a critical element of success.

### Student Survey

How confident are you in preparing for and taking tests? Take this quick survey to figure it out, ranking questions on a scale of 1–4, 1 meaning “least like me” and 4 meaning “most like me.” These questions will help you determine how the chapter concepts relate to you right now. As you are introduced to new concepts and practices, it can be informative to reflect on how your understanding changes over time. We’ll revisit these questions at the end of the chapter to see whether your feelings have changed.

1. I set aside enough time to prepare for tests.
2. If I don’t set aside enough time, or if life gets in the way, I can usually cram and get positive results.
3. I prefer to pull all-nighters. The adrenaline and urgency help me remember what I need come test time.

4. I study my notes, highlight book passages, and use flash cards, but I still don't feel like I'm as successful as I should be on tests.

You can also take the Chapter 6 Survey anonymously online.

## STUDENT PROFILE

"I didn't have to study much for tests in high school, but I learned really quick that you have to for college. One of the best strategies is to test yourself over the material. This will help you improve your retrieval strength and help you remember more when it comes to the test. I also learned about reviewing your graded tests. This will help you see where you went wrong and why. Being able to see your mistakes and correct them helps the storage and retrieval strength as well as building those dendrites. Getting a question wrong will only improve those things helping you remember the next time it comes up."

—**Lilli Branstetter**, University of Central Arkansas

## About this Chapter

By the time you finish this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Outline the importance of memory when studying, and note some opportunities to strengthen memory.
- Discuss specific ways to increase the effectiveness of studying.
- Articulate test-taking strategies that minimize anxiety and maximize results.

Kerri didn't need to study in high school. She made good grades,



and her friends considered her lucky because she never seemed to sweat exams or cram. In reality, Kerri did her studying during school hours, took excellent notes in class, asked great questions, and read the material before class meetings—all of these are excellent strategies. Kerri just seemed to do them without much fuss.

Then when she got to college, those same skills weren't always working as well. Sound familiar? She discovered that, for many classes, she needed to read paragraphs and textbook passages more than once for comprehension. Her notes from class sessions were longer and more involved—the subject material was more complicated and the problems more complex than she had ever encountered. College isn't high school, as most students realize shortly after enrolling in a higher ed program. Some old study habits and test-taking strategies may serve as a good foundation, but others may need major modification.

It makes sense that, the better you are at studying and test taking, the better results you'll see in the form of high grades and long-term learning and knowledge acquisition. And the more experience you have using your study and memorization skills and employing success strategies during exams, the better you'll get at it. But you have to keep it up—maintaining these skills and learning better strategies as the content you study becomes increasingly complex is crucial to your success. Once you transition into a work environment, you will be able to use these same skills that helped you be successful in college as you face the problem-solving demands and expectations of your job. Earning high grades is one goal, and certainly a good one when you're in college, but true learning means committing content to long-term memory.

## 12. Memory

### Questions to consider:

- How does working memory work, exactly?
- What's the difference between working and short-term memory?
- How does long-term memory function?
- What obstacles exist to remembering?
- When and how should you memorize things?

In what situations is it best to memorize, and what do you memorize?

What can you do consistently to improve both your short- and long-term memory?

Memory is one of those cherished but mysterious elements in life. Everyone has memories, and some people are very good at rapid recall, which is an enviable skill for test takers. We know that we seem to lose the capacity to remember things as we age, and scientists continue to study how we remember some things but not others and what memory means, but we don't know that much about memory, really.

Nelson Cowan is one researcher who is working to explain what we do know about memory. His article "What Are the Differences between Long-Term, Short-Term, and Working Memory?" breaks down the different types of memory and what happens when we recall thoughts and ideas. When we remember something, we actually do quite a lot of thinking.<sup>1</sup>

We go through three basic steps when we remember ideas or images: we encode, store, and retrieve that information. Encoding is how we first perceive information through our senses, such as when we smell a lovely flower or a putrid trash bin. Both make an impression on our minds through our sense of smell and probably

our vision. Our brains encode, or label, this content in short-term memory in case we want to think about it again.

If the information is important and we have frequent exposure to it, the brain will store it for us in case we need to use it in the future in our aptly named long-term memory. Later, the brain will allow us to recall or retrieve that image, feeling, or information so we can do something with it. This is what we call remembering.

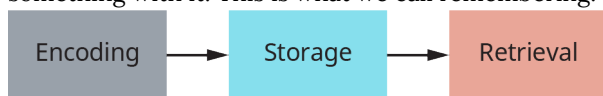


Figure 6.2

## ANALYSIS QUESTION

Take a few minutes to list ways you create memories on a daily basis. Do you think about how you make memories? Do you do anything that helps you keep track of your memories?

## Foundations of Memory

William Sumrall et al. in the *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* explain the foundation of memory by noting: “Memory is a term applied to numerous biological devices by which living organisms acquire, retain, and make use of skills and knowledge. It is present in all forms of higher order animals. The most evolutionary forms of memory have taken place in human beings. Despite much research and exploration, a complete understanding of human memory does not exist.”<sup>2</sup>

## Working Memory

Working memory is a type of short-term memory, but we use it when we are actively performing a task. For example, nursing student Marilyn needs to use her knowledge of chemical reactions to suggest appropriate prescriptions in various medical case studies. She does not have to recall every single fact she learned in years of chemistry classes, but she does need to have a working memory of certain chemicals and how they work with others. To ensure she can make these connections, Marilyn will have to review and study the relevant chemical details for the types of drug interactions she will recommend in the case studies.

In working memory, you have access to whatever information you have stored in your memory that helps you complete the task you are performing. For instance, when you begin to study an assignment, you certainly need to read the directions, but you must also remember that in class your professor reduced the number of problem sets the written instructions indicated you needed to finish. This was an oral addition to the written assignment. The change to the instructions is what you bring up in working memory when you complete the assignment.

## Short-Term Memory

Short-term memory is a very handy thing. It helps us remember where we set our keys or where we left off on a project the day before. Think about all the aids we employ to help us with short-term memory: you may hang your keys in a particular place each evening so you know exactly where they are supposed to be. When you go grocery shopping, do you ever choose a product because you recall an advertising jingle? You see the box of cereal and you remember the song on the TV commercial. If that memory causes

you to buy that product, the advertising worked. We help our memory along all the time, which is perfectly fine. In fact, we can modify these everyday examples of memory assistance for purposes of studying and test taking. The key is deliberate use of strategies that are not so elaborate that they are too difficult to remember in our short-term memory.

## ACTIVITY

Consider this list of items. Look at the list for no more than 30 seconds. Then, cover up the list and use the spaces below to complete an activity.

Baseball	Picture frame	Tissue	Paper clip
Bread	Pair of dice	Fingernail polish	Spoon
Marble	Leaf	Doll	Scissors
Cup	Jar of sand	Deck of cards	Ring
Blanket	Ice	Marker	String

Without looking at the list, write down as many items as you can remember.

Now, look back at your list and make sure that you give yourself credit for any that you got right. Any items that you misremembered, meaning they were not in the original list, you won't count in your total. TOTAL ITEMS REMEMBERED

-----  
There were 20 total items. Did you remember between 5 and 9 items? If you did, then you have a typical short-term memory and you just participated in an experiment, of sorts, to prove it.

Harvard psychology professor George A. Miller in 1956 claimed

humans can recall about five to nine bits of information in our short-term memory at any given time. Other research has come after this claim, but this concept is a popular one. Miller's article is entitled "The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two" and is easily accessible online if you're interested in learning more about this seminar report.<sup>3</sup>

Considering the vast amount of knowledge available to us, five to nine bits isn't very much to work with. To combat this limitation, we clump information together, making connections to help us stretch our capacity to remember. Many factors play into how much we can remember and how we do it, including the subject matter, how familiar we are with the ideas, and how interested we are in the topic, but we certainly cannot remember absolutely everything, for a test or any other task we face. As such, we have to use effective strategies, like those we cover later in this chapter, to get the most out of our memories.

## ACTIVITY

Now, let's revisit the items above. Go back to them and see if you can organize them in a way that you would have about five groups of items. See below for an example of how to group them.

Row 1: Items found in a kitchen

Row 2: Items that a child would play with

Row 3: Items of nature

Row 4: Items in a desk drawer/school supplies

Row 5: Items found in a bedroom

Cup	Spoon	Ice	Bread	
Baseball	Marble	Pair of dice	Doll	Deck of cards
Jar of sand	Leaf			
Marker	String	Scissors	Paper clip	
Ring	Picture frame	Fingernail polish	Tissue	Blanket

Now that you have grouped items into categories, also known as chunking, you can work on remembering the categories and the items that fit into those categories, which will result in remembering more items. Check it out below by covering up the list of items again and writing down what you can remember.

Now, look back at your list and make sure that you give yourself credit for any that you got right. Any items that you misremembered, meaning they were not in the original list, you won't count in your total. TOTAL ITEMS REMEMBERED \_\_\_\_\_. Did you increase how many items you could remember?

## Long-Term Memory

Long-term memory is exactly what it sounds like. These are things you recall from the past, such as the smell of your elementary school cafeteria or how to pop a wheelie on a bicycle. Our brain keeps a vast array of information, images, and sensory experiences in long-term memory. Whatever it is we are trying to keep in our memories, whether a beautiful song or a list of chemistry vocabulary terms, must first come into our brains in short-term memory. If we want these fleeting ideas to transfer into long-term memory, we have to do some work, such as causing frequent exposure to the information over time (such as studying the terms every day for a period of time or the repetition you performed to memorize

multiplication tables or spelling rules) and some relevant manipulation for the information.

According to Alison Preston of the University of Texas at Austin's Center for Learning and Memory, "A short-term memory's conversion to a long-term memory requires changes within the brain . . . and result[s] in changes to neurons (nerve cells) or sets of neurons. . . . For example, new synapses—the connections between neurons through which they exchange information—can form to allow for communication between new networks of neurons. Alternatively, existing synapses can be strengthened to allow for increased sensitivity in the communication between two neurons."<sup>4</sup>

When you work to convert your thoughts into memories, you are literally *changing your mind*. Much of this brain work begins in the part of the brain called the *hippocampus*. Preston continues, "Initially, the hippocampus works in concert with sensory-processing regions distributed in the neocortex (the outermost layer of the brain) to form the new memories. Within the neocortex, representations of the elements that constitute an event in our life are distributed across multiple brain regions according to their content. . . . When a memory is first formed, the hippocampus rapidly combines this distributed information into a single memory, thus acting as an index of representations in the sensory-processing regions. As time passes, cellular and molecular changes allow for the strengthening of direct connections among the neocortical regions, enabling access to the memory independent of the hippocampus."

We learn the lyrics of a favorite song by singing and/or playing the song over and over. That alone may not be enough to get that song into the coveted long-term memory area of our brain, but if we have an emotional connection to the song, such as a painful breakup or a life-changing proposal that occurred while we were listening to the song, this may help. Think of ways to make your study session memorable and create connections with the information you need to study. That way, you have a better chance of keeping your study material in your memory so you can access it whenever you need it.



## ANALYSIS QUESTION

What are some ways you convert short-term memories into long-term memories?

Do your memorization strategies differ for specific courses (e.g., how you remember for math or history)?

## Obstacles to Remembering

If remembering things we need to know for exams or for learning new disciplines were easy, no one would have problems with it, but students face several significant obstacles to remembering, including a persistent lack of sleep and an unrealistic reliance on cramming. Life is busy and stressful for all students, so you have to keep practicing strategies to help you study and remember successfully, but you also must be mindful of obstacles to remembering.

### *Lack of Sleep*

Let's face it, sleep and college don't always go well together. You have so much to do! All that reading, all those papers, all those extra hours in the science lab or tutoring center or library! And then we have the social and emotional aspects of going to school, which may not be the most critical aspect of your life as you pursue more education but are a significant part of who you are. When you consider everything you need to attend to in college, you probably won't be surprised that sleep is often the first thing we give up as we search for more time to accomplish everything we're trying to do. That seems reasonable—just wake up an hour earlier or stay up

a little later. But you may want to reconsider picking away at your precious sleep time.

Sleep benefits all of your bodily functions, and your brain needs sleep time to dream and rest through the night. You probably can recall times when you had to do something without adequate sleep. We say things like “I just can’t wake up” and “I’m walking around half asleep.”

In fact, you may actually be doing just that. Lack of sleep impairs judgment, focus, and our overall mood. Do you know anyone who is always grumpy in the morning? A fascinating medical study from the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) claims that sleep deprivation is as dangerous as being drunk, both in what it does to our bodies and in the harm we may cause to ourselves and others in driving and performing various daily tasks.<sup>56</sup>

If you can’t focus well because you didn’t get enough sleep, then you likely won’t be able to remember whatever it is you need to recall for any sort of studying or test-taking situation. Most exams in a college setting go beyond simple memorization, but you still have a lot to remember for exams. For example, when Saanvi sits down to take an exam on introductory biology, she needs to recall all the subject-specific vocabulary she read in the textbook’s opening chapters, the general connections she made between biological studies and other scientific fields, and any biology details introduced in the unit for which she is taking the exam.

Trying to make these mental connections on too little sleep will take a large mental toll because Saanvi has to concentrate even harder than she would with adequate sleep. She isn’t merely tired; her brain is not refreshed and primed to conduct difficult tasks. Although not an exact comparison, think about when you overtax a computer by opening too many programs simultaneously. Sometimes the programs are sluggish or slow to respond, making it difficult to work efficiently; sometimes the computer shuts down completely and you have to reboot the entire system. Your body is a bit like that on too little sleep.

On the flip side, though, your brain on adequate sleep is amazing,

and sleep can actually assist you in making connections, remembering difficult concepts, and studying for exams. The exact reasons for this is still a serious research project for scientists, but the results all point to a solid connection between sleep and cognitive performance.

If you're interested in learning more about this research, the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) is a good place to start. One article is entitled "College Students: Getting Enough Sleep Is Vital to Academic Success."

## ANALYSIS QUESTION

How long do you sleep every night on average? Do you see a change in your ability to function when you haven't had enough sleep? What could you do to limit the number of nights with too little sleep?

### *Downside of Cramming*

At least once in their college careers, most students will experience the well-known pastime called *cramming*. See if any of this is familiar: Shelley has lots of classes, works part-time at a popular restaurant, and is just amazingly busy, so she puts off serious study sessions day after day. She isn't worried because she has set aside time she would have spent sleeping to cram just before the exam. That's the idea anyway. Originally, she planned to stay up a little late and study for four hours from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. and still get several hours of refreshing sleep. But it's Dolphin Week or Beat State Day or whatever else comes up, and her study session doesn't start until midnight—she'll pull an *all-nighter* (to be more precise, this is actually an *all-really-early-morning-er*, but it doesn't quite have the same ring to it). So, two hours after her original start time, she tries to *cram* all the lessons, problems, and information from the last two

weeks of lessons into this one session. Shelley falls asleep around 3 a.m. with her notes and books still on her bed. After her late night, she doesn't sleep well and goes into the morning exam tired.

Shelley does OK but not great on the exam, and she is not pleased with her results. More and more research is showing that the stress Shelley has put on her body doing this, combined with the way our brains work, makes cramming a seriously poor choice for learning.

One sleep researcher, Dr. Susan Redline from Boston, says, "Sleep deficiency can affect mood and the ability to make memories and learn, but it also affects metabolism, appetite, blood pressure, levels of inflammation in the body and perhaps even the immune response."<sup>7</sup>

Your brain simply refuses to cooperate with cramming—it sounds like a good idea, but it doesn't work. Cramming causes stress, which can lead to paralyzing test anxiety; it erroneously supposes you can remember and understand something fully after only minimal exposure; and it overloads your brain, which, however amazing it is, can only focus on one concept at a time and a limited number of concepts all together for learning and retention.

Leading neuroscientist John Medina claims that the brain begins to wander at about 10 minutes, at which point you need a new stimulus to spark interest.<sup>8</sup> That doesn't mean you can't focus for longer than 10 minutes; you just have to switch gears a lot to keep your brain engaged. Have you ever heard a speaker drone on about one concept for, say, 30 minutes without somehow changing pace to engage the listeners? It doesn't take much to re-engage—pausing to ask the listeners questions or moving to a different location in the room will do it—but without these subtle attention markers, listeners start thinking of something else. The same thing happens to you if you try to cram all reading, problem-solving, and note reviewing into one long session; your brain will wander.

## WHAT STUDENTS SAY

1. Which of the following is your most common method of studying?
  - a. Reading or rereading the text or my class notes.
  - b. Watching videos of my instructor's lecture or other people discussing the topics.
  - c. Taking practice quizzes/tests.
  - d. Creating/using study tools (flashcards, mnemonic devices, etc.)
  - e. Working with a study group, tutor, or academic support.
2. Which of the following do you have the most difficulty remembering?
  - a. Vocabulary and facts (such as Biology vocab, Historical facts.)
  - b. Problem-solving methods (such as in Math)
  - c. Details from text and literature
  - d. Skills and processes (such as a lab technique or a building process)
  - e. Computer functions/locations/processes
  - f. Which formulas, processes, or categories to apply in situations (such as in Physics or Accounting)
3. How much anxiety do you feel when an exam or other major course evaluation is approaching?
  - a. A great deal
  - b. A lot
  - c. A moderate amount
  - d. A little
  - e. None at all

You can also take the anonymous What Students Say surveys to add your voice to this textbook. Your responses will be included in updates.

Students offered their views on these questions, and the results are displayed in the graphs below.

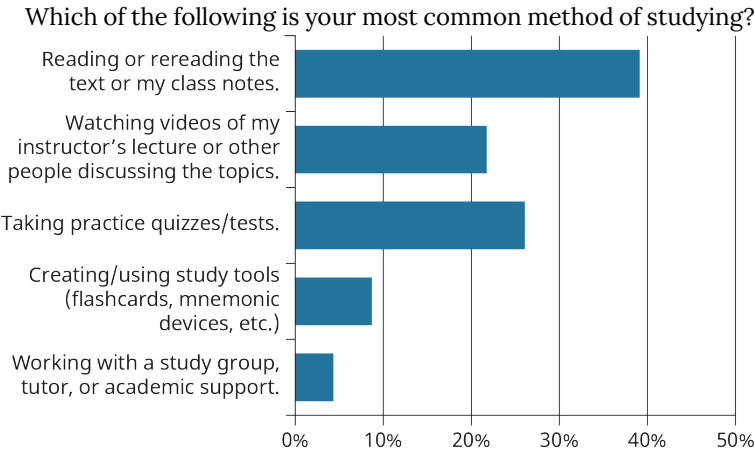


Figure 6.3

Which of the following do you have the most difficulty remembering?

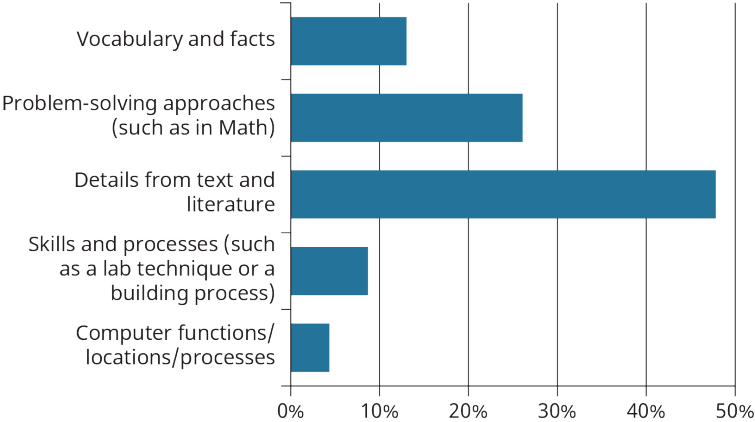


Figure 6.4

How much anxiety do you feel when an exam or other major course evaluation is approaching?

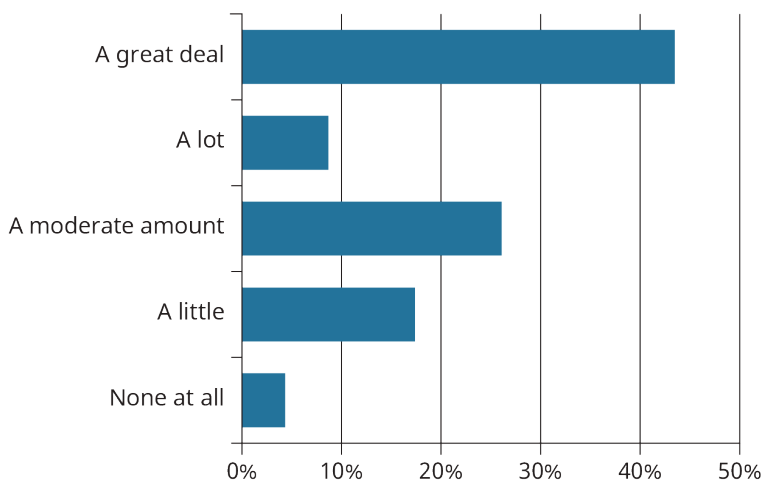


Figure 6.5

## Determining When/What to Memorize

In the realm of learning and studying, some conditions warrant memorization as the most effective way to work with information. For instance, if you are expected to have a working knowledge of conversational French or Spanish, you will have to memorize some words. Simply knowing a long list of terms isn't going to help you order food in a café or ask for directions in a foreign country because you also need to understand the other language's grammar and have some sort of context for what needs to be said from your vocabulary list. But you cannot say the words in a different language if you cannot remember your vocabulary. From this scenario, you can assume that memorization is a good fit for some parts of language acquisition.

A worthwhile book on memory, thinking, and learning is a short study called *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning* by Peter Brown, Henry Roediger, and Mark McDaniel. The authors conclude, after extensive research, that our attempts to speed up

learning and make studying easier are not good ideas. Studying is hard work, and it should be. For learning to stick, we need to work hard to pull the information out of our memory and use it by continually pushing ourselves to accomplish increasingly difficult tasks.<sup>9</sup>

## Footnotes

- 1NCBI. “What are the differences between long-term, short-term, and working memory?” <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2657600/>
- 2Sumrall, William, et. al. “A Review of Memory Theory.” *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2016. Vol. 6. No. 5.
- 3Miller, George A. “The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two: Some Limits on Our capacity for Processing Information.” *Psychological Review*, 1956.
- 4Preston, Alison. “Ask the Experts: How do short-term memories become long-term memories?” *Scientific American*, Dec. 2017. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-do-short-term-memories-become-l/>
- 5Nir, Yuval, et. al. “Selective neuronal lapses precede human cognitive lapses following sleep deprivation,” *Nature Medicine* volume23, pages 1474–1480 (2017).
- 6UCLA Health. “Drowsy Driving.” <https://www.uclahealth.org/sleepcenter/drowsy-driving>
- 7Redline, Susan <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/Sleep/health-hazards-linked-lack-sleep/story?id=16524313>
- 8Medina, John. *Brain Rules*. 2018, Pear Press.
- 9Brown, Peter, et. al. *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning*. Brown, Roediger, Daniel, 2014.



# 13. Studying

## Questions to consider:

- How do you prepare yourself and your environment for successful studying?
- What study strategies will be most beneficial to you?
- What are learning preferences and strategies, and how can you leverage those to your advantage?

## Preparing to Study

Studying is hard work, but you can still learn some techniques to help you be a more effective learner. Two major and interrelated techniques involve avoiding distractions to the best of your ability and creating a study environment that works to help you concentrate.

### *Avoiding Distractions*

We have always had distractions—video games, television shows, movies, music, friends—even housecleaning can distract us from doing something else we need to do, like study for an exam. That may seem extreme, but sometimes vacuuming is the preferred activity to buckling down and working through calculus problems! Cell phones, tablets, and portable computers that literally bring a world of possibilities to us anywhere have brought *distraction* to an entirely new level. When was the last time you were with a large group of people when you didn't see at least a few people on devices?



Figure 6.6 Video games are a common distraction, but we need to be aware that even tedious activities like cleaning can be a distraction from studying.

When you study, your biggest challenge may be to block out all the competing noise. And letting go of that connection to our friends and the larger world, even for a short amount of time, can be difficult. Perhaps the least stressful way to allow yourself a distraction-free environment is to make the study session a definite amount of time: long enough to get a significant amount of studying accomplished but short enough to hold your attention.

You can increase that attention time with practice and focus. Pretend it is a professional appointment or meeting during which you cannot check e-mail or texts or otherwise engage with your portable devices. We have all become very attached to the ability to check in—anonymously on social media or with family and friends via text, chat, and calls. If you set a specific amount of time to study without interruptions, you can convince your wandering mind that you will soon be able to return to your link to the outside world. Start small and set an alarm—a 30-minute period to review notes, then a brief break, then another 45-minute study session to quiz yourself on the material, and so on.

When you prepare for your optimal study session, remember to do these things:

- Put your phone out of sight—in another room or at least some place where you will not see or hear it vibrate or ring. Just flipping it over is not enough.
- Turn off the television or music (more on that in the next section).
- Unless you are deliberately working with a study group, study somewhere alone if possible or at least away from others enough to not hear them talking.

If you live with lots of other people or don't have access to much privacy, see if you can negotiate some space alone to study. Ask others to leave one part of the house or an area in one room as a quiet zone during certain hours. Ask politely for a specific block of time; most people will respect your educational goals and be willing to accommodate you. If you're trying to work out quiet zones with small children in the house, the bathtub with a pillow can make a fine study oasis.

## *Study Environment*

You may not always be in the mood or inspired to study. And if you have a long deadline, maybe you can blow off a study session on occasion, but you shouldn't get into the habit of ignoring a strong study routine. Jane Austen once wrote in a letter, "I am not at all in a humor for writing; I must write on till I am." Sometimes just starting is the hard part; go ahead and begin. Don't wait around for your study muse; start working, and she'll show up.

Sometimes you just need to plop down and study whenever and wherever you can manage—in the car waiting for someone, on the bus, at the Little League field as you cheer on your shortstop. And that's OK if this is the exception. For long-term success in studying,

though, you need a better study setting that will help you get the most out of your limited study time. Whatever your space limitations, carve out a place that you can dedicate to reading, writing, note taking, and reviewing. This doesn't need to be elaborate and expensive—all you truly need is a flat surface large enough to hold either your computer or writing paper, book or notes, pens/pencils/markers, and subject-specific materials you may need (e.g., stand-alone calculators, drawing tools, and notepads). Your space should be cool or warm enough for you to be comfortable as you study. What do you have now that you consider your study space? Is it set up for your optimal success?



Figure 6.7 Which is before, and which is after? (Credit: Ali West / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

If it is at all possible, try to make this area exclusive to your study sessions and something you can leave set up all the time and a place out of the way of family or roommate traffic. For example, Martina thought setting up her study station on the dining room table was a good idea at first. The view was calming, and the table was big enough to spread out and could even hold all her materials to study architectural drawings, her favorite subject. But then she needed the table for a small family dinner party, so she had to find a cubbyhole to hide away her supplies with some needing to go into a closet in the next room. Now she was spread out over multiple study spaces. And the family TV was in an adjacent room, not visible from the table but certainly an auditory distraction. Martina ultimately decided to forgo her view and create a smaller station in an unused bedroom so she could leave her supplies out and have a quieter area.

You may have to try out numerous places to determine what works best for you.

Wherever you study, try to make it a welcoming place you want to be in—not an uncomfortable environment that makes you want to just do the minimum you must complete and leave. You should include the basics: a good chair, a work surface, and whatever materials, books, notes, and other supplies you need for the subject you are studying. If you want to make it even more of a productive place, you can look in magazines for ideas or search the web to see how others have set up simple areas or more elaborate arrangements. Don't let decorating your workspace be an excuse to get out of studying!

You don't need an elaborate setting, but you may want to consider including a few effective additions if you have the space:

- small bulletin board for often-used formulas
- encouraging quotes or pictures of your goal
- whiteboard for brainstorming
- sticky notes for reminders in texts and notes
- file holder for most-used documents
- bookshelf for reference books

## ACTIVITY

Describe every element in your ideal study environment and explain why it's there as well as how it will make more efficient use of your time, limit distractions, or in some other way strengthen your ability to study.

After you have described your ideal study environment, think about how you can adapt that environment if you cannot be in your favorite place to study. How do you *make your own space* in the library, a student lounge, or a dedicated space on campus for student studying?

## *Debunking Study Myths*

### **MYTH #1: You can multitask while studying.**

How many times do you eat in the car? Watch TV while you write out a grocery list? Listen to music while you cook dinner? What about type an e-mail while you're on the phone with someone else and jot down notes about the call? The common term for this attempt to do more than one thing at a time is multitasking, and almost everyone does it at some point. On some days, you simply cannot accomplish all that you want to get done, so you double up. The problem is, multitasking doesn't really work. Of course, it exists, and we do it. For instance, we walk and chew gum or drive and talk, but we are not really thinking about two or more distinct things or doing multiple processes simultaneously.

### **MYTH #2: Highlighting main points of a text is useful.**

Another myth of studying that seems to have a firm hold is that the idea of highlighting text—in and of itself—is the best way to review study material. It is one way, and you can get some benefit from it, but don't trick yourself into spending too much time on this surface activity and consider your study session complete. Annotating texts or notes is a first-step type of study practice. If you allow it to take up all your time, you may want to think you are fully prepared for an exam because you put in the time. Actually, you need much more time reviewing and retrieving your lessons and ideas from the text or class lecture as well as quizzing yourself to accomplish your goal of learning so you can perform well on the exam. Highlighting is a task you can do rather easily, and it makes you feel good because you are actively engaging with your text, but true learning needs more steps.

### **MYTH #3: Studying effectively is effortless.**

There is nothing effortless, or even pleasant at times, about studying. This is why so many students don't put in the time necessary to learn complex material: it takes time, effort, and, in some cases, a little drudgery. This is not to say that the outcome, learning—and maybe making an A—is not pleasant and rewarding.

It is just that when done right, learning takes focus, deliberate strategies, and time. Think about a superstar athlete who puts in countless hours of drills and conditioning so that she makes her work on the field look easy. If you can also *enjoy* the studying, the skill development, and the knowledge building, then you will most likely be more motivated to do the work.

## ANALYSIS QUESTION

When are you most liable to multitask? How could you be more aware of this practice and try to eliminate it, especially when it comes to studying? How can you make your initial text highlighting more time efficient so you can include other study practices?

## Study Strategies

Everyone wishes they had a better memory or a stronger way to use memorization. You can make the most of the memory you have by making some conscious decisions about how you study and prepare for exams. Incorporate these ideas into your study sessions:

Practicing effective memorization is when you use a trick, technique, or strategy to recall something—for another class, an exam, or even to bring up an acquaintance's name in a social situation. Really whatever works for you to recall information is a good tool to have. You can create your own quizzes and tests to go over material from class. You can use mnemonics to jog your memory. You can work in groups to develop unique ways to remember complex information. Whatever methods you choose to enhance your memory, keep in mind that repetition is one of the most effective tools in any memory strategy. Do whatever you do over and over for the best results.

## Using Mnemonics

Mnemonics (pronounced new-monics) are a way to remember things using reminders. Did you learn the points of the compass by remembering NEWS (north, east, west, and south)? Or the notes on the music staff as FACE or EGBDF (every good boy does fine)? These are mnemonics. When you're first learning something and you aren't familiar with the foundational concepts, these help you bring up the information quickly, especially for multistep processes or lists. After you've worked in that discipline for a while, you likely don't need the mnemonics, but you probably won't forget them either.

Here are some familiar mnemonics you may find useful:

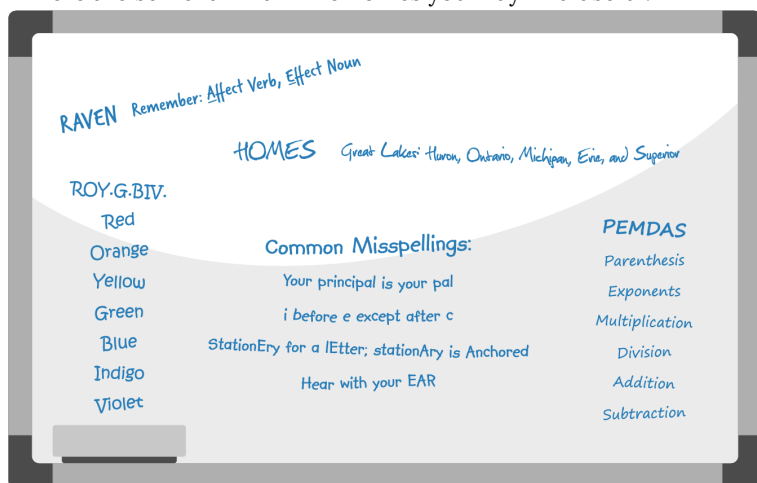


Figure 6.8

You can certainly make up your own mnemonics, but be careful that your reminder isn't so complex and convoluted that it is more difficult to remember than the information you were relating it to!



## ANALYSIS QUESTION

Do you have other mnemonics that help you remember difficult material? What are they? How have they helped you with remembering important things?

### *Practicing Concept Association*

When you study, you're going to make connections to other things—that's a good thing. It shows a highly intelligent ability to make sense of the world when you can associate like and even somewhat unlike components. If, for instance, you were reading Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," and you read the line that he had been in Birmingham, you may remember a trip you took with your family last summer through Alabama and that you passed by and visited the civil rights museum in Birmingham. This may remind you of the different displays you saw and the discussions you had with your family about what had happened concerning civil rights in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s in the United States.

This is a good connection to make, but if your assignment is to critique the literary aspects of King's long epistle, you need to be able to come back to the actual words of the letter and see what trends you can see in his writing and why he may have used his actual words to convey the powerful message. The connection is fine, but you can't get lost in going down rabbit holes that may or may not be what you're supposed to be doing at the time. Make a folder for this assignment where you can put things such as a short summary of your trip to Alabama. You may eventually include notes from this summary in your analysis. You may include something from a website that shows you information about that time period. Additionally, you could include items about Martin Luther King Jr.'s life and death and his work for civil rights. All of these elements may

help you understand the significance of this one letter, but you need to be cognizant of what you're doing at the time and remember it is not usually a good idea to just try to keep it all in your head. The best idea is to have a way to access this information easily, either electronically or in hard copy, so that if you are able to use it, you can find it easily and quickly.

### *Generating Idea Clusters*

Like mnemonics, idea clusters are nothing more than ways to help your brain come up with ways to recall specific information by connecting it to other knowledge you already have. For example, Andrea is an avid knitter and remembers how to create complicated stitches by associating them with nursery rhymes she read as a child. A delicate stitch that requires concentration because it makes the yarn look like part of it is hiding brings to mind Red Riding Hood, and connecting it to that character helps Andrea recall the exact order of steps necessary to execute the design. You can do the same thing with song lyrics, lines from movies, or favorite stories where you draw a connection to the well-known phrase or song and the task you need to complete.

## APPLICATION

Choose one of the following, and create an idea cluster to group and organize:

- Example A: aviation jobs in North America
- Example B: the use of analytics in sports to determine team rosters
- Example C: how social media affects political campaigns

Start the idea cluster with the topic circled in the middle of the page. For Example A, you might make one cluster off the main circle for specific positions; you could add another cluster for salary ranges and another for geographic regions.

### *Three Effective Study Strategies*

There are more than three study strategies, but focusing on the most effective strategies will make an enormous difference in how well you will be able to demonstrate learning (also known as “acing your tests”). Here is a brief overview of each of the three strategies:

- Spacing—This has to do with *when* you study. Hint: Don’t cram; study over a period of days, preferably with “breaks” in between.
- Interleaving—This has to do with *what* you study. Hint: Don’t study just one type of content, topic, chapter, or unit at a time; instead, mix up the content when you study.
- Practice testing—This has to do with *how* you study. Hint: Don’t just reread content. You must quiz or test your ability to retrieve the information from your brain.

### Spacing

We all know that cramming is not an effective study strategy, but do we know why? Research on memory suggests that giving yourself time in between study sessions actually helps you forget the information. And forgetting, which sounds like it would be something you *don’t* want to do, is actually good for your ability to remember information long-term. That’s because every time you forget something, you need to relearn it, leading to gains in your overall understanding and “storage” of the material. The table below demonstrates how spacing works. Assume you are going to spend

about four hours studying for a Sociology exam. Cramming would have you spending most of those four hours the night before the exam. With spacing, on the other hand, you would study a little bit each day.

Spacing

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cramming				Study for 1 hour	Study for 3 hours	<b>Sociology Test</b>	
Spacing	Study for 1 hour		Study for 30 minutes	Study for 1 hour	Study for 90 minutes	<b>Sociology Test</b>	

Table 6.1

Interleaving

One particular studying technique is called interleaving, which calls for students to mix up the content that is being studied. This means not just spending the entire study session on one sort of problem and then moving on to a different sort of problem at a later time.

If you take the schedule we used for the spacing example above, we can add the interleaving concepts to it. Notice that interleaving includes revisiting material from a previous chapter or unit or revisiting different types of problems or question sets. The benefit is that your brain is “mixing up” the information, which can sometimes lead to short-term forgetting but can lead to long-term memory and learning.

Interleaving

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Reread Sociology, Chapter 1. Reorganize notes		Reread Sociology, Chapter 1 and 2 Take Ch 1 online quiz. Create Chapter 2 concept map	Reread Sociology, Chapters 1-3. Take online quizzes for chapters 2 and 3. Reorganize notes. Create practice test	Reread notes. Review items missed on online quizzes. Take practice test and review challenge areas.	<b>TEST in sociology, Chapters 1-3</b>

Table 6.2

## Practice Testing

You can do a practice “test” in two ways. One is to test yourself as you are reading or taking in information. This is a great way to add a little variety to your studying. You can ask yourself what a paragraph or text section means as you read. To do this, read a passage in a text, cover up the material, and ask yourself, “What was the main idea of this section?” Recite aloud or write down your answer, and then check it against the original information.

Another, more involved, way to practice test is to create flashcards or an actual test by writing a test. This takes more time, but there are online programs such as Quizlet that make it a little easier. Practice testing is an effective study strategy because it helps you practice *retrieving* information, which is what you want to be able to do when you are taking the real test.

One of the best ways to learn something is to teach it to someone else, so ask a friend or family member if you can explain something to them, and *teach* them the lesson. You may find you know more about the subject than you thought . . . or you may realize quickly that you need to do more studying. Why does teaching someone

else rank as one of the most effective ways to learn something? It is a form of practice testing that requires you to demonstrate you know something in front of someone else! No one wants to look like they don't know what they are talking about, even if it your audience is another classmate.

### *Recognizing Strengths/Weaknesses of Preferred Study Approaches*

Most children don't learn to ride a bicycle by reading a manual; they learn by watching other kids, listening to instructions, and getting up on the seat and learning to balance—sometimes with training wheels or a proud parent holding on, but ultimately without any other support. They may fall over and feel insecure, but usually, they learn to make the machine go. Most of us employ multiple methods of study all the time. You usually only run into trouble if you stubbornly rely on just one way to learn or study and the material you're studying or the task you want to accomplish doesn't lend itself to that preference. You can practice specific strategies to help you learn in your preferred learning approach. Can you think of a time when the way you usually study a situation didn't work?

When deciding on a study approach, consider what you know about the material and the type of knowledge it involves. Is it a group of concepts related to problem-solving methods, such as those you'd find in a physics class? Or is it a literary analysis of a novel? Consider as many elements as possible about the material — and the way the material will be assessed — to help choose a study approach.

You should also consider your instructor's preferred method of teaching and learning. Watching the way they teach lessons or convey necessary course information to the class. Do they almost always augment lessons with video clips to provide examples or create a memorable narrative? Do they like to show you how something works by demonstrating and working with their

hands—for instance, assembling a piece of equipment by taking it apart and putting it back together again? Echoing their teaching approach may help your study. That doesn't mean you have to change your entire learning approach to match your instructors' methods. Many instructors understand that their students will have different ways of learning and try to present information in multiple ways.

### *Practicing Active Continuous Improvement for All Preferences*

You can certainly learn through specific approaches or according to specific preferences, but you will also need to adapt to different situations, skills, and subject areas. Don't limit yourself to thinking you can *only* learn one way or another. That mindset induces anxiety when you encounter a learning situation that doesn't match your preference. What if your instructor *only* uses a spoken lecture to teach concepts in your chemistry class, and you consider yourself a visual learner? Or what if the only method presented to you for learning mathematical computations is to see videos of others working problems, and you're more hands-on? You may have to concentrate in a different way or devise other strategies to learn, but you can do it. In fact, you should sometimes work on the styles/preferences that you feel are your least favorite; it will actually strengthen your overall ability to learn and retain information.<sup>10</sup>

Dr. Stephen Covey, famous leadership coach and businessman, called this attention to knowing and honing all your skill sets, not just your favorites, *sharpening the saw*. He advised that people should be aware of their strengths but should always hone their weaknesses by saying, “We must never become too busy sawing to take time to sharpen the saw.”<sup>11</sup> For instance, in the chemistry lecture example, you may need to take good notes from the spoken lecture and then review those notes as you sketch out any complex ideas or formulas. If the math videos are not enough for you to grasp difficult problems, you may ask for or find your own problems for

additional practice covering that particular mathematical concept to solve on your own.

## Footnotes

- 10Newton, Phillip M., & Miah, Mahallad. “Evidence-Based Higher Education—Is the Learning Style ‘Myth’ Important?” *Frontiers in Psychology* 8:444 (2017) DOI: 10.3389/FPSYG.2017.00444.
- 11Covey, Stephen. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* ® <https://www.franklincovey.com/the-7-habits.html>



# 14. Test Taking

## Questions to consider:

- What are the differences between test prep and taking the actual test?
- How can you take a *whole person* approach to test taking?
- What can you do on test day to increase your confidence and success?
- What should you know about test anxiety?

Once you are practicing good study habits, you'll be better prepared for actual test taking. Since studying and test taking are both part of learning, honing your skills in one will help you in the other.

Probably the most obvious differences between your preparation for an exam and the actual test itself is your level of urgency and the time constraints. A slight elevation in your stress level can actually be OK for testing—it keeps you focused and *on your game* when you need to bring up all the information, thinking, and studying to show what you've learned. Properly executed, test preparation mixed in with a bit of stress can significantly improve your actual test-taking experience.

## Preparation vs. Actual Test

You can replicate the effective sense of urgency an actual test produces by including timed writing into your study sessions. You don't need all of your study time to exactly replicate the test, but you would be well served to find out the format of the exam in advance and practice the skills you'll need to use for the various test components. On one early exam in history, Stuart learned the prof was going to include several short-answer essay questions—one for

each year of the time period covered. Stuart set up practice times to write for about 15 to 20 minutes on significant events from his notes because he estimated that would be about how much time he could devote out of the hour-long testing session to write one or two required short-answer questions. He would write a prompt from his notes, set a timer, and start writing. If you're ready and you have practiced and know the material, 20 minutes is adequate to prepare, draft, and revise a short response, but you don't have a lot of extra time.

Likewise, in a math exam, you will need to know what kinds of problems you will have to solve and to what extent you'll need to show your computational work on the exam. If you are able to incorporate this sort of timed problem-solving into your study time, you'll be more prepared and confident when you actually come to the exam. Making yourself adhere to a timed session during your study can only help. It puts a sense of urgency on you, and it will help you to find out what types of problems you need to practice more than ones that perhaps you're more comfortable solving.

### *Leveraging Study Habits for Test Prep*

In your mind, you probably know what you need to do to be prepared for tests. Occasionally, something may surprise you—emphasis on a concept you considered unimportant or a different presentation of a familiar problem. But those should be exceptions. You can take all your well-honed study habits to get ready for exams. Here's a checklist for study and test success for your consideration:



Figure 6.9

Read this list with each separate class in mind, and check off the items you already do. Give yourself one point for every item you checked. If you always take the success steps—congratulations! They are not a guarantee, but doing the steps mindfully will give you a nice head start. If you do fewer than five of the steps—you have some work to do. But recognition is a good place to start, and you can incorporate these steps starting now.

As strange as this may sound, you can find some interesting research articles online about using the taste or smell of peppermint to increase memory, recall, and focus. Read more at: <http://naturalsociety.com/mint-scent-improve-brain-cognition->

memory. While sucking on a peppermint disk won't replace studying, why not experiment with this relatively easy idea that seems to be gaining some scientific traction?

## Whole Person Approach to Testing

Just because you are facing a major exam in your engineering class (or math or science or English class) doesn't mean everything else in your life comes to a stop. Perhaps that's somewhat annoying, but that's reality. Allergies still flare up, children still need to eat, and you still need to sleep. You must see your academic life as one segment of who you are—it's an important segment, but just one aspect of who you are as a whole person. Neela tries to turn off everything else when she has exams coming up in her nursing program, which is pretty often. She ignores her health, puts off her family, tries to reschedule competing work tasks, and focuses all her energy on the pending exam. On the surface, that sounds like a reasonable approach, but if she becomes really sick by ignoring a minor head cold, or if she misses an important school deadline for one of her children, Neela risks making matters worse by attempting to compartmentalize so strictly. Taking care of her own health by eating and sleeping properly; asking for help in other aspects of her busy life, such as attending to the needs of her children; and seeing the big picture of how it all fits together would be a better approach. Pretending otherwise may work sporadically, but it is not sustainable for the long run.

A whole person approach to testing takes a lot of organization, scheduling, and attention to detail, but the life-long benefits make the effort worthwhile.

## *Establishing Realistic Expectations for Test Situations*

Would you expect to make a perfect pastry if you've never learned how to bake? Or paint a masterpiece if you've never tried to work with paints and brushes? Probably not. But often we expect ourselves to perform at much higher levels of achievement than that for which we've actually prepared. If you become very upset and stressed if you make any score lower than the highest, you probably need to reevaluate your own expectations for test situations. Striving to always do your best is an admirable goal. Realistically knowing that your current *best* may not achieve the highest academic ratings can help you plot your progress.

Realistic continuous improvement is a better plan, because people who repeatedly attempt challenges for which they have not adequately prepared and understandably fail (or at least do not achieve the desired highest ranking) often start moving toward the goal in frustration. They simply quit. This doesn't mean you settle for mediocre grades or refrain from your challenges. It means you become increasingly aware of yourself and your current state and potential future. Know yourself, know your strengths and weaknesses, and be honest with yourself about your expectations.

## *Understanding Accommodations and Responsibilities*

As with so many parts of life, some people take exams in stride and do just fine. Others may need more time or change of location or format to succeed in test-taking situations. With adequate notice, most faculty will provide students with reasonable accommodations to assist students in succeeding in test situations. If you feel that you would benefit from receiving these sorts of accommodations, first speak with your instructor. You may also need to talk to a student services advisor for specific requirements for accommodations at your institution.

If you need accommodations, you are responsible for understanding what your specific needs are and communicating your needs with your instructors. Before exams in class, you may be allowed to have someone else take notes for you, receive your books in audio form, engage an interpreter, or have adaptive devices in the classroom to help you participate. Testing accommodations may allow for additional time on the test, the use of a scribe to record exam answers, the use of a computer instead of handwriting answers, as well as other means to make the test situation successful. Talk to your instructors if you have questions about testing accommodations.

### *Prioritizing Time Surrounding Test Situations*

Keep in mind that you don't have any more or less time than anyone else, so you can't *make time* for an activity. You can only use the time everyone gets wisely and realistically. Exams in college classes are important, but they are not the only significant events you have in your classes. In fact, everything leading up to the exam, the exam itself, and the post-exam activities are all one large continuum. Think of the exam as an event with multiple phases, more like a long-distance run instead of a 50-yard dash. Step back and look at the big picture of this timeline. Draw it out on paper. What needs to happen between now and the exam so you feel comfortable, confident, and ready?

If your instructor conducts some sort of pre-exam summary or prep session, make sure to attend. These can be invaluable. If this instructor does not provide that sort of formal exam prep, create your own with a group of classmates or on your own. Consider everything you know about the exam, from written instructions to notes you took in class, including any experiential notes you may have from previous exams, such as the possibility of bonus points for answering an extra question that requires some time

management on your part. You can read more about time management in Chapter 3.

## GET CONNECTED

Which apps can help you study for a test, increase your memory, and even help you overcome test anxiety?

Personal Zen is a free online gaming app clinically proven to reduce stress and anxiety. The games retrain your brain to think more positively, reducing stress to help you focus on the experiences around you.

Games like solitaire, hangman, and Simon Says all build on your memory, keeping it sharp and active. There are loads of fun, free online memory games you can use to make time wasting a little less wasteful. For more than 250 options, visit the Memory Improvement Tips website.

iTunes University might be able to help you dig into a research topic or find additional content to help you if you're struggling with a course. Their library of free lectures and content comes from some of the most highly respected universities around the world.

Chegg Prep is a flashcard-based self-quizzing resource. It provides millions of pre-made flashcards and decks organized by course and topic, which you can search, sort, bookmark, and use in a variety of ways. The service is free and does not require a login unless you'd like to save or create your own cards.

## Test Day

Once you get to the exam session, try your best to focus on nothing but the exam. This can be very difficult with all the distractions in our lives. But if you have done all the groundwork to attend the

classes, completed the assignments, and scheduled your exam prep time, you are ready to focus intently for the comparatively short time most exams last.

### **Arriving to class:**

Don't let yourself be sidetracked right at the end. Beyond the preparation we've discussed, give yourself some more advantages on the actual test day:

- Get to the testing location a few minutes early so you can settle into your place and take a few relaxing breaths.
- Don't let other classmates interrupt your calmness at this point.
- Just get to your designated place, take out whatever supplies and materials you are allowed to have, and calm your mind.

### **Taking the test:**

Once the instructor begins the test:

- Listen carefully for any last-minute oral directions that may have changed some detail on the exam, such as the timing or the content of the questions.
- As soon as you receive the exam sheet or packet, make a quick scan over the entire test.
- Don't spend a lot of time on this initial glance, but make sure you are familiar with the layout and what you need to do.
- Using this first review, decide how you will allocate your available time for each section.
- You can even jot down how many minutes you can allow for the different sections or questions.

Then for each section, if the exam is divided this way, be sure you **read the section directions** very carefully so you don't miss an important detail. For example, instructors often offer options—so you may have four short-answer questions from which to choose, but you only need to answer two of them. If you had not read the



directions for that section, you may have thought you needed to provide answers to all four prompts. Working on extra questions for which you likely will receive no credit would be a waste of your limited exam time. The extra time you spend at the beginning is like an investment in your overall results.

**Answer every required question on the exam.** Even if you don't complete each one, you may receive some credit for partial answers. Whether or not you can receive partial credit would be an excellent question to ask before the exam during the preparation time. If you are taking an exam that contains multiple-choice questions, go through and answer the questions about which you are the most confident first.

**Read the entire question carefully even if you think you know what the stem (the introduction of the choices) says, and read all the choices.** Skip really difficult questions or ones where your brain goes blank. Then you can go back and concentrate on those skipped ones later after you have answered the majority of the questions confidently. Sometimes a later question will trigger an idea in your mind that will help you answer the skipped questions.

And, in a similar fashion to spending a few minutes right at the beginning of the test time to read the directions carefully and identify the test elements, **allow yourself a few minutes at the end of the exam session to review your answers.** Depending on what sort of exam it is, you can use this time to check your math computations, review an essay for grammatical and content errors, or answer the difficult multiple-choice questions you skipped earlier. Finally, **make sure you have completed the entire test:** check the backs of pages, and verify that you have a corresponding answer section for every question section on the exam. It can be easy to skip a section with the idea you will come back to it but then forget to return there, which can have a significant impact on your test results.

## *After the Test*

As you leave the exam room, the last thing you may want to think about is that particular test. You probably have numerous other assignments, projects, and life obligations to attend to, especially if you pushed some of those off to study for this completed exam. Give yourself some space from this exam, but only for the duration of the time when your instructor is grading your exam. Once you have your results, study them—whether you did really well (Go, you!) or not as well as you had hoped (Keep your spirits up!). Both scenarios hold valuable information if you will use it.

Thandie had a habit of going all-out for exams before she took them, and she did pretty well usually, but once the instructor passed back the graded tests, she would look at the letter grade, glance half-heartedly at the instructor's comments, and toss the exam away, ready to move on to the next chapter, section, or concept. A better plan would be to learn from her exam results and analyze both what she did well and where she struggled. After a particularly unimpressive exam outing in her statistics class, Thandie took her crumpled-up exam to the campus tutoring center, where the tutor reviewed the test with her section by section. Together they discovered that Thandie did particularly well on the computational sections, which she admitted were her favorites, and not well at all on the short-answer essay questions that she did not expect to find in a stats class, which in her experience had been more geared toward the mathematical side of solving statistical problems.

Going forward in this class, Thandie should practice writing out her explanations of how to compute the problems and talk to her instructor about ways to hone this skill. This tutoring session also proved to Thandie the benefit of holding on to important class papers—either electronically or in hard copy, depending on the class setup—for future reference. For some classes, you probably don't need to keep every scrap of paper (or file) associated with your notes, exams, assignments, and projects, but for others, especially for those in your major, those early class materials may come in very

handy in your more difficult later undergraduate courses or even in grad school when you need a quick refresher on the basic concepts.

## Test Anxiety



Figure 6.10 Text anxiety can be a common occurrence, but you can use strategies to manage it.

Test anxiety is very real. You may know this firsthand. Almost everyone gets a little nervous before a major exam, in the same way most people get slightly anxious meeting a new potential date or undertaking an unfamiliar activity. We second-guess whether we're ready for this leap, if we prepared adequately, or if we should postpone this potentially awkward situation. And in most situations, testing included, that reasonable level of nervous anticipation can be a good thing—enhancing your focus and providing you with a bit of bravado to get you through a difficult time.

Test anxiety, however, can cause us to doubt ourselves so severely

that we underperform or overcompensate to the point that we do not do well on the exam. Don't despair; you can still succeed if you suffer from test anxiety. The first step is to understand what it is and what it is not, and then to practice some simple strategies to cope with your anxious feelings relative to test taking. Whatever you do, don't use the label *test anxiety* to keep you from your dreams of completing your education and pursuing whatever career you have your eyes on. You are bigger than any anxiety.

### *Understanding Test Anxiety*

If someone tries to tell you that test anxiety is *all in your head*, they're sort of right. Our thinking is a key element of anxiety of any sort. On the other hand, test anxiety can manifest itself in other parts of our bodies as well. You may feel queasy or light-headed if you are experiencing test anxiety. Your palms may sweat, or you may become suddenly very hot or very cold for no apparent reason. At its worst, test anxiety can cause its sufferers to experience several unpleasant conditions including nausea, diarrhea, and shortness of breath. Some people may feel as though they may throw up, faint, or have a heart attack, none of which would make going into a testing situation a pleasant idea. You can learn more about symptoms of test anxiety from the Anxiety and Depression Association of America that conducts research on this topic.<sup>12</sup>

Back to our minds for a minute. We think constantly, and if we have important events coming up, such as exams, but other significant events as well, we tend to think about them seemingly all the time. Almost as if we have a movie reel looping in our heads, we can anticipate everything that may happen during these events—both sensational results and catastrophic endings. What if you oversleep on the test day? What if you're hit by a bus on the way to campus? What if you get stung by a mysterious insect and have to save the world on the very day of your exam?

How about the other way? You win the lottery! Your screenplay is

accepted by a major publisher! You get a multimillion-dollar record deal! It could happen. Typically, though, life falls somewhere in between those two extremes, unless you live in an action movie. Our minds, however, (perhaps influenced by some of those action movies or spy novels we've seen and read) often gravitate to those black-and-white, all-or-nothing results. Hence, we can become very nervous when we think about taking an exam because if we do really poorly, we think, we may have to face consequences as dire as dropping out of school or never graduating. Usually, this isn't going to happen, but we can literally make ourselves sick with anxiety if we dwell on those slight possibilities. You actually may encounter a few tests in your academic careers that are so important that you have to alter your other life plans temporarily, but truly, this is the exception, not the rule. Don't let the most extreme and severe result take over your thoughts. Prepare well and do your best, see where you land, and then go from there.

### *Using Strategies to Manage Test Anxiety*

You have to work hard to control test anxiety so it does not take an unhealthy hold on you every time you face a test situation, which for many of you will last well into your careers. One of the best ways to control test anxiety is to be prepared for the exam. You can control that part. You can also learn effective relaxation techniques including controlled breathing, visualization, and meditation. Some of these practices work well even in the moment: at your test site, take a deep breath, close your eyes, and smile—just bringing positive thoughts into your mind can help you meet the challenges of taking an exam without anxiety taking over.

The tests in the corporate world or in other career fields may not look exactly like the ones you encounter in college, but professionals of all sorts take tests routinely. Again, being prepared helps reduce or eliminate this anxiety in all these situations. Think of a presentation or an explanation you have provided well

numerous times—you likely are not going to feel anxious about this same presentation if asked to provide it again. That's because you are prepared and know what to expect. Try to replicate this feeling of preparation and confidence in your test-taking situations.

Many professions require participants to take frequent licensing exams to prove they are staying current in their rapidly changing work environments, including nursing, engineering, education, and architecture, as well as many other occupations. You have tools to take control of your thinking about tests. Better to face it head-on and let test anxiety know who's in charge!

## Footnotes

- 12Reteguiz, Jo-Ann. "Relationship between anxiety and standardized patient test performance in the medicine clerkship." *Journal of general internal medicine* vol. 21,5 (2006): 415-8. doi:10.1111/j.1525-1497.2006.00419.

# 15. Writing Summaries

## What is a Summary?

A summary is a comprehensive and objective restatement of the main ideas of a text (an article, book, movie, event, etc.) Stephen Wilhoit, in his textbook *A Brief Guide to Writing from Readings*, suggests that keeping the qualities of a good summary in mind helps students avoid the pitfalls of unclear or disjointed summaries. These qualities include:

*Neutrality* – The writer avoids inserting his or her opinion into the summary, or interpreting the original text’s content in any way. This requires that the writer avoids language that is evaluative, such as: good, bad, effective, ineffective, interesting, boring, etc. Also, keep “I” out of the summary; instead, summary should be written in grammatical 3rd person (For example: “he”, “she”, “the author”, “they”, etc).

*Brevity* – The summary should not be longer than the original text, but rather highlight the most important information from that text while leaving out unnecessary details while still maintaining accuracy.

*Independence* – The summary should make sense to someone who has not read the original source. There should be no confusion about the main content and organization of the original source. This also requires that the summary be accurate.

By mastering the craft of summarizing, students put themselves in the position to do well on many assignments in college, not just English essays. In most fields (from the humanities to the soft and hard sciences) summary is a required task. Being able to summarize lab results accurately and briefly, for example, is critical in a chemistry or engineering class. Summarizing the various theories

of sociology or education helps a person apply them to his or her fieldwork. In college, it's imperative we learn how to summarize well because we are asked to do it so often.

College students are asked to summarize material for many different types of assignments. In some instances, summarizing one source is often the sole purpose of the entire assignment. Students might also be asked to summarize as just one aspect of a larger project, such as a literature review, an abstract in a research paper, or a works consulted entry in an annotated bibliography.

Some summary assignments will expect students to condense material more than others. For example, when summary is the sole purpose of the assignment, the student might be asked to include key supporting evidence, where as an abstract might require students to boil down the source text to its bare-bones essentials.

## What Makes Something a Summary?

When you ask yourself, after reading an article (and maybe even reading it two or three times), “What was that article about?” and you end up jotting down—from memory, without returning to the original article to use its language or phrases—three things that stood out as the author's main points, you are summarizing. Summaries have several key characteristics.

You're summarizing well when you

- use your own words
- significantly condense the original text
- provide accurate representations of the main points of the text they summarize
- avoid personal opinion.

Summaries are much shorter than the original material—a general



rule is that they should be no more than 10% to 15% the length of the original, and they are often even shorter than this.

It can be easy and feel natural, when summarizing an article, to include our own opinions. We may agree or disagree strongly with what this author is saying, or we may want to compare their information with the information presented in another source, or we may want to share our own opinion on the topic. Often, our opinions slip into summaries even when we work diligently to keep them separate. These opinions are not the job of a summary, though. A summary should *only* highlight the main points of the article.

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Focusing on just the ideas that best support a point we want to make or ignoring ideas that don't support that point can be tempting. This approach has two significant problems, though:

**First**, it no longer correctly represents the original text, so it misleads your reader about the ideas presented in that text. A summary should give your reader an accurate idea of what they can expect if we pick up the original article to read.

**Second**, it undermines your own credibility as an author to not represent this information accurately. If readers cannot trust an author to accurately represent source information, they may not be as likely to trust that author to thoroughly and accurately present a reasonable point.

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# How Should I Organize a Summary?

Like traditional essays, summaries have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. What these components look like will vary some based on the purpose of the summary you're writing. The introduction, body, and conclusion of work focused specifically around summarizing something is going to be a little different than in work where summary is not the primary goal.

## Introducing a Summary

One of the trickier parts of creating a summary is making it clear that this is a summary of someone else's work; these ideas are not your original ideas. You will almost always begin a summary with an introduction to the author, article, and publication so the reader knows what we are about to read. This information will appear again in your bibliography, but is also useful here so the reader can follow the conversation happening in your paper. You will want to provide it in both places.

In summary-focused work, this introduction should accomplish a few things:

- Introduce the name of the author whose work you are summarizing.
- Introduce the title of the text being summarized.
- Introduce where this text was presented (if it's an art installation, where is it being shown? If it's an article, where was that article published? Not all texts will have this component—for example, when summarizing a book written by one author, the title of the book and name of that author are sufficient information for your readers to easily locate the work you are summarizing).

- State the main ideas of the text you are summarizing—just the big-picture components.
- Give context when necessary. Is this text responding to a current event? That might be important to know. Does this author have specific qualifications that make them an expert on this topic? This might also be relevant information.

So, for example, if you were to get an assignment asking you to summarize Matthew Hutson's *Atlantic* article, "Beyond the Five Senses," an introduction for that summary might look something like this:

In his July 2017 article in *The Atlantic*, "Beyond the Five Senses," Matthew Hutson explores ways in which potential technologies might expand our sensory perception of the world. He notes that some technologies, such as cochlear implants, are already accomplishing a version of this for people who do not have full access to one of the five senses. In much of the article, though, he seems more interested in how technology might expand the ways in which we sense things. Some of these technologies are based in senses that can be seen in nature, such as echolocation, and others seem more deeply rooted in science fiction. However, all of the examples he gives consider how adding new senses to the ones we already experience might change how we perceive the world around us.

However, you will probably find yourself more frequently using summary as just one component of work with a wide range of goals (not just a goal to "summarize X").

Summary introductions in these situations still generally need to

- name the author
- name the text being summarized
- state just the relevant context, if there is any (maybe the author has a specific credential that makes their work on this topic carry more weight than it would otherwise, or

maybe the study they generated is now being used as a benchmark for additional research)

- introduce the author's full name (first and last names) the first time you summarize part of their text. If you summarize pieces of the same text more than once in a work you are writing, each time you use their text after that initial introduction of the source, you will only use the author's last name as you introduce that next summary component.

## Presenting the “Meat” (or Body) of a Summary

Again, this will look a little different depending on the purpose of the summary work you are doing. Regardless of how you are using summary, you will introduce the main ideas throughout your text with transitional phrasing, such as “One of [Author's] biggest points is...,” or “[Author's] primary concern about this solution is...”

If you are responding to a “write a summary of X” assignment, the body of that summary will expand on the main ideas you stated in the introduction of the summary, although this will all still be very condensed compared to the original. What are the key points the author makes about each of those big-picture main ideas? Depending on the kind of text you are summarizing, you may want to note how the main ideas are supported (although, again, be careful to avoid making your own opinion about those supporting sources known).

When you are summarizing with an end goal that is broader than just summary, the body of your summary will still present the idea from the original text that is relevant to the point you are making (condensed and in your own words).

Since it is much more common to summarize just a single idea or point from a text in this type of summarizing (rather than all of its main points), it is important to make sure you understand the

larger points of the original text. For example, you might find that an article provides an example that opposes its main point in order to demonstrate the range of conversations happening on the topic it covers. This opposing point, though, isn't the main point of the article, so just summarizing this one opposing example would not be an accurate representation of the ideas and points in that text.

## Concluding a Summary

For writing in which summary is the sole purpose, here are some ideas for your conclusion.

- Now that we've gotten a little more information about the main ideas of this piece, are there any connections or loose ends to tie up that will help your reader fully understand the points being made in this text? This is the place to put those.
- This is also a good place to state (or restate) the things that are most important for your readers to remember after reading your summary.
- Depending on your assignment, rather than providing a formal concluding paragraph where you restate the main points and make connections between them, you may want to simply paraphrase the author's concluding section or final main idea. Check your assignment sheet to see what kind of conclusion your instructor is asking for.

When your writing has a primary goal other than summary, your conclusion should

- discuss the summary you've just presented. How does it support, illustrate, or give new information about the point you are making in your writing? Connect it to your own main point for that paragraph so readers understand clearly why it

deserves the space it takes up in your work. (Note that this is still not giving your opinion on the material you've summarized, just making connections between it and your own main points.)

This chapter is adapted from *A Guide to Rhetoric*, Chapter 5.1, “Writing Summaries,” by Melanie Gagich, CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0.

PART VI

# CIVILITY AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE





# 16. Civility and Cultural Competence: Introduction



Figure 9.1 (Credit John Martinez Pavliga / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

## Student Survey

How do you feel about diversity, equity, and inclusion? These questions will help you determine how the chapter concepts relate to you right now. As you are introduced to new concepts and practices, it can be informative to reflect on how your understanding changes over time. We'll revisit these questions at the end of the chapter to see whether your feelings have changed. Take this quick survey to figure it out, ranking questions on a scale of 1–4, 1 meaning “least like me” and 4 meaning “most like me.”

1. I'm aware of the different categories of diversity and the various populations I may encounter.
2. I think we sometimes go too far in trying to be sensitive to different groups.
3. I think nearly everybody in our society has equal opportunity.

4. It's not my role to ensure equity and inclusiveness among my peers or colleagues.

You can also take the Chapter 9 survey anonymously online.

## STUDENT PROFILE

“For the vast majority of my life, I thought being an Asian-American—who went through the Palo Alto School District—meant that I was supposed to excel in academics. But, in reality, I did the opposite. I struggled through college, both in classes and in seeking experiences for my future. At first, I thought I was unique in not living up to expectations. But as I met more people from all different backgrounds, I realized my challenges were not unique.

“I began capturing videos of students sharing their educational issues. Like me, many of my peers lack the study skills required to achieve our academic goals. The more I researched and developed videos documenting this lack of skill, the more I realized that student identities are often lost as they learn according to a traditional pedagogy. I began documenting students’ narratives and the specific strategies they used to overcome difficulty. Once we can celebrate a diverse student body and showcase their strengths and identities as well as the skills necessary to excel academically, my hope is that students of all backgrounds can begin to feel that they belong.”

—**Henry Fan**, Foothill College and San Jose State University

## About This Chapter

In this chapter you will learn about diversity and how it plays a role

in personal, civic, academic, and professional aspects of our lives. By the end of the chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Articulate how diverse voices have been historically ignored or minimized in American civic life, education, and culture.
- Describe categories of identity and experience that contribute to diverse points of view.
- Acknowledge implicit bias and recognize privilege.
- Evaluate statements and situations based on their inclusion of diverse perspectives.

# 17. What is Diversity, and Why Is Everybody Talking About It?

## **Questions to Consider:**

- Historically, has diversity always been a concern?
- What does it mean to be civil?
- Why do people argue about diversity?

## What Would Shakespeare Say?

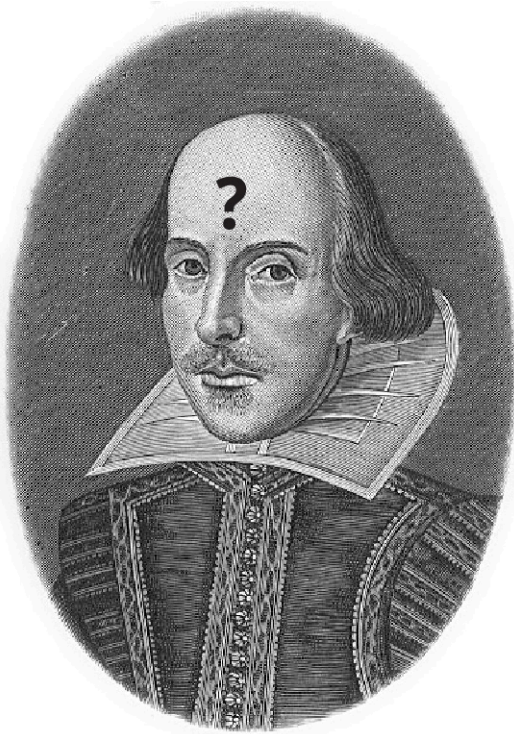


Figure 9.2 (Credit: Sourced originally from Helmolt, H.F., ed. *History of the World*. Dodd, Mead and Company, 1902 / Perry-Castañeda Library, University of Texas at Austin / Wikimedia Commons / Public Domain).

### **In our classroom, everyone is the same...**

Consider a classroom containing 25 college students and their instructor. In this particular class, all of the students and the instructor share the same racial group—White. In fact, everyone in the class is a White American from the Midwest.

The instructor is leading the class through reading a scene from William Shakespeare's drama *Romeo and Juliet*. As students read

their parts, each one is thinking carefully about the role he or she has been given.

One of the male students wonders what it would be like to read the part of Juliet; after all, men originally played the part in Shakespeare's day. The young woman reading Juliet wonders if anyone would object to her taking the role if they knew she was a lesbian. What would it be like, she wonders, if Romeo, her love interest, were also played by a woman? One reader strongly identifies as German American, but he is reading the part of an Italian. Another student has a grandmother who is African American, but he looks like every other White student in the room. No one recognizes his mixed-race heritage.

After the students finish reading the scene, the instructor announces, "In our classroom, everyone is the same, but these days when Shakespeare is staged, there is a tendency for nontraditional casting. Romeo could be Black, Juliet could be Latina, Lady Montague could be Asian. Do you think that kind of casting would disrupt the experience of seeing the play?"

In this case, the instructor makes the assumption that because everyone in the class *looks* the same, they *are* the same. What did the instructor miss about the potential for diversity in his classroom? Have you ever made a similar mistake?

Diversity is more than what we can recognize from external clues such as race and gender. Diversity includes many unseen aspects of identity, like sexual orientation, political point of view, veteran status, and many other aspects that you may have not considered. To be inclusive and civil within your community, it is essential that you avoid making assumptions about how other people define or identify themselves.

In this chapter we will discover that each person is more than the sum of surface clues presented to the world. Personal experience, social and family history, public policy, and even geography play a role in how diversity is constructed. We'll also explore elements of civility and fairness within the college community.

One important objective of civility is to become culturally

competent. Culturally competent people understand the complexity of their own personal identity, values, and culture. In addition, they respect the personal identities and values of others who may not share their identity and values. Further, culturally competent people remain open-minded when confronted with new cultural experiences. They learn to relate to and respect difference; they look beyond the obvious and learn as much as they can about what makes each person different and appreciated.

These concepts tie closely to Chapter 8: Communication, particularly the section on Emotional Intelligence and Overcoming Barriers to Communication.

## WHAT STUDENTS SAY

1. Do you think the diversity of your school's student body is reflected in course offerings and campus activities?
  - a. Yes
  - b. Somewhat
  - c. No
2. How comfortable are you when discussing issues of race, sexuality, religion, and other aspects of civility?
  - a. Extremely comfortable
  - b. Somewhat comfortable
  - c. Somewhat uncomfortable
  - d. Extremely uncomfortable
3. Do you generally feel welcomed and included on campus?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. It varies significantly by class or environment.

You can also take the anonymous What Students Say surveys to

add your voice to this textbook. Your responses will be included in updates.

Students offered their views on these questions, and the results are displayed in the graphs below.

Do you think the diversity of your school's student body is reflected in course offerings and campus activities?

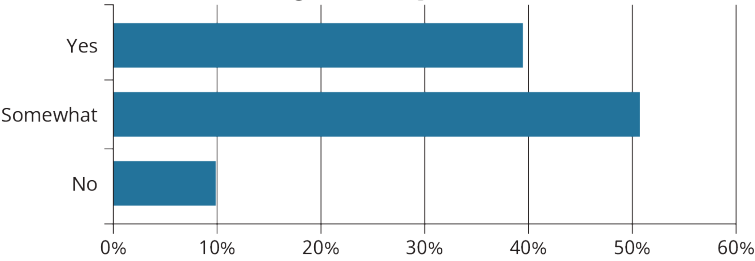


Figure 9.3

How comfortable are you when discussing issues of race, sexuality, religion, and other aspects of civility?

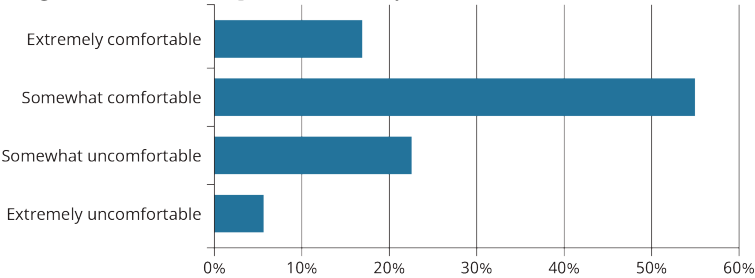


Figure 9.4

Do you generally feel welcomed and included on campus?

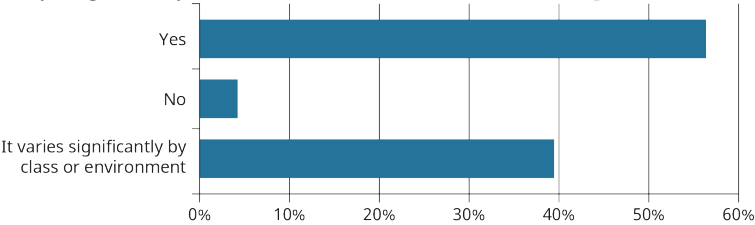


Figure 9.5



## Why Diversity Matters

The United States of America is viewed the world over as a leader in democracy and democratic ideals. Our nation, young by most standards, continues to evolve to make the freedoms and opportunities available to all. Where the benefits of citizenship have been imperfect, discord over issues related to civil rights and inclusion have often been at the center of the conflict.

To understand the importance of civility and civil engagement, it is necessary to acknowledge our country's history. The United States is a country born out of protest. Colonists protesting what they felt were unfair taxes under King George III was at the foundation of the Revolutionary War. Over time, many groups have been given their civil liberties and equal access to all that our country has to offer through that same spirit of protest and petition.



Figure 9.6 (Credit: Carl Campbell / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

The United States is often described as a “melting pot,” a rich mixture made up of people of many colors, religions, abilities, etc. working together to make one great big stew. That is the image generations of Americans grew up learning, and it is a true one. The United States is a nation of immigrants, and cultural influences from around the world have added to its strength.

Historically, however, not all contributions and voices have been acknowledged equally or adequately. Some groups have had to struggle to have their contributions acknowledged, be treated fairly, and be allowed full participation in the civic life of the country. Entire populations of people have been oppressed as a part of the nation’s history, something important for Americans to confront and

acknowledge. For example, in what is known as the Trail of Tears, the U.S. government forcibly removed Native Americans from their homelands and made them walk to reservations; some had to travel more than 1,000 miles, and over 10,000 died on the journey. Further, in an act of forced assimilation, Native American children were taken from their families and placed in schools where they were not allowed to practice cultural traditions or speak their Native languages. This practice continued as late as the 1970s. As a result, many Native American languages have been lost or are at risk of being lost.

The slavery of Africans occurred in America for close to 250 years. Much of the wealth in the United States during that time came directly from the labor of enslaved people; however, the enslaved people themselves did not benefit financially. During World War II, Japanese Americans were placed into internment camps and considered a danger to our country because our nation was at war with Japan.

For many years, all women and minority men were traditionally left out of public discourse and denied participation in government, industry, and even cultural institutions such as sports. For example, the United States Supreme Court was founded in 1789; however, the court's first female justice, Sandra Day O'Connor, was not appointed until 1981, almost 200 years later. Jackie Robinson famously became the first African American major league baseball player in 1947 when he was hired by the Brooklyn Dodgers, although the major leagues were established in 1869, decades earlier. The absence of White women and minorities was not an accident. Their exclusion was based on legal discrimination or unfair treatment.

These are all examples of mistreatment, inequality, and discrimination, and they didn't end without incredible sacrifice and heroism. The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s and the equal rights movement for women's rights in the 1970s are examples of how public protests work to bring attention to discriminatory practices and to create change. Because racism, anti-Semitism, sexism, and other forms of bias and intolerance still exist, civil

engagement and protests continue, and policies must be constantly monitored. Many people still work to ensure the gains these communities have made in acquiring the rights of full citizenship are not lost.

Diversity refers to differences in the human experience. As different groups have gained in number and influence, our definition of diversity has evolved to embrace many variables that reflect a multitude of different backgrounds, experiences, and points of view, not just race and gender. Diversity takes into account age, socioeconomic factors, ability (such as sight, hearing, and mobility), ethnicity, veteran status, geography, language, sexual orientation, religion, size, and other factors. At one time or another, each group has had to make petitions to the government for equal treatment under the law and appeals to society for respect. Safeguarding these groups' hard-won rights and public regard maintains diversity and its two closely related factors, *equity* and *inclusion*.

## ACTIVITY

Our rights and protections are often acquired through awareness, effort, and, sometimes, protest. Each one of the following groups has launched protests over discrimination or compromises to their civil rights. Choose three of the groups below and do a quick search on protests or efforts members of the group undertook to secure their rights. To expand your knowledge, choose some with which you are not familiar.

Record the name, time frame, and outcomes of the protest or movements you researched.

The groups are as follows:

- Veterans
- Senior citizens

- Blind or visually impaired people
- Muslims
- Christians
- LGBTQ+ community
- Hispanic/Latinos
- People with intellectual disabilities
- Undocumented immigrants
- Little people
- College students
- Jewish Americans
- Farm workers
- Wheelchair users

## The Role of Equity and Inclusion

Equity plays a major part in achieving fairness in a diverse landscape. Equity gives everyone equal access to opportunity and success. For example, you may have seen interpreters for deaf or hard of hearing people in situations where a public official is making an announcement about an impending weather emergency. Providing immediate translation into sign language means that there is no gap between what the public official is saying and when all people receive the information. Simultaneous sign language provides equity.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, many students have learning differences that require accommodations in the classroom. For example, a student with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) might be given more time to complete tests or writing assignments. The extra time granted takes into account that students with ADHD process information differently.

If a student with a learning difference is given more time than other students to complete a test, that is a matter of equity. The student is not being given an advantage; the extra time gives them an equal chance at success.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990) is a federal government policy that addresses equity in the workplace, housing, and public places. The ADA requires “reasonable accommodations” so that people with disabilities have equal access to the same services as people without disabilities. For example, wheelchair lifts on public transportation, automatic doors, entrance ramps, and elevators are examples of accommodations that eliminate barriers of participation for people with certain disabilities.

Without the above accommodations, those with a disability may justly feel like second-class citizens because their needs were not anticipated. Further, they might have to use their own resources to gain equal access to services although their tax dollars contribute to providing that same access and service to other citizens.

Equity levels the playing field so that everyone’s needs are anticipated and everyone has an equal starting point. However, understanding equity is not enough.

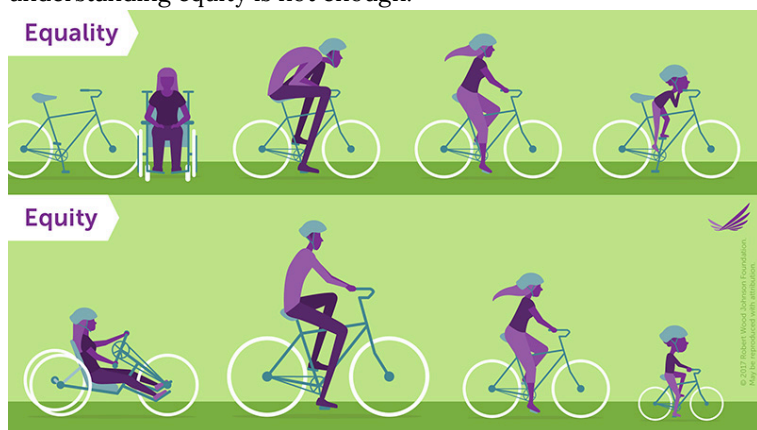


Figure 9.7 Equality is a meaningful goal, but it can leave people with unmet needs; equity is more empowering and fair. In equality portion of the graphic, people all sizes and a person who uses a wheelchair are all given the same bicycle, which is unusable for most. In the equity portion, each person gets a bicycle specifically designed for them, enabling them to successfully ride it. Credit: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation / Custom License: “May be

Produced with Attribution<sup>2</sup>)

When equity is properly considered, there is also inclusion. *Inclusion* means that there are a multiplicity of voices, skills, and interests represented in any given situation. Inclusion has played a major role in education, especially in terms of creating inclusion classrooms and inclusive curricula. In an inclusion classroom, students of different skill levels study together. For example, students with and without developmental disabilities study in the same classroom. Such an arrangement eliminates the stigma of the “special education classroom” where students were once segregated. In addition, in inclusion classrooms all students receive support when needed. Students benefit from seeing how others learn. In an inclusive curriculum, a course includes content and perspectives from underrepresented groups. For example, a college course in psychology might include consideration of different contexts such as immigration, incarceration, or unemployment in addition to addressing societal norms.

Inclusion means that these voices of varied background and experience are integrated into discussions, research, and assignments rather than ignored.

## Our Country Is Becoming More Diverse

You may have heard the phrase “the browning of America,” meaning it is predicted that today’s racial minorities will, collectively, be the majority of the population in the future. The graph from the Pew Research Center projects that by the year 2065, U.S. demographics will have shifted significantly. In 2019, the White population made up just over 60% of the population. In 2065, the Pew Research Center predicts that Whites will be approximately 46% of the population. The majority of Americans will be the non-White majority, 54% Hispanic/Latinos, Blacks, and Asians.

## The changing face of America, 1965–2065

*% of the total population*

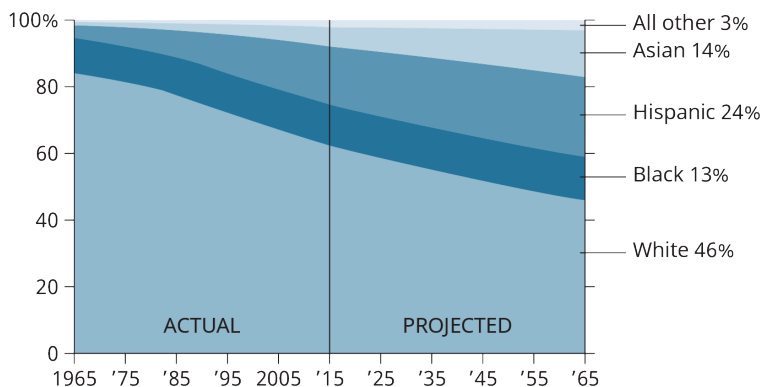


Figure 9.8 United States demographics (or statistical characteristics of populations) are changing rapidly. In just over 35 years, the country as a whole will be a “majority minority” nation, with ethnic/racial minorities making up more than half of the population. (Credit: Based on work by the Pew Research Center.)

What does this mean? It could mean that the United States begins accepting Spanish as a mainstream language since the Hispanic/Latino population will be significantly larger. It could mean a changing face for local governments. It could mean that our country will elect its second non-White president. Beyond anything specific, the shifting demographics of the United States could mean greater attention is paid to diversity awareness, equity, and inclusion.

## ANALYSIS QUESTION

How should the United States prepare for its projected demographic shift? What changes do you suppose will take place as part of the “browning of America”?



# Education: Equity for All

Education has been one of the most significant arenas for social change related to our rights as Americans. And the effects of that change have significantly impacted other power dynamics in society. You need look no further than the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) to see how our nation has responded passionately in civil and uncivil ways to appeals for equity and inclusion in public education.

For much of the 20th century, African Americans lived under government-sanctioned separation better known as segregation. Not only were schools segregated, but Jim Crow laws allowed for legal separation in transportation, hospitals, parks, restaurants, theaters, and just about every aspect of public life. These laws enacted that there be “Whites only” water fountains and restrooms. Only White people could enter the front door of a restaurant or sit on the main level of a movie theater, while African Americans had to enter through the back door and sit in the balcony. The segregation also included Mexican Americans and Catholics, who were forced to attend separate schools. *Brown v. Board of Education* was a landmark Supreme Court case that challenged the interpretation of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. The case involved the father of Linda Brown suing the Topeka, Kansas, board of education for denying his daughter the right to attend an all-White school. Oliver Brown maintained that segregation left his Black community with inferior schools, a condition counter to the equal protection clause contained in Section I of the 14th Amendment:

**“All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or**

**property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”**

There was widespread heated opposition to desegregated education across the country. Passions were even more severe after *Brown v. Board of Education* was won by the plaintiff on appeal to the United States Supreme Court. In effect, the case changed the power dynamics in America by leveling the playing field for education. No longer were White schools (and their better resources) legally segregated. In principal, there was equity—equal access.

Debates in the courtrooms surrounding *Brown* were passionate but professional. Protests and debate in those communities directly affected by the decision, especially in the South, were intense, violent confrontations that demonstrated the height of incivility. One thing you may notice about uncivil behavior is the difficulty most have looking back on those actions.



Figure 9.9 After the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision,

Americans pursued their rights for equal education in other districts. In Arkansas, a group of teenagers, which would come to be known as the Little Rock Nine, were blocked from entering a formerly Whites-only school. Facing angry protestors, the state governor, and even the National Guard, the nine students finally took their rightful place in the school after a judge ruled in their favor and President Eisenhower sent the 101st Airborne Division to secure the situation. (Credit: Courtesy of the National Archives, sourced from The US Army / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY))

Educational institutions like colleges and school districts are critically important spaces for equity and inclusion, and debates around them remain challenging. Transgender students in America's schools face discrimination, harrassment, and bullying, which causes nearly 45 percent of LGBTQ+ to feel unsafe because of their gender expression and 60 percent of to feel unsafe due to their sexual orientation. Many of these students miss school or experience significant stress, which usually has a negative impact on their grades, participation, and overall success.<sup>3</sup> In essence, this hostility creates inequality. Regardless of individual state or district laws on bathroom use and overall accommodation, federal law protects *all* students from discrimination, especially that based on categories such as gender. But implementation of these federal protections varies, and, in general, many outside the transgender community do not fully understand, empathize with, or support transgender rights.

How can the circumstances improve for transgender students? In other societal changes throughout our nation's history, court decisions, new legislation, protests, and general public opinion combined to right past wrongs and provide justice and protection for mistreated people. For example, in 2015, the Supreme Court upheld the right to same-sex marriage under the 14th Amendment. Just as African Americans publicly debated and protested educational inequality, the gay community used discussion, protest,

and debate to sway public and legal opinion. Proponents of gay marriage faced fervent argument against their position based on religion and culture; like other minority groups, they were confronted with name-calling, job insecurity, family division, religious isolation, and physical confrontation. And as has often been the case, success in achieving marriage equality eventually came through the courts.

Legal remedies are significant, but can take a very long time. Before they see success in the courts or legislatures, transgender students in America's schools will continue to undergo harsh treatment. Their lives and education will remain very difficult until people from outside their community better understand their situation.

## Debates: Civility vs. Incivility

Healthy debate is a desirable part of a community. In a healthy debate, people are given room to explain their point of view. In a healthy airing of differences, people on opposing sides of an argument can reach common ground and compromise or even agree to disagree and move on.

However, incivility occurs when people are not *culturally competent*. An individual who is not culturally competent might make negative assumptions about others' values, lack an open mindset, or be inflexible in thinking. Instead of being tolerant of different points of view, they may try to shut down communication by not listening or by keeping someone with a different point of view from being heard at all. Out of frustration, a person who is uncivil may resort to name-calling or discrediting another person only with the intention of causing confusion and division within a community. Incivility can also propagate violence. Such uncivil reaction to difficult issues is what makes many people avoid certain topics at all costs. Instead of seeking out diverse communities,

people retreat to safe spaces where they will not be challenged to hear opposing opinions or have their beliefs contested.

Debates on difficult or divisive topics surrounding diversity, especially those promoting orchestrated change, are often passionate. People on each side may base their positions on deeply held beliefs, family traditions, personal experience, academic expertise, and a desire to orchestrate change. With such a strong foundation, emotions can be intense, and debates can become uncivil.

Even when the disagreement is based on information rather than personal feelings, discussions can quickly turn to arguments. For example, in academic environments, it's common to find extremely well-informed arguments in direct opposition to each other. Two well-known economics faculty members from your college could debate for hours on financial policies, with each professor's position backed by data, research, and publications. Each person could feel very strongly that they are right and the other person is wrong. They may even feel that the approach proposed by their opponent would actually do damage to the country or to certain groups of people. But for this debate—whether it occurs over lunch or on an auditorium stage—to remain civil, the participants need to maintain certain standards of behavior.

## ACTIVITY

1. Describe a time when you could not reach an agreement with someone on a controversial issue.
2. Did you try to compromise, combining your points of view so that each of you would be partially satisfied?
3. Did either of you shut down communication? Was ending the conversation a good choice? Why or why not?

Civility is a valued practice that takes advantage of cultural and

political systems we have in place to work through disagreements while maintaining respect for others' points of view. Civil behavior allows for a respectful airing of grievances. The benefit of civil discussion is that members of a community can hear different sides of an argument, weigh evidence, and decide for themselves which side to support.

You have probably witnessed or taken part in debates in your courses, at social events, or even at family gatherings. What makes people so passionate about certain issues? First, some may have a personal stake in an issue, such as abortion rights. Convincing other people to share their beliefs may be intended to create a community that will protect their rights. Second, others may have deeply held beliefs based on faith or cultural practices. They argue based on deeply held moral and ethical beliefs. Third, others may be limited in their background knowledge about an issue but are able to speak from a "script" of conventional points of view. They may not want to stray from the script because they do not have enough information to extend an argument.

## *Rules for Fair Debate*



Figure 9.10 You'll participate in classroom or workplace debate throughout your academic or professional career. Civility is important to productive discussions, and will lead to worthwhile outcomes. (Credit: Creative Sustainability / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

The courtroom and the public square are not the only places where serious debate takes place. Every day we tackle tough decisions that involve other people, some of whom have strong opposing points of view. To be successful in college, you will need to master sound and ethical approaches to argument, whether it be for a mathematical proof or an essay in a composition class.

You probably already know how to be sensitive and thoughtful when giving feedback to a family member or friend. You think about their feelings and the best way to confront your disagreement without attacking them. Of course, sometimes it's easier to be less sensitive with people who love you no matter what. Still, whether in a classroom, a workplace, or your family dinner table, there are

rules for debating that help people with opposing points of view get to the heart of an issue while remaining civil:

1. Avoid direct insults and personal attacks—the quickest way to turn someone away from your discussion is to attack them personally. This is actually a common logical fallacy called *ad hominem*, which means “to the person,” and it means to attack the person rather than the issue.
2. Avoid generalizations and extreme examples—these are two more logical fallacies called *bandwagon*, or *ad populum*, and *reduction to absurdity*, or *argumentum ad absurdum*. The first is when you argue that everyone is doing something so it must be right. The second is when you argue that a belief or position would lead to an absurd or extreme outcome.
3. Avoid appealing to emotions rather than facts—it’s easy to get emotional if you’re debating something about which you feel passionate. Someone disagreeing with you can feel like a personal affront. This fallacy, called *argument to compassion*, appeals to one’s emotions and happens when we mistake feelings for facts. While strong and motivating, our feelings are not great arbiters of the truth.
4. Avoid irrelevant arguments—sometimes it’s easy to change the subject when we’re debating, especially if we feel flustered or like we’re not being heard. Irrelevant conclusion is the fallacy of introducing a topic that may or may not be sound logic but is not about the issue under debate.
5. Avoid appeal to bias—you may not have strong opinions on every topic but, no doubt, you are opinionated about things that matter to you. This strong view can create a bias, or a leaning toward an idea or belief. While there’s nothing wrong with having a strong opinion, you must be mindful to ensure that your bias doesn’t create prejudice. Ask yourself if your biases influence the ways in which you interact with other people and with ideas that differ from your own.
6. Avoid appeal to tradition—just because something worked in



the past or was true in the past does not necessarily mean that it is true today. It's easy to commit this fallacy, as we often default to "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." It's appealing because it seems to be common sense. However, it ignores questions such as whether the existing or old policy truly works as well as it could and if new technology or new ways of thinking can offer an improvement. Old ways can certainly be good ways, but not simply because they are old.

7. Avoid making assumptions—often, we think we know enough about a topic or maybe even more than the person talking, so we jump ahead to the outcome. We assume we know what they're referring to, thinking about, or even imagining, but this is a dangerous practice because it often leads to misunderstandings. In fact, most logical fallacies are the result of assuming.
8. Strive for root cause analysis—getting at the root cause of something means to dig deeper and deeper until you discover why a problem or disagreement occurred. Sometimes, the most obvious or immediate cause for a problem is not actually the most significant one. Discovering the root cause can help to resolve the conflict or reveal that there isn't one at all.
9. Avoid obstinacy—in the heat of a debate, it's easy to dig in your heels and refuse to acknowledge when you're wrong. Your argument is at stake, and so is your ego. However, it's important to give credit where it's due and to say you're wrong if you are. If you misquoted a fact or made an incorrect assumption, admit to it and move on.
10. Strive for resolution—while some people like to debate for the sake of debating, in the case of a true conflict, both parties should seek agreement, or at least a truce. One way to do this is to listen more than you speak. Listen, listen, listen: you'll learn and perhaps make better points of your own if you deeply consider the other point of view.

# ANALYSIS QUESTION

Have you ever witnessed incivility in person or an argument in the news? Briefly describe what happened. Why do you think individuals are willing to shut down communication over issues they are passionate about?

## Online Civility

The Internet is the watershed innovation of our time. It provides incredible access to information and resources, helping us to connect in ways inconceivable just a few decades ago. But it also presents risks, and these risks seem to be changing and increasing at the same rate as technology itself. Because of our regular access to the Internet, it's important to create a safe, healthy, and enjoyable online space.

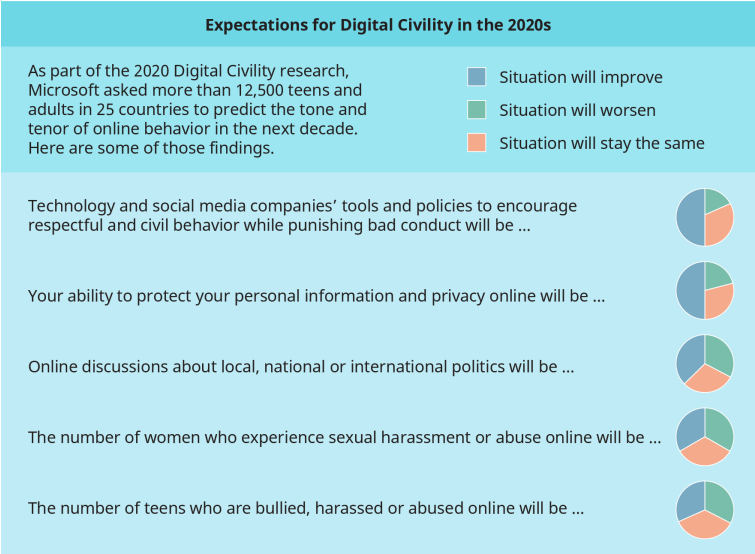


Figure 9.11 Microsoft's Digital Civility Research survey asked people their opinions on the future of online behavior and communication.

While in some cases, the respondents thought circumstances would improve, predictions about the others, such as harassment and bullying, are more bleak. (Credit: Based on work from Microsoft, “Expectations for Digital Civility 2020.”<sup>4</sup>)

In the survey conducted by Microsoft, “nearly 4 in 10 [respondents] feel unwanted online contact (39%), bullying (39%) and unwelcome sexual attention (39%) will worsen [in 2020]. A slightly smaller percentage (35%) expect people’s reputations, both professional and personal, will continue to be attacked online. One-quarter (25%) of respondents see improvement across each of these risk areas in 2020.”

Digital civility is the practice of leading with empathy and kindness in all online interactions and treating each other with respect and dignity. This type of civility requires users to fully understand and appreciate potential harms and to follow the new rules of the digital road. You can find a discussion on best practices for online communication, often referred to as Netiquette, in Chapter 8 on Communicating. Following, are some basic guidelines to help exercise digital civility:

- **Live the “Golden Rule”** and treat others with respect and dignity both online and off.
- **Respect differences** of culture, geography, and opinion, and when disagreements surface, engage thoughtfully.
- **Pause before replying** to comments or posts you disagree with, and ensure responses are considerate and free of name-calling and abuse.
- **Stand up for yourself and others** if it’s safe and prudent to do so.

## Footnotes

- <https://www.nad.org/resources/american-sign-language/>

- community-and-culture-frequently-asked-questions/
- 2<https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/infographics/visualizing-health-equity.html#/download>
  - 32017 National School Climate Survey, GLESN.  
<https://www.glsen.org/research/school-climate-survey>
  - 4Expectations for Digital Civility. Note: Link leads to direct download.

# 18. Categories of Diversity

## Questions to consider:

- What is identity?
- Can a person have more than one identity?
- Can identity be ambiguous?
- What are fluidity and intersectionality?

The multiple roles we play in life—student, sibling, employee, roommate, for example—are only a partial glimpse into our true identity. Right now, you may think, “I really don’t know what I want to be,” meaning you don’t know what you want to do for a living, but have you ever tried to define yourself in terms of the sum of your parts?

Social roles are those identities we assume in relationship to others. Our social roles tend to shift based on where we are and who we are with. Taking into account your social roles as well as your nationality, ethnicity, race, friends, gender, sexuality, beliefs, abilities, geography, etc., who are you?

## Who Am I?

Popeye, a familiar 20th-century cartoon character, was a sailor-philosopher. He declared his own identity in a circular manner, landing us right where we started: “I am what I am and that’s all that I am.” Popeye proves his existence rather than help us identify him. It is his title, “The Sailor Man,” that tells us how Popeye operates in the social sphere.

According to the American Psychological Association, personal identity is an individual’s sense of self defined by (a) a set of physical, psychological, and interpersonal characteristics that is not wholly

shared with any other person and (b) a range of affiliations (e.g., ethnicity) and social roles. Your identity is tied to the most dominant aspects of your background and personality.<sup>5</sup> It determines the lens through which you see the world and the lens through which you receive information.

## ACTIVITY

Complete the following statement using no more than four words:

I am \_\_\_\_\_.

It is difficult to narrow down our identity to just a few options. One way to complete the statement would be to use gender and geography markers. For example, “I am a male New Englander” or “I am an American woman.” Assuming they are true, no one can argue against those identities, but do those statements represent everything or at least most things that identify the speakers? Probably not.

Try finishing the statement again by using as many words as you wish.

I am \_\_\_\_\_.

If you ended up with a long string of descriptors that would be hard for a new acquaintance to manage, don’t worry. Our identities are complex and reflect that we lead interesting and multifaceted lives.

To better understand identity, consider how social psychologists describe it. Social psychologists, those who study how social interactions take place, often categorize identity into four types: personal identity, role identity, social identity, and collective identity.

**Personal identity** captures what distinguishes one person from another based on life experiences. No two people, even identical twins, live the same life.

**Role identity** defines how we interact in certain situations. Our roles change from setting to setting, and so do our identities. At work you may be a supervisor; in the classroom you are a peer working collaboratively; at home, you may be the parent of a 10-year-old. In each setting, your bubbly personality may be the same, but how your coworkers, classmates, and family see you is different.

**Social identity** shapes our public lives by our awareness of how we relate to certain groups. For example, an individual might relate to or “identify with” Korean Americans, Chicagoans, Methodists, and Lakers fans. These identities influence our interactions with others. Upon meeting someone, for example, we look for connections as to how we are the same or different. Our awareness of who we are makes us behave a certain way in relation to others. If you identify as a hockey fan, you may feel an affinity for someone else who also loves the game.

**Collective identity** refers to how groups form around a common cause or belief. For example, individuals may bond over similar political ideologies or social movements. Their identity is as much a physical formation as a shared understanding of the issues they believe in. For example, many people consider themselves part of the collective energy surrounding the #metoo movement. Others may identify as fans of a specific type of entertainment such as Trekkies, fans of the Star Trek series.

“I am large. I contain multitudes.” Walt Whitman

In his epic poem *Song of Myself*, Walt Whitman writes, “Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself (I am large. I contain multitudes.)” Whitman was asserting and defending his shifting sense of self and identity. Those lines importantly point out that our identities may evolve over time. What we do and believe today may not be the same tomorrow. Further, at any one moment,

the identities we claim may seem at odds with each other. Shifting identities are a part of personal growth. While we are figuring out who we truly are and what we believe, our sense of self and the image that others have of us may be unclear or ambiguous.

Many people are uncomfortable with identities that do not fit squarely into one category. How do you respond when someone's identity or social role is unclear? Such ambiguity may challenge your sense of certainty about the roles that we all play in relationship to one another. Racial, ethnic, and gender ambiguity, in particular, can challenge some people's sense of social order and social identity.

When we force others to choose only one category of identity (race, ethnicity, or gender, for example) to make ourselves feel comfortable, we do a disservice to the person who identifies with more than one group. For instance, people with multiracial ancestry are often told that they are too much of one and not enough of another.

The actor Keanu Reeves has a complex background. He was born in Beirut, Lebanon, to a White English mother and a father with Chinese-Hawaiian ancestry. His childhood was spent in Hawaii, Australia, New York, and Toronto. Reeves considers himself Canadian and has publicly acknowledged influences from all aspects of his heritage. Would you feel comfortable telling Keanu Reeves how he must identify racially and ethnically?

There is a question many people ask when they meet someone whom they cannot clearly identify by checking a specific identity box. Inappropriate or not, you have probably heard people ask, "What are you?" Would it surprise you if someone like Keanu Reeves shrugged and answered, "I'm just me"?

Malcolm Gladwell is an author of five New York Times best-sellers and is hailed as one of Foreign Policy's Top Global Thinkers. He has spoken on his experience with identity as well. Gladwell has a Black Jamaican mother and a White Irish father. He often tells the story of how the perception of his hair has allowed him to straddle racial groups. As long as he kept his hair cut very short, his fair skin



obscured his Black ancestry, and he was most often perceived as White. However, once he let his hair grow long into a curly Afro style, Gladwell says he began being pulled over for speeding tickets and stopped at airport check-ins. His racial expression carried serious consequences.



Figure 9.12 Writer Malcolm Gladwell's racial expression has impacted his treatment by others and his everyday experiences. (Credit: Kris Krug, Pop!Tech / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

## *Gender*

More and more, gender is also a diversity category that we

increasingly understand to be less clearly defined. Some people identify themselves as gender fluid or non-binary. “Binary” refers to the notion that gender is only one of two possibilities, male or female. Fluidity suggests that there is a range or continuum of expression. Gender fluidity acknowledges that a person may vacillate between male and female identity.

Asia Kate Dillon is an American actor and the first non-binary actor to perform in a major television show with their roles on *Orange is the New Black* and *Billions*. In an article about the actor, a reporter conducting the interview describes his struggle with trying to describe Dillon to the manager of the restaurant where the two planned to meet. The reporter and the manager struggle with describing someone who does not fit a pre-defined notion of gender identity. Imagine the situation: You’re meeting someone at a restaurant for the first time, and you need to describe the person to a manager. Typically, the person’s gender would be a part of the description, but what if the person cannot be described as a man or a woman?



Figure 9.13 Asia Kate Dillon is a non-binary actor best known for their roles on *Orange Is the New Black* and *Billions*.

(Credit: *Billions* Official Youtube Channel / Wikimedia Commons / Attribution 3.0 Unported (CC-BY 3.0))

Within any group, individuals obviously have a right to define themselves; however, collectively, a group's self-determination is also important. The history of Black Americans demonstrates a progression of self-determined labels: Negro, Afro-American, colored, Black, African American. Similarly, in the nonbinary community, self-described labels have evolved. Nouns such as *genderqueer* and pronouns such as *hir*, *ze*, and *Mx.* (instead of Miss, Mrs. or Mr.) have entered not only our informal lexicon, but the dictionary as well.

**Merriam-Webster's dictionary includes a definition of "they" that denotes a nonbinary identity, that is, someone who fluidly moves between male and female identities.**

Transgender men and women were assigned a gender identity at birth that does not fit their true identity. Even though our culture is increasingly giving space to non-heteronormative (straight) people to speak out and live openly, they do so at a risk. Violence against gay, nonbinary, and transgender people occurs at more frequent rates than for other groups.

To make ourselves feel comfortable, we often want people to fall into specific categories so that our own social identity is clear. However, instead of asking someone to make us feel comfortable, we should accept the identity people choose for themselves. Cultural competency includes respectfully addressing individuals as they ask to be addressed.

Table Gender Pronoun Examples

Subjective	Objective	Possessive	Reflexive	Example
She	Her	Hers	Herself	She is speaking. I listened to her. The backpack is hers.
He	Him	His	Himself	He is speaking. I listened to him. The backpack is his.
They	Them	Theirs	Themselves	They are speaking. I listened to them. The backpack is theirs.
Ze	Hir/Zir	Hirs/Zirs	Hirself/ Zirself	Ze is speaking. I listened to hir. The backpack is zirs.

Table 9.1 The website Transstudent.org provides educational resources such as the above graphic for anyone seeking clarity on gender identity. Note that these are only examples of some gender pronouns, not a complete list.

## *Intersectionality*

The many layers of our multiple identities do not fit together like puzzle pieces with clear boundaries between one piece and another. Our identities overlap, creating a combined identity in which one aspect is inseparable from the next.

The term intersectionality was coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to describe how the experience of Black women was a unique combination of gender and race that could not be divided into two separate identities. In other words, this group could not be seen solely as women or solely as Black; where their identities overlapped is considered the “intersection,” or crossroads, where identities combine in specific and inseparable ways.

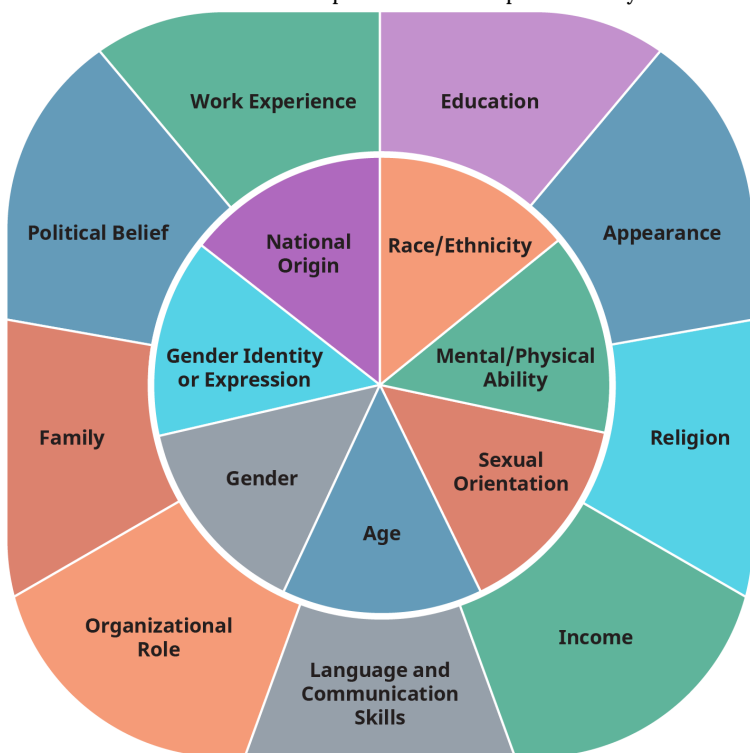


Figure 9.14 Our identities are formed by dozens of factors,

sometimes represented in intersection wheels. Consider the subset of identity elements represented here. Generally, the outer ring are elements that may change relatively often, while the inner circle are often considered more permanent. (There are certainly exceptions.) How does each contribute to who you are, and how would possible change alter your self-defined identity?

Intersectionality and awareness of intersectionality can drive societal change, both in how people see themselves and how they interact with others. That experience can be very inward-facing, or can be more external. It can also lead to debate and challenges. For example, the term “Latinx” is growing in use because it is seen as more inclusive than “Latino/Latina,” but some people—including scholars and advocates—lay out substantive arguments against its use. While the debate continues, it serves as an important reminder of a key element of intersectionality: Never assume that all people in a certain group or population feel the same way. Why not? Because people are more than any one element of their identity; they are defined by more than their race, color, geographic origin, gender, or socio-economic status. The overlapping aspects of each person’s identity and experiences will create a unique perspective.

## ANALYSIS QUESTION

Consider the intersectionality of race, gender, and sexuality; religion, ethnicity, and geography; military experience; age and socioeconomic status; and many other ways our identities overlap. Consider how these overlap in you.

Do you know people who talk easily about their various identities? How does it inform the way you interact with them?

## Footnotes

- 5APA Dictionary of Psychology <https://dictionary.apa.org/>  
identity proper citation to come

# 19. Navigating the Diversity Landscape

## Questions to consider:

- What happens when we make assumptions about others?
- Are microaggressions honest mistakes?
- How do I know if I have a diversity “problem”?
- How important is diversity awareness in the college classroom?

## Avoid Making Assumptions

By now you should be aware of the many ways diversity can be both observable and less apparent. Based on surface clues, we may be able to approximate someone’s age, weight, and perhaps their geographical origin, but even with those observable characteristics, we cannot be sure about how individuals define themselves. If we rely too heavily on assumptions, we may be buying into stereotypes, or generalizations.

Stereotyping robs people of their individual identities. If we buy into stereotypes, we project a profile onto someone that probably is not true. Prejudging people without knowing them, better known as prejudice or bias, has consequences for both the person who is biased and the individual or group that is prejudged. In such a scenario, the intimacy of real human connections is lost. Individuals are objectified, meaning that they only serve as symbolic examples of who we assume they are instead of the complex, intersectional individuals we know each person to be.

Stereotyping may be our way of avoiding others’ complexities. When we stereotype, we do not have to remember distinguishing



details about a person. We simply write their stories for ourselves and let those stories fulfill who we expect those individuals to be. For example, a hiring manager may project onto an Asian American the stereotype of being good at math, and hire her as a researcher over her Hispanic counterpart. Similarly, an elementary school teacher may recruit an Indian American sixth-grader to the spelling bee team because many Indian American students have won national tournaments in the recent past. A real estate developer may hire a gay man as an interior designer because he has seen so many gay men performing this job on television programs. A coach chooses a White male student to be a quarterback because traditionally, quarterbacks have been White men. In those scenarios, individuals of other backgrounds, with similar abilities, may have been overlooked because they do not fit the stereotype of who others suspect them to be.

Earlier in this chapter, equity and inclusion were discussed as going hand in hand with achieving civility and diversity. In the above scenarios, equity and inclusion are needed as guiding principles for those with decision-making power who are blocking opportunity for nontraditional groups. Equity might be achieved by giving a diverse group of people access to internships to demonstrate their skills. Inclusion might be achieved by assembling a hiring or recruiting committee that might have a better chance of seeing beyond stereotypical expectations.

## APPLICATION

Often, our assumptions and their impacts are not life-changing, but they can be damaging to others and limiting to our own understanding. Consider the following scenarios, and answer the questions that follow.

### **Scenario 1:**

During an in-class conversation about a new mission to explore Mars, two classmates offer opinions.

- Student A says, “We should focus on this planet before we focus on others.”
- Student B responds immediately with, “If we’re going to stop climate change, we’ll probably find the answer through science related to space travel.”

What assumption did student B make about student A’s point? What else, aside from climate change, could student A have been considering?

### **Scenario 2:**

For an important group project, an instructor designates teams of six students and gives them time to set up their work schedule for the assignment. One group of students, most of whom don’t know each other well, agrees to meet two nights later. They initially propose to get together in the library, but at the last moment one member suggests an off-campus restaurant; several of the others agree right away and move on to other topics. The remaining two students look at each other uncomfortably. One interjects, suggesting they go back to the original idea of meeting in the library, but the others are already getting up to leave. It’s clear that two of the students are uncomfortable meeting at the restaurant.

What might be the reason that two of the students are not comfortable meeting over dinner? What assumptions did the others make?

Being civil and inclusive does not require a deep-seated knowledge of the backgrounds and perspectives of everyone you meet. That would be impossible. But avoiding assumptions and being considerate will build better relationships and provide a more effective learning experience. It takes openness and self-awareness and sometimes requires help or advice, but learning to be sensitive—practicing assumption avoidance—is like a muscle you can strengthen.

## Be Mindful of Microaggressions

Whether we mean to or not, we sometimes offend people by not thinking about what we say and the manner in which we say it. One danger of limiting our social interactions to people who are from our own social group is in being insensitive to people who are not like us. The term *microaggression* refers to acts of insensitivity that reveal our inherent biases, cultural incompetency, and hostility toward someone outside of our community. Those biases can be toward race, gender, nationality, or any other diversity variable. The individual on the receiving end of a microaggression is reminded of the barriers to complete acceptance and understanding in the relationship. Let's consider an example.

Ann is new to her office job. Her colleagues are friendly and helpful, and her first two months have been promising. She uncovered a significant oversight in a financial report, and, based on her attention to detail, was put on a team working with a large client. While waiting in line at the cafeteria one day, Ann's new boss overhears her laughing and talking loudly with some colleagues. He then steps into the conversation, saying, "Ann, this isn't a night at one of your clubs. Quiet down." As people from the nearby tables look on, Ann is humiliated and angered.

What was Ann's manager implying? What could he have meant by referring to "your clubs?" How would you feel if such a comment were openly directed at you? One reaction to this interaction might be to say, "So what? Why let other people determine how you feel? Ignore them." While that is certainly reasonable, it may ignore the pain and invalidation of the experience. And even if you could simply ignore some of these comments, there is a compounding effect of being frequently, if not constantly, barraged by such experiences.

Consider the table below, which highlights common examples of microaggressions. In many cases, the person speaking these phrases may not mean to be offensive. In fact, in some cases the speaker might think they are being *nice*. However, appropriate terminology

and other attitudes or acceptable descriptions change all the time. Before saying something, consider how a person could take the words differently than you meant them. As we discussed in Chapter 8, emotional intelligence and empathy can help understand another's perspective.

Microaggressions

Category	Microaggression	Why It's Offensive
Educational Status or Situation	"You're an athlete; you don't need to study."	Stereotypes athletes and ignores their hard work.
	"You don't get financial aid; you must be rich."	"Even an assumption of privilege can be invalidating."
	"Did they have honors classes at your high school?"	Implies that someone is less prepared or intelligent based on their geography.
	You speak so well for someone like you."	Implies that people of a certain race/ethnicity can't speak well.
Race, Ethnicity, National Origin	"No, where are you <i>really</i> from?"	Calling attention to someone's national origin makes them feel separate."
	You must be good at -----."	Falsely connects identity to ability.
	"My people had it so much worse than yours did."	Makes assumptions and diminishes suffering/difficulty.
	"I'm not even going to try your name. It looks too difficult."	Dismisses a person's culture and heritage.
	"It's so much easier for Black people to get into college."	Assumes that merit is not the basis for achievement.
	"They're so emotional."	Assumes a person cannot be emotional and rational.
Gender and Gender Identity	"I guess you can't meet tonight because you have to take care of your son?"	Assumes a parent (of any gender) cannot participate.
	"I don't get all this pronoun stuff, so I'm just gonna call you what I call you."	Diminishes the importance of gender identity; indicates a lack of empathy.
	"I can't even tell you used to be a woman."	Conflates identity with appearance, and assumes a person needs someone else's validation.
	"You're too good-looking to be so smart."	Connects outward appearance to ability.

Category	Microaggression	Why It's Offensive
Sexual Orientation	"I support you; just don't throw it in my face."	Denies another person's right to express their identity or point of view.
	"You seem so rugged for a gay guy."	Stereotypes all gay people as being "not rugged," and could likely offend the recipient.
	"I might try being a lesbian."	May imply that sexual orientation is a choice.
	"I can't even keep track of all these new categories."	Bisexual, pansexual, asexual, and other sexual orientations are just as valid and deserving of respect as more binary orientations.
Age	"You can't just love whomever you want; pick one."	
	"Are you going to need help with the software?"	May stereotype an older person as lacking experience with the latest technology.
	"Young people have it so easy nowadays."	Makes a false comparison between age and experience.
Size	"Okay, boomer."	Dismisses an older generation as out of touch.
	"I bet no one messes with you."	Projects a tendency to be aggressive onto a person of large stature.
	"You are so cute and tiny."	Condescending to a person of small stature.
	"I wish I was thin and perfect like you."	Equates a person's size with character.
Ability	(To a person using a wheelchair) "I wish I could sit down wherever I went."	Falsely assumes a wheelchair is a luxury; minimizes disabilities.
	"You don't have to complete the whole test. Just do your best."	Assumes that a disability means limited intellectual potential.
	"I'm blind without my glasses."	Equating diminished capacity with a true disability.

Table 9.2 Have you made statements like these, perhaps without realizing the offense they might cause? Some of these could be

intended as compliments, but they could have the unintended effect of diminishing or invalidating someone. (Credit: Modification of work by Derald Wing Sue<sup>6</sup>.)

## Everyone Has a Problem: Implicit Bias

One reason we fall prey to stereotypes is our own implicit bias. Jo Handelsman and Natasha Sakraney, who developed science and technology policy during the Obama administration, defined implicit bias.

According to Handelsman and Sakraney, “A lifetime of experience and cultural history shapes people and their judgments of others. Research demonstrates that most people hold unconscious, implicit assumptions that influence their judgments and perceptions of others. Implicit bias manifests in expectations or assumptions about physical or social characteristics dictated by stereotypes that are based on a person’s race, gender, age, or ethnicity. People who intend to be fair, and believe they are egalitarian, apply biases unintentionally. Some behaviors that result from implicit bias manifest in actions, and others are embodied in the absence of action; either can reduce the quality of the workforce and create an unfair and destructive environment.”<sup>7</sup>

The notion of bias being “implicit,” or unconsciously embedded in our thoughts and actions, is what makes this characteristic hard to recognize and evaluate. You may assume that you hold no racial bias, but messages from our upbringing, social groups, and media can feed us negative racial stereotypes no matter how carefully we select and consume information. Further, online environments have algorithms that reduce our exposure to diverse points of view. Psychologists generally agree that implicit bias affects the judgements we make about others.

Harvard University’s Project Implicit website offers an interactive implicit association test that measures individual preference for

characteristics such as weight, skin color, and gender. During the test, participants are asked to match a series of words and images with positive or negative associations. Test results, researchers suggest, can indicate the extent to which there is implicit bias in favor of or against a certain group. Completing a test like this might reveal unconscious feelings you were previously aware you had.

The researchers who developed the test make clear that there are limitations to its validity and that for some, the results of the test can be unsettling. The test makers advise not taking the test if you feel unprepared to receive unexpected results.

## APPLICATION

Take the Project Implicit test and write a brief passage about your results.

Do you think the results accurately reflect your attitude toward the group you tested on? Can you point to any actions or thoughts you have about the group you tested on that are or are not reflected in the test results? Will you change any behaviors or try to think differently about the group you tested on based on your results? Why or why not?

## Cultural Competency in the College Classroom

We carry our attitudes about gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, and other diversity categories with us wherever we go. The college classroom is no different than any other place. Both educators and students maintain their implicit bias and are sometimes made uncomfortable by interacting with people different than themselves. Take for example a female freshman who has attended a school for girls for six years before college. She might



find being in the classroom with her new male classmates a culture shock and dismiss male students' contributions to class discussions. Similarly, a homeschooled student may be surprised to find that no one on campus shares his religion. He may feel isolated in class until he finds other students of similar background and experience. Embedded in your classroom may be peers who are food insecure, undocumented, veterans, atheist, Muslim, or politically liberal or conservative. These identities may not be visible, but they still may separate and even marginalize these members of your community. If, in the context of classroom conversations, their perspectives are overlooked, they may also feel very isolated.

In each case, the students' assumptions, previous experience with diversity of any kind, and implicit bias surface. How each student reacts to the new situation can differ. One reaction might be to self-segregate, that is, locate people they believe are similar to them based on how they look, the assumption being that those people will share the same academic skills, cultural interests, and personal values that make the student feel comfortable. The English instructor at the beginning of this chapter who assumed all of his students were the same demonstrated how this strategy could backfire.

You do not have to be enrolled in a course related to diversity, such as Asian American literature, to be concerned about diversity in the classroom. Diversity touches all aspects of our lives and can enter a curriculum or discussion at any time because each student and the instructor bring multiple identities and concerns into the classroom. Ignoring these concerns, which often reveal themselves as questions, makes for an unfulfilling educational experience.

In higher education, diversity includes not only the identities we have discussed such as race and gender, but also academic preparation and ability, learning differences, familiarity with technology, part-time status, language, and other factors students bring with them. Of course, the instructor, too, brings diversity into the classroom setting. They decide how to incorporate diverse perspectives into class discussions, maintain rules of civility, choose

inclusive materials to study or reference, receive training on giving accommodations to students who need them, and acknowledge their own implicit bias. If they are culturally competent, both students and instructors are juggling many concerns.

How do you navigate diversity in the college classroom?

### *Academic Freedom Allows for Honest Conversations*

Academic freedom applies to the permission instructors and students have to follow a line of intellectual inquiry without the fear of censorship or sanction. There are many heavily contested intellectual and cultural debates that, for some, are not resolved. A student who wants to argue against prevailing opinion has the right to do so based on academic freedom. Many point to a liberal bias on college campuses. Conservative points of view on immigration, education, and even science, are often not accepted on campus as readily as liberal viewpoints. An instructor or student who wants to posit a conservative idea, however, has the right to do so because of academic freedom.

Uncomfortable conversations about diversity are a part of the college classroom landscape. For example, a student might use statistical data to argue that disparities in degrees for men and women in chemistry reflect an advantage in analytical ability for men. While many would disagree with that theory, the student could pursue that topic in a discussion or paper as long as they use evidence and sound, logical reasoning.

*“I’m just me.”*

Remember the response to the “What are you?” question for people whose racial or gender identity was ambiguous? “I’m just me” also serves those who are undecided about diversity issues or those

who do not fall into hard categories such as feminist, liberal, conservative, or religious. Ambiguity sometimes makes others feel uncomfortable. For example, if someone states she is a Catholic feminist unsure about abortion rights, another student may wonder how to compare her own strong pro-life position to her classmate's uncertainty. It would be much easier to know exactly which side her classmate is on. Some people straddle the fence on big issues, and that is OK. You do not have to fit neatly into one school of thought. Answer your detractors with "I'm just me," or tell them if you genuinely don't know enough about an issue or are not ready to take a strong position.

### *Seek Resources and Projects That Contribute to Civility*

A culturally responsive curriculum addresses cultural and ethnic differences of students. Even in classrooms full of minority students, the textbooks and topics may only reflect American cultural norms determined by the mainstream and tradition. Students may not relate to teaching that never makes reference to their socio-economic background, race, or their own way of thinking and expression. Educators widely believe that a culturally responsive curriculum, one that integrates relatable contexts for learning and reinforces cultural norms of the students receiving the information, makes a difference.

The K-12 classroom is different than the college classroom. Because of academic freedom, college instructors are not required to be culturally inclusive. (They *are* usually required to be respectful and civil, but there are different interpretations of those qualities.) Because American colleges are increasingly more sensitive to issues regarding diversity, faculty are compelled to be inclusive. Still, diversity is not always adequately addressed. In his TED "Talk Can Art Amend History?" the artist Titus Kaphar tells the story of the art history class that influenced him to become an artist and provides an example of this absence of diversity in the college classroom.

Kaphar explains that his instructor led his class through important periods and artists throughout history, but failed to spend time on Black artists, something that Kaphar was anxiously awaiting. The instructor stated that there was just not enough time to cover it. While the professor probably did not intend to be noninclusive, her choice resulted in just that. Kaphar let his disappointment fuel his passion and mission to amend the representation of Black figures in historical paintings. His work brings to light the unnoticed Black figures that are too often overlooked.



Figure 9.15 In *Twisted Tropes*, Titus Kaphar reworks a painting to bring a Black figure to the forefront of an arrangement in which she had previously been marginalized. (Credit: smallcurio / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Any student can respond to a lack of diversity in a curriculum as Titus Kaphar did. Where you find diversity missing, when possible, fill in the gaps with research papers and projects that broaden your exposure to diverse perspectives. Take the time to research contributions in your field by underrepresented groups. Discover

the diversity issues relevant to your major. Are women well-represented in your field? Is there equity when it comes to access to opportunities such as internships? Are veterans welcomed? Do the academic societies in your discipline have subgroups or boards focused on diversity and equity? (Most do.) Resources for expanding our understanding and inclusion of diversity issues are all around us.

### *Directly Confront Prejudice*

To draw our attention to possible danger, the Department of Homeland Security has adopted the phrase, “If you see something, say something.” That credo can easily be adopted to confront stereotypes and bias: “If you hear something, say something.” Academic freedom protects students and instructors from reprisal for having unpopular opinions, but prejudice is never correct, nor should it be tolerated. Do not confuse hate speech, such as sexist language, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and acts that reflect those points of view, with academic freedom. Yes, the classroom is a place to discuss these attitudes, but it is not a place to direct those sentiments toward fellow students, educators, or society in general.

Most higher education institutions have mission statements and codes of conduct that warn students about engaging in such behavior. The consequences for violators are usually probation and possibly dismissal. Further policies such as affirmative action and Title IX are instituted to evaluate and maintain racial and gender equity.

## APPLICATION

No one knows when a racist or sexist attack is coming. The Barnard

Center for Research on Women has created a video suggesting ways to be an ally to people victimized by intolerant behavior.

## *Affirmative Action and Higher Education*

Affirmative action is a policy that began during the John F. Kennedy administration to eliminate discrimination in employment. Since that time, it has expanded as a policy to protect from discrimination in a number of contexts, including higher education. Most notably in higher education, affirmative action has been used to create equity in access. Institutions have used affirmative action as a mandate of sorts in admission policies to create diverse student bodies. Colleges sometimes overlook traditional admissions criteria and use socioeconomic and historical disparities in education equity as criteria to admit underrepresented groups. Affirmative action is a federal requirement to be met by entities that contract with the federal government; most colleges are federal government contractors and must adhere to the policy by stating a timeline by which its affirmative action goals are met.

Many interpret “goals” as quotas, meaning that a certain number of students from underrepresented groups would be admitted, presumably to meet affirmative action requirements. Opposition to affirmative action in college admissions has been pursued in several well-known court cases.

### Regents of the University of California v. Bakke

This 1978 case resulted in a U.S. Supreme Court decision to allow race to be used as one of the criteria in higher education admission policies as long as quotas were not established and race was not the only criterion for admission. The case stemmed from Alan Bakke, an applicant to the University of California at Davis Medical School, suing the university because he was not admitted but had higher

test scores and grades than minority students who had been accepted. Lawyers for Bakke referenced the same equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment used to desegregate public schools in *Brown v. Board of Education*. The “reverse discrimination” denied him equal protection under the law.

### Fisher v. University of Texas

In 2016, the U.S. Supreme Court decided another affirmative action case regarding Fisher v. University of Texas. Abigail Fisher also argued that she had been denied college admission based on race. The case ended in favor of the university. Justice Kennedy, in the majority opinion, wrote:

**“A university is in large part defined by those intangible “qualities which are incapable of objective measurement but which make for greatness.” Considerable deference is owed to a university in defining those intangible characteristics, like student body diversity, that are central to its identity and educational mission.”**

In each of the above landmark cases, affirmative action in college admission policies were upheld. However, cases of reverse discrimination in college admission policies continue to be pursued.

## ANALYSIS QUESTION

Examine your college’s code of conduct. You may find it in your student handbook, as part of an office of community standards or engagement, or by simply searching your college site. How does the code of conduct protect academic freedom but guard against hate speech, prejudice, and intolerance?

## *Title IX and Higher Education*

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 states, “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” As with affirmative action, Title IX applies to institutions that receive federal funding, such as public and charter schools, for-profit schools, libraries, and museums in the United States and its territories.

According to the Office for Civil Rights, educational programs and activities receiving federal funds must operate in a nondiscriminatory manner. Title IX addresses recruitment, admissions, and counseling; financial assistance; athletics; sex-based harassment; treatment of pregnant and parenting students; discipline; single-sex education; and employment.

Before the enactment of Title IX, there were few if any protections provided for women college students. To give some perspective, consider this description of the circumstances:

“Young women were not admitted into many colleges and universities, athletic scholarships for women were rare, and math and science was a realm reserved for boys. Girls square danced instead of playing sports, studied home economics instead of training for ‘male-oriented’ (read: higher-paying) trades. Girls could become teachers and nurses, but not doctors or principals; women rarely were awarded tenure and even more rarely appointed college presidents. There was no such thing as sexual harassment because ‘boys will be boys,’ after all, and if a student got pregnant, her formal education ended. Graduate professional schools openly discriminated against women.”<sup>8</sup>

The protections of Title IX have been invoked in college athletics to ensure women’s athletic programs are sustained. In addition, schools must make efforts to prevent sexual harassment and violence. Gender discrimination under Title IX extends to the



protection of transgender students so that they are treated as the gender they identify with.

## ANALYSIS QUESTION

Based on the cases against affirmative action in higher education, are admissions policies that use race, along with other factors, as admissions criteria fair? What other options do you think would create equity in admissions?

## Footnotes

- 6Adapted from Sue, Derald Wing, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender and Sexual Orientation*, Wiley & Sons, 2010
- 7Handlesman, Jo and Sakraney, Natasha. White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. [https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/bias\\_9-14-15\\_final.pdf](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/bias_9-14-15_final.pdf).
- 8WInslow, Barbara. "The Impact of Title IX." Gilder-Lerhman Institute. [https://faculty.uml.edu/sgallagher/The\\_Impact\\_of\\_Title\\_IX-\\_GilderLehrman.pdf](https://faculty.uml.edu/sgallagher/The_Impact_of_Title_IX-_GilderLehrman.pdf)



PART VII

# DEGREE PLANNING AND GOAL-SETTING



## 20. Degree Planning and Goal-Setting: Introduction



Figure 4.1 Credit: University of the Fraser Valley / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0)

### Student Survey

How do you feel about your readiness to create an academic and life plan? These questions will help you determine how the chapter concepts relate to you right now. As you are introduced to new concepts and practices, it can be informative to reflect on how your understanding changes over time. We'll revisit these questions at the end of the chapter to see whether your feelings have changed. Take this quick survey to figure it out, ranking questions on a scale of 1–4, 1 meaning “least like me” and 4 meaning “most like me.”

1. I have reflected on and can identify my personal values.
2. I have set both short- and long-term academic goals.
3. I am familiar with the requirements I must complete and options I must select to obtain a college degree.
4. I am familiar with the resources, tools, and individuals who can

assist me in developing an effective plan for success.

You can also take the Chapter 4 survey anonymously online.

## STUDENT PROFILE

“I came into my university with little to no knowledge about how to decide a college major. I can now say with confidence that I have found the major for me! This was not an easy process though. It takes a lot of reflection to decide where you will focus your time and energy for your college career. The most important thing I had to consider was what major would provide me with learning outcomes that matter the most to me? I switched my major three or four times and each time I weighed the pros and cons of the major I was exiting and the one I was transitioning into. I decided to major in sociology and it has been the best decision of my academic career! I value social awareness and deep understandings of social phenomenon and sociology provided the course material necessary to place me on a path to begin learning about those topics. As a first-generation and low-income student navigating college pathways can be difficult. That is why it is so important to be open to change and set on learning what you want to learn how to get yourself to the next step!”

—**Drew Carter**, Rice University

## About This Chapter

Among the most celebrated differences between high school and college is the freedom that students look forward to when they complete their mandatory high school education and take up the voluntary pursuit of a college degree. Though not every college

freshman comes fresh from high school, those who do might be looking forward to the freedom of moving away from home onto a campus or into an apartment. Others might be excited about the potential to sleep in on a Monday morning and take their classes in the afternoon. For others, balancing a class schedule with an already-busy life filled with work and other responsibilities may make college seem less like freedom and more like obligation. In either case, and however they might imagine their next experience to be, students can anticipate increased freedom of choice in college and the ability to begin to piece together how their values, interests, and developing knowledge and skills will unfold into a career that meets their goals and dreams.

In Chapter 3, *Managing Your Time and Priorities*, we cover how goal setting and prioritizing help you plan and manage your time effectively. This chapter extends that discussion by recognizing that it can be challenging to stay on task and motivated if you don't see how those tasks fit into a larger plan. Even the freedom to choose can become overwhelming without a plan to guide those choices. The goal of this chapter is to help you develop the personal skills and identify the resources, tools, and support people to help you make sense of your choices and formulate a personal academic and career plan. We will also consider how to take those first steps toward making your plan a reality and what to do if or when you realize you're off track from where you had hoped to be.

By the time you complete this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Use your personal values to guide your decision-making, set short-term goals that build toward a long-term goal, and plan how you will track progress toward your goals.
- List the types of college certificates, degrees, special programs, and majors you can pursue, as well as general details about their related opportunities and requirements.
- Take advantage of resources to draft and track an academic plan.

- Recognize decision-making and planning as continuous processes, especially in response to unexpected change.



## 2I. Defining Values and Setting Goals

### Questions to consider:

- What beliefs help shape your decision-making and goals?
- How do you set manageable goals that will help you stay on track?



Figure 4.2 Figuring out the best major and your academic pathway can be confusing and challenging. (Credit: Bruce Mars / Pexels)

**“In every single thing you do, you are choosing a direction. Your life is a product of choices.”**

— Dr. Kathleen Hall, CEO of the Stress Institute and Mindful Living Network<sup>1</sup>

A recent high school graduate, Mateo was considering his options for the future. He knew he wanted to go to college, but he wasn't quite sure what he would study. At a family picnic to celebrate his

graduation, he talked about his indecision with his two uncles. One uncle, his Uncle Nico, told him that his best bet was to find out what types of jobs would be hiring in a couple years at high enough salary for Mateo to afford to live however he desired. His other uncle, who rarely agreed with Uncle Nico, nodded and said, “Hey, that’s one way to look at it, but don’t you want to enjoy what you do every day regardless of how much money you make? You should do whatever interests you. After all, don’t they say that if you love what you do, you’ll never work a day in your life?”

Mateo appreciated the advice of his uncles and realized that they might both be right. He wanted to do something that interested him, but he also wanted to be employable and to make money. Clarifying his interests and recognizing his values would be key to helping Mateo decide his path.

## Values

Values are the basic beliefs that guide our thinking and actions. Whether we are consciously aware of them or not, values influence both our attitudes and our actions. They help us determine what is important and what makes us happy. It is important to think about and reflect on your values, especially as you make decisions.

## ACTIVITY

### *Determining Your Values*

To begin to identify some of your personal values, consider the examples listed below. As a first step, select the five that you find most important, that bring you the greatest happiness, or that make

you feel the most proud. Then, rank those five values in order of importance. Feel encouraged to write in other options that are relevant to you.

Achievement	Efficiency	Hard Work	Positivity
Adventure	Empathy	Health	Security
Ambition	Equality	Honesty	Selflessness
Balance	Excellence	Honor	Service
Belonging	Exploration	Humility	Simplicity
Calm	Fairness	Independence	Spontaneity
Challenge	Faith	Intelligence	Stability
Commitment	Family	Joy	Strength
Community	Fitness	Justice	Success
Competition	Flexibility	Love	Trustworthiness
Contribution	Freedom	Loyalty	Understanding
Control	Friends	Making a Difference	Uniqueness
Creativity	Fun	Merit	
Curiosity	Generosity	Openness	
Dependability	Growth	Originality	
Diversity	Happiness	Perfection	

Table 4.1

Another way to recognize the important influence of values is to consider if you have ever made a decision that you later regretted. Did you reflect on your values prior to making that choice? Sometimes others ask us to do things that are inconsistent with our values. Knowing what you value and making plans accordingly is an important effort to help you stay on track toward your goals.

## ANALYSIS QUESTION

Recall a decision that you have recently made (for example, a smaller decision about how to spend your Saturday, or maybe a larger decision about where to apply for part-time work). Did the values you identified through this exercise influence that decision? If so, how?



Figure 4.3 Credit: Curt Smith / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0)

## Goals and Planning

Have you ever put together a jigsaw puzzle? Many people start by looking for the edge and corner pieces to assemble the border. Some will then group pieces with similar colors, while others just try to fit in new pieces as they pick them up. Regardless of strategy, a jigsaw puzzle is most easily solved when people have a picture to reference. When you know what the picture should look like, you can gauge your progress and avoid making mistakes. If you were

to put a puzzle together facedown (cardboard side up, rather than picture side up), you could still connect the pieces, but it would take you much longer to understand how it should fit together. Your attempts, beyond the border, would be mostly by trial and error. Pursuing anything without goals and a plan is like putting together an upside-down puzzle. You can still finish, or get to where you're meant to be, but it will take you much longer to determine your steps along the way.

In Chapter 3, you learned about the SMART goal method for setting actionable goals, or goals that are planned and stated with enough clarity for the goal-setter to take realistic action toward meeting those goals. SMART goals help you focus on your priorities and manage your time while also providing a means of organizing your thinking and actions into manageable steps. Long- and short-term goals help to connect the action steps.

### *Long-Term Goals*

Long-term goals are future goals that often take years to complete. An example of a long-term goal might be to complete a bachelor of arts degree within four years. Another example might be purchasing a home or running a marathon. While this chapter focuses on academic and career planning, long-term goals are not exclusive to these areas of your life. You might set long-term goals related to fitness, wellness, spirituality, and relationships, among many others. When you set a long-term goal in any aspect of your life, you are demonstrating a commitment to dedicate time and effort toward making progress in that area. Because of this commitment, it is important that your long-term goals are aligned with your values.

## *Short-Term Goals*

Setting short-term goals helps you consider the necessary steps you'll need to take, but it also helps to chunk a larger effort into smaller, more manageable tasks. Even when your long-term goals are SMART, it's easier to stay focused and you'll become less overwhelmed in the process of completing short-term goals.

You might assume that short-term and long-term goals are different goals that vary in the length of time they take to complete. Given this assumption, you might give the example of a long-term goal of learning how to create an app and a short-term goal of remembering to pay your cell phone bill this weekend. These are valid goals, but they don't exactly demonstrate the intention of short- and long-term goals for the purposes of effective planning.

Instead of just being bound by the difference of time, short-term goals are the action steps that take less time to complete than a long-term goal, but that help you work toward your long-term goals. To determine your best degree option, it might make sense to do some research to determine what kind of career you're most interested in pursuing. Or, if you recall that short-term goal of paying your cell phone bill this weekend, perhaps this short-term goal is related to a longer-term goal of learning how to better manage your budgeting and finances.

## *Setting Long- and Short-Term Goals*

Sunil's story provides an example of effective goal setting. While meeting with an academic advisor at his college to discuss his change of major, Sunil was tasked with setting long- and short-term goals aligned with that major. He selected a degree plan in business administration, sharing with his advisor his intention to work in business and hopefully human relations in particular. His advisor discussed with him how he could set short-term goals that

would help his progress on that plan. Sunil wondered if he should be as specific as setting short-term goals week by week or for the successful completion of every homework assignment or exam. His advisor shared that he could certainly break his goals down into that level of specificity if it helped him to stay focused, but recommended that he start by outlining how many credits or courses he would hope to complete. Sunil drafted his goals and planned to meet again with his advisor in another week to discuss.

My Goals – Sunil Shah	
Long-term	My goal is to graduate from my college in a total of 4 years with a degree in business administration, concentrating in human relations.
Short-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Finish the 12 credits i am taking in my first semester with at least a 3.0 GPA</li><li>• Take 15 credits in the spring semester while maintaining my GPA</li><li>• Take a 3 credit class online in the summer</li><li>• Take 15 credits in my third semester</li><li>• Apply for study abroad program in my third semester</li><li>• Take 18 credits in my fourth semester</li><li>• Complete study abroad program for business during my fifth semester (12 credits)</li><li>• Apply for summer internship program during fifth semester</li><li>• Take 15 credits in my sixth semester</li><li>• Complete summer internship program</li><li>• Take 15 credits in my seventh semester</li><li>• Take 15 credits in my eighth semester</li><li>• Graduate in four years and take my parents out for an awesome dinner to thank them for their support!</li></ul>

Figure 4.4 Sunil drafted his goals before meeting with his advisor to discuss them.

Sunil worried that his list of short-term goals looked more like a checklist of tasks than anything. His advisor reassured him, sharing that short-term goals can absolutely look like a checklist of tasks because their purpose is to break the long-term goal down into manageable chunks that are easier to focus on and complete. His advisor then recommended that Sunil add to his plan an additional note at the end of every other semester to “check in” with his advisor to make certain that he was on track.

## *Planning for Adjustments*

You will recall from the SMART goals goal-setting model that goals should be both measurable and attainable. Far too often, however, we set goals with the best of intentions but then fail to keep track of our progress or adjust our short-term goals if they're not helping us to progress as quickly as we'd like. When setting goals, the most successful planners also consider when they will evaluate their progress. At that time, perhaps after each short-term goal should have been met, they may reflect on the following:

1. **Am I meeting my short-term goals as planned?**
  - If so, celebrate!
  - If not, you may want to additionally consider:
2. **Are my short-term goals still planned across time in a way where they will meet my long-term goals?**
  - If so, continue on your path.
  - If not, reconsider the steps you need to take to meet your long-term goal. If you've gotten off track or if you've learned that other steps must be taken, set new short-term goals with timelines appropriate to each step. You may also want to seek some additional advice from others who have successfully met long-term goals that are similar to your own.
3. **Are my long-term goals still relevant, or have my values changed since I set my goals?**
  - If your goals are still relevant to your interests and values, then continue on your path, seeking advice and support as needed to stay on track.
  - If your goals are no longer relevant or aligned with your



values, give careful consideration to setting new goals.

While departing from your original goals may seem like a failure, taking the time to reflect on goals before you set them aside to develop new ones is a success. Pivoting from a goal to new, better-fitting goal involves increased self-awareness and increased knowledge about the processes surrounding your specific goal (such as the details of a college transfer, for example). With careful reflection and information seeking, your change in plans may even demonstrate learning and increased maturity!

## APPLICATION

Take a moment to practice setting long- and short-term goals. Your short-term goal should help you progress toward your long-term goal. Include a plan for when and how you will know if you're on track or if you need to adjust your goals to match new priorities.

---

**My Long-Term Goal:**

**My Short-Term Goal:**

**My Plan for Checking My Progress:**

---

Table 4.2

Keep in mind that values and goals may change over time as you meet new people, your life circumstances change, and you gain more wisdom or self-awareness. In addition to setting goals and tracking your progress, you should also periodically reflect on your goals to ensure their consistency with your values.

## ANALYSIS QUESTION

Now that you've set some goals, what is your plan to track your progress on those goals? Can you identify a time you will set aside to intentionally reflect on your progress and whether you need to set any new short-term goals or perhaps adjust your larger plans?

## Footnotes

- 1Hall, Kathleen. *Alter Your Life: Overbooked, Overworked, Overwhelmed?* Oak Haven Press. Georgia. 2005.

## 22. Planning Your Degree Path

### Questions to consider:

- What types of college degrees or certifications can I pursue?
- What is the difference between majors and minors?
- How do preprofessional programs differ from other majors?
- Do some majors have special requirements beyond regular coursework?

To set goals for your academic and career path, you must first have an understanding of the options available for you to pursue and the requirements you will need to meet. The next section provides an overview of academic programs and college degrees that are common among many colleges and universities in the United States. Please note that each institution will have its own specific options and requirements, so the intention of this section is both to help you understand your opportunities and to familiarize you with language that colleges typically use to describe these opportunities. After reviewing this section, you should be better able to formulate specific questions to ask at your school or be better prepared to navigate and search your own college's website.

### Types of Degrees

Whereas in most states high school attendance through the 12th grade is mandatory, or *compulsory*, a college degree may be pursued voluntarily. There are fields that do not require a degree. Bookkeeping, computer repair, massage therapy, and childcare are all fields where certification programs—tracks to study a specific

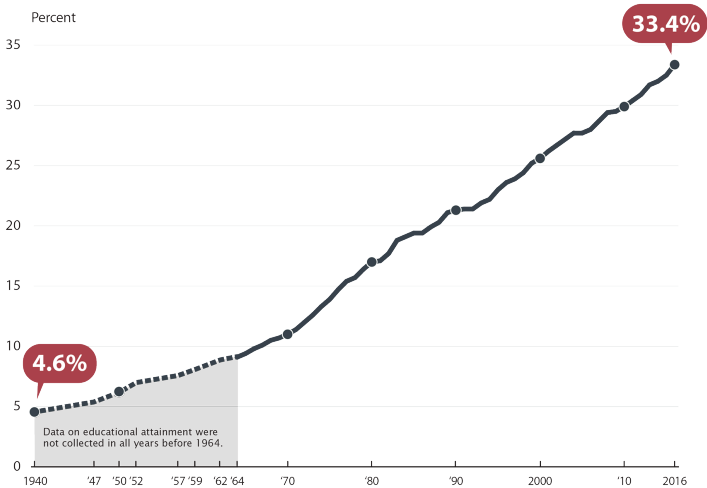
subject or career without need of a complete degree—may be enough.

However, many individuals will find that an associate's or bachelor's degree is a requirement to enter their desired career field. According to United States Census data published in 2017, more than one-third of the adult population in the country has completed at least a bachelor's degree, so this may be the degree that is most familiar to you.



### Highest Educational Attainment Levels Since 1940

Adults 25 Years and Older With a Bachelor's Degree or Higher





U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
[census.gov](https://www.census.gov)

Source: 1940-2010 Censuses and  
Current Population Survey  
[www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps.html](https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps.html)  
[www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html](https://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html)

Figure 4.5 The number of American's receiving Bachelor's degrees has increased significantly. While not every job requires one, the level of overall education required for most careers continues to go up. (Credit: US Department of Commerce / Public Domain)

Not every job requires a bachelor's degree, and some require even

higher degrees or additional specialized certifications. As you develop your academic plan, it is important to research your field of interest to see what requirements might be necessary or most desirable.

Require Associate's Degrees	Require Bachelor's Degrees	Require Additional Certifications	Require Graduate Degrees
Radiology Technician	Nurse	Public School Teacher	Lawyer
Dental Hygienist	Computer/Information Systems Manager	Accountant	College or University Professor
Web Developer	Airline Pilot	Financial Advisor	Pharmacist
Graphic Designer	Electrical Engineer		Marriage and Family Therapist
Automotive Technician	Construction Manager		Occupational Therapist

Table 4.3 Example Jobs by Minimum Degree Qualification<sup>2</sup>

To distinguish between the types of degrees, it is useful to understand that courses are often assigned a number of credits, sometimes called *semester hours* as well. Credits relate to the calculated hours during a course that a student spends interacting with the instructor and/or the course material through class time, laboratory time, online discussions, homework, etc. Courses at all degree levels are typically assigned a value of one to six credits, although students often need to complete a developmental education course or two, often in English or math. These requirements, which cost as much as typical college courses but do not grant college credit, are meant to provide some basic information students may have missed in high school but that will be necessary to keep up in college-level coursework.

The minimum or maximum number of credits required to graduate with different degrees varies by state or institution, but

approximate minimum numbers of credits are explained below. Keep in mind that although a minimum number of credits must be completed to get a certain degree, total credits completed is not the only consideration for graduation—you must take your credits or courses in particular subjects indicated by your college.

To determine your best degree option, it might make sense to do some research to determine what kind of career you're most interested in pursuing. Visit your campus career center to meet with a counselor to guide you through this process. These services are free to students—similar services can be pricey once you've graduated, so take advantage. There are other tools online you can investigate.

## GET CONNECTED

These free, online self-assessments help you narrow down your choices.

- MyPlan identifies your motivations by having you rank different aspects of work, then creating a ranked list of different possible jobs.
- MAPP Test helps you determine what you love to do and what you don't love to do and then creates a list of jobs that might be a good fit for you.
- The Career Cluster Interest Survey is a quick tool to let you create career clusters based on personal qualities and school subjects and activities you especially enjoy.

### *Associate's Degrees*

To enter an associate's degree program, students must have a high school diploma or its equivalent. Associate's degree programs may

be intended to help students enter a technical career field, such as automotive technology, graphic design, or entry-level nursing in some states. Such technical programs may be considered an Associate of Applied Arts (AAA) or Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees, though there are other titles as well.

Other associate's degree programs are intended to prepare a student with the necessary coursework to transfer into a bachelor's degree program upon graduation. These transfer-focused programs usually require similar general education and foundational courses that a student would need in the first half of a bachelor's degree program. Transfer-focused associate's degrees may be called Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AS), or other titles, depending on the focus of study.



Figure 4.6 Air traffic controllers are extremely important and well-paid jobs that typically require an associates degree. (Credit: Expert Infantry / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

An associate's degree is typically awarded when a student has completed a minimum of 60 credits, approximately 20 courses, meeting the requirements of a specific degree. Some technical associate's degrees, such as nursing, may require additional credits in order to meet requirements for special certifications. You may

find that your college or university does not offer associate's degrees. Most associate's degrees are offered by community or junior colleges, or by career and technical colleges.

## ACTIVITY

### *What to Ask*

If you're planning your associate's degree, here are some specific questions you may want to research.

**If you intend to enter a technical career that requires special certification:**

- Does your college prepare you to take a certification exam, or will you be meeting those requirements through your courses?
- Does your college have any special internship or employment placement arrangements with employers to help you gain experience or get started in the field?

**If you intend to transfer upon graduation:**

- Is your college regionally accredited?
- Does your college have any special transfer agreements for guaranteed transfer of credits or perhaps for discounted tuition?
- Does your state have special transfer agreements or requirements that make it easier to transfer to colleges or universities within the same state?



## *Bachelor's Degrees*

When someone generally mentions “a college degree,” they are often referring to the bachelor’s degree, or baccalaureate degree. Because it takes four years of full-time attendance to complete a bachelor’s degree, this degree is also referred to as a “four-year degree.” Similar to an associate’s degree, to enter a bachelor’s degree program a student must have completed a high school diploma or its equivalent. Both associate’s degrees and bachelor’s degrees are considered *undergraduate degrees*, thus students working toward these degrees are often called *undergraduates*. A student with an associate’s degree may transfer that degree to meet some (usually half) of the requirements of a bachelor’s degree; however, completion of an associate’s degree is not necessary for entry into a bachelor’s degree program.

A bachelor’s degree is usually completed with a minimum of 120 credits, or approximately 40 courses. Some specialized degree programs may require more credits. (If an associate’s degree has been transferred, the number of credits from that degree usually counts toward the 120 credits. For example, if an associate’s degree was 60 credits, then a student must take 60 additional credits to achieve their bachelor’s degree.)

Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BS), Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), and Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) are the most popular degree titles at this level and differ primarily in their focus on exploring a broader range of subject areas, as with a BA, versus focusing in more depth on a particular subject, as with a BS, BSN, or BFA. Regardless of whether a student is pursuing a BA, BS, BSN, or BFA, each of these programs requires a balance of credits or courses in different subject areas. In the United States, a bachelor’s degree comprises courses from three categories: *general education* courses, *major* courses, and *electives*. A fourth category of courses would be those required for a minor, which we will discuss in more detail in the section on majors and minors.

# General Education

General education, also called *core curriculum*, is a group of courses that are often set as requirements by your state or by your individual college. These courses provide you with a foundation of knowledge across a breadth of fields and are also intended to help you further develop college-level critical-thinking and problem-solving abilities. You may be able to select courses from a general education menu of courses available at your institution. More than half of your bachelor’s degree program is likely made up of general education courses.

---

English composition
Humanities courses that study our beliefs and the expression of our beliefs such as literature, philosophy, politics, art, or religious studies
Social science courses that study our behavior such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, or economics
Laboratory science courses such as biology, chemistry, physics, and environmental science
Mathematics
Technology or computer skills
Foreign language, diversity, or global studies courses that provide introduction to different cultures or global social issues and promote cultural awareness
College success or first-year experience courses that provide introduction to your specific institution, discuss college-level expectations and skills, and/or provide assistance with academic and career planning

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Table 4.4 General Education Categories. While your college may use different labels, general education courses often include a selection of courses from these categories.

## Major Courses

Major courses are courses in your field of interest and provide you

with the foundational knowledge required for further study in that field or with the skills necessary to enter your career. Some schools may refer to these as *career studies* courses. Major courses often have a series of *prerequisites*, or courses that must be taken in sequence prior to other courses, starting with an introductory course and progressing into more depth. Major courses usually make up about a fourth or more of a bachelor's degree (30 credits, or approximately 10 courses). A BS or BFA degree may require more major courses than a BA degree. Colleges and universities usually require students to select a major by the time they've completed 30 total credits.

## Electives

Electives are free-choice courses. Though you may have a choice to select from a menu of options to meet general education and major requirements, electives are even less restricted. Some students may be able to take more electives than others due to their choice of major or if they are able to take courses that meet more than one requirement (for example, a sociology course may be both a major requirement and a general education social science course). Some colleges intentionally allow room for electives in a program to ensure that students, particularly those students who are undecided about their major, are able to explore different programs without exceeding the total number of credits required to graduate with a bachelor's degree. In other cases, students may have taken all of their major courses and fulfilled their general education requirements but still need additional credits to fulfill the minimum to graduate. The additional courses taken to meet the total credit requirement (if necessary) are considered electives.

## *Graduate Degrees*

According to United States Census data published in 2018, 13.1 percent of the U.S. adult population have completed advanced degrees.<sup>3</sup> Whereas associate's and bachelor's degrees are considered undergraduate degrees and require high school graduation for entry, advanced degrees called graduate degrees require prior completion of a bachelor's degree. Some professions require graduate degrees as a minimum job qualification, such as pharmacists, lawyers, physical therapists, psychologists, and college professors. In other cases, students may be motivated to pursue a graduate degree to obtain a higher-level job or higher salary, or to be more competitive in their field. Some students are also interested in learning about some subject in greater depth than they did at the undergraduate level. Because graduate degrees do not include general education or free elective courses, they are very focused on career-specific knowledge and skills. Graduate degrees include master's, doctoral, and professional degrees. *Master's degrees* often require 30–60 credits and take one to two years of full-time attendance to complete. Some master's degrees, like those for counselors, require supervised job experience as a component of the degree and therefore require more credits.



Figure 4.7 Pharmacists and related scientific or medical careers require master's degrees. (Credit: US Department of Agriculture / Flickr / Public Domain)

*Doctorate and professional degrees* are the highest level of advanced degrees. Approximately 3.5% of the U.S. adult population has completed a doctorate or professional degree. Very few careers require this level of education for entry, so fewer individuals pursue these degrees. Doctorates are offered in many subjects and primarily prepare students to become researchers in their field of study. This in-depth level of education often requires an additional 90–120 credits beyond the bachelor's degree, and may or may not require a master's degree prior to entry. (A master's degree as an entry requirement may reduce the number of credits required to complete the doctoral degree.)

Professional degrees are a specific type of doctorate-level degree that focus on skills to be applied in a *practical*, or hands-on, career rather than as a researcher. The most common professional degrees are Doctor of Medicine (MD) for aspiring medical doctors, Juris Doctor (JD) for aspiring lawyers, Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) for aspiring pharmacists, and Doctor of Education (EdD) for aspiring school and college or university administrators. If the career you are

pursuing requires a graduate degree, you should keep this end goal in mind as you plan for the timeline and finances required to meet your goals. You may also want to inquire about special agreements that your college or university may have to expedite admission into or completion of graduate degrees. For example, some universities offer *4+1 master's programs*, wherein students take both bachelor's and master's level courses during their last year as an undergraduate to accelerate the completion of both degrees.

### *Other Post-Baccalaureate Credentials*

Post-baccalaureate refers to structured learning experiences pursued after a bachelor's degree is achieved. While some such activities are structured into graduate degrees as described in the sections above, other fields value continuing education credits, competency badges, and additional certifications. These post-baccalaureate credentials may need to be completed prior to entering a career field, may be obtained as an option to gain competitive advantage for hiring, or may be achieved during the course of an individual's career to stay current, maintain qualification, or be promoted. To determine if your field requires post-baccalaureate credentials, you may want to speak with an established professional in that career, review the qualifications section of related job descriptions, or visit with a career counselor on your campus. In a world that changes as rapidly as ours, engaging in lifelong learning is advisable regardless of the specific requirements of any particular career choice.



Figure 4.8 Some computing, networking, and database careers require post-baccalaureate certificates. (Credit: WOCinTechChat / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

## ACTIVITY

### *Draft an Education Timeline*

Use the Bureau of Labor Statistics online Occupational Outlook Handbook to search for occupations that interest you, and note the level of education that these jobs require. Refer to your college's academic catalog (frequently located on the college's website) or curriculum maps to see the suggested sequence of courses for majors that relate to your career or careers of interest.

Select three interesting jobs and sketch a timeline for each, starting with your first semester of undergraduate study (whether you're getting an associate's or a bachelor's) and ending with the point when you will meet the minimum requirements to be qualified

for that job. Keep in mind that the timeline of students attending full-time may differ from those who are attending part-time.

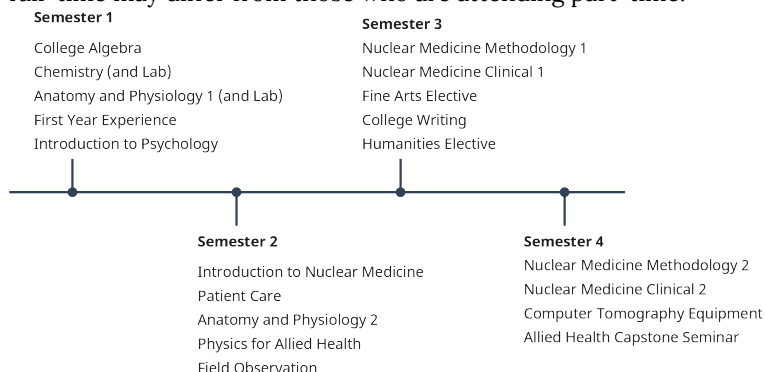


Figure 4.9 This example timeline for a nuclear medicine technician spaces different types of courses across four semesters. Note that some courses may be prerequisites for other courses and experiences. For example, Introduction to Nuclear Medicine, Patient Care, and a Field Observation may be required before students engage in the formal Clinical in Semester 3. When planning, look at each course description in the college catalog to understand its prerequisites.

## Majors and Minors

One of the most common questions an undergraduate college student will be asked is “What’s your major?” As we already noted, your major is only one part of your undergraduate (associate’s or bachelor’s) degree, but it is the part that most demonstrates your interests and possible future goals. At some point during your studies you will be asked to decide on, or *declare*, a major. You may also be able to select a *minor* or additional concentration. Whereas a major comprises approximately 10–12 courses of a bachelor’s degree program and is required, a minor is usually 5–8 courses, is often optional, and may count toward or contribute to exceeding



the total number of credits required for graduation. Rather than take elective courses, some students will select courses that meet the requirements for a minor. When selecting a major and possibly a minor, you'll want to consider how the knowledge and skills you gain through those fields of study prepare you for a particular career. Majors and minors can be complementary. For example, a major in business might be well-matched with a minor in a foreign language, thus allowing the student to pursue a career in business with a company that hires bilingual employees. It is important to research careers of interest to you when selecting your major and/or minor to determine what will best help you to meet your goals.



Figure 4.10 Many majors, such as nursing, allied health, and emergency medical technician, may include simulations and other activities to expose students to the real-world activities of their field. (Credit: COD Newsroom / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

## Preprofessional Programs

Some undergraduate degrees are specifically designed to prepare students to later pursue professional degrees (such as the MD or PharmD) at the graduate level. Such programs are called *preprofessional programs*, *preprofessional majors*, or *preprofessional tracks*. The most common preprofessional programs are premed, prelaw, and prepharmacy, but you may see other offerings. Although some preprofessional programs are structured as majors that you can declare, many preprofessional programs are a sequence of recommended courses and activities that a student can follow alongside a related major. While following a preprofessional program may not guarantee your admittance to a professional program, it does increase the likelihood of acceptance to and preparation for a graduate professional program.

Consider Loretta's story as an example of how a student might be on a preprofessional track. Loretta has decided that she would like to become a medical doctor. She has declared biology as her major and is taking the courses required to graduate with a bachelor of science degree in biology. Her university does not have a premed major, but it does have a premed track. She informs her academic advisor of her career goals, and her advisor provides her information about the premed track. The premed track includes a list of courses that students should take to prepare for the medical school entrance exams, called MCATs. Some of these courses are biology courses that overlap with Loretta's biology major, while others are higher-level chemistry courses that are not required for her major. She can take these chemistry courses, and any other premed-track courses, as her elective courses. The premed track at Loretta's university includes opportunities to attend MCAT study workshops and premed student club meetings. It also provides recommendations for summer volunteering and internships that

will strengthen Loretta's resume and application to medical school following the completion of her bachelor's degree.

## Special Requirements of Majors

While preprofessional programs prepare students for entrance into graduate professional degree programs, some undergraduate majors involve special requirements beyond the usual courses and classroom experience to prepare students for entrance to their career. Such requirements provide students practical experience or prerequisites for licensure necessary for a particular job. When requirements are major-specific, it is often because the requirement is state-mandated for that job. Majors that often include state-mandated special requirements are education, social work, and nursing. Some colleges and universities may require all students to participate in additional experiences beyond their regular coursework. You will want to ask your college about details specific to your major or institution. In this section we will generally discuss four such special requirements and experiences: fieldwork and internships, clinicals, student teaching, and service learning.

### *Fieldwork and Internships*

Fieldwork and internships may also be referred to as *practicums* and field experience. These requirements provide hands-on work experience in a career, or *field*. When fieldwork or internships are required for your major, such as with a social work major, it is often listed as a course requirement among your major requirements. In other words, you usually receive credits for your fieldwork as you would for a lab or lecture course. Your fieldwork instructor will likely ask you to reflect on and report on your experiences. They will likely confer with a supervisor at your *fieldwork* site, the

place where you are working, to help assess your hands-on learning. Fieldwork and internships provide students with opportunities to practice the skills they've learned in the classroom while also introducing them to the values and culture of the organizations and communities in which they hope to be employed. It is important to note that fieldwork and internship experiences are often available to students even if they are not required for their major. You may want to inquire with your academic advisors, faculty, or career services office to determine what opportunities might be available for you to gain this type of experience in your field of interest.

## *Clinicals*

Clinicals are a type of fieldwork specifically required of nursing students. Clinicals may take place in hospitals, nursing homes, or mental health facilities. They provide nursing students who are nearing the end of their degree programs with the opportunity to practice nursing skills that cannot be learned in a regular classroom. During clinicals, students will interact with real patients to conduct physical examinations, draw blood, administer medicine, and provide other care as necessary. Because of the risk to patients, students participating in clinicals are more closely supervised by experienced professionals than those in other types of fieldwork experiences. Thus, clinicals function very much like a real-world classroom and progress to more independent work through the semester. Before undertaking clinicals, nursing students will need to complete certain coursework and pass a physical examination and background check. Because clinicals are often much longer than a class meeting, students will need to work with staff from the program to plan their schedule. It may not be feasible to work at another job while completing clinicals, so if you must work while you're in college, it's important to discuss this with nursing staff or academic advisors and to plan ahead.

## *Student Teaching*

Student teaching is a specific type of fieldwork undertaken by students who plan to teach at the preschool, elementary, or middle and high school levels. Education students are often required to complete a student teaching experience in order to obtain a teaching license in their state. Students must often complete core education coursework prior to student teaching and must complete a background check prior to placement in a school setting. During their student teaching experience, students are usually paired one-on-one with an experienced teacher and have the opportunity to observe that teacher, get to know the students, understand the classroom culture, and participate in lessons as a teaching assistant as needed or appropriate. Much like nursing clinicals, this highly supervised fieldwork experience usually progresses to more independent work when the student teacher is asked to deliver and reflect on a lesson plan of their own design. Keep in mind as you plan for student teaching that unlike other fieldwork experiences, student teaching is limited to fall or spring semesters and cannot be completed in the summer because most schools are closed during the summer terms. Also, it may not be feasible to work at another job while completing your student teaching experience, so if you must work while you're in college, it's important to discuss this with your program staff or academic advisors and to plan ahead.



Figure 4.11 Student teaching is an extremely important aspect of becoming a K-12 educator. The experience helps future teachers practice their skills and understand the complexity of working in the classroom. (Credit: seansinnit / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

## *Service Learning*

While service learning may not be required of a specific major, you may see this special requirement for a course or as a general graduation requirement for your college or university. It's also an excellent opportunity to try out something that interests you, something that could lead to or be part of your eventual career.

Service learning is very much like volunteering or community service. The purpose of service learning is to interact with and meet the needs of your local community. Service learning does differ from volunteering in that it is more structured to meet specific learning goals. For example, if you were engaging in service learning for an environmental science course, your activities would likely be focused on local environmental issues. Or, if you were engaging in

service learning for a sociology course, you would likely be working with local community groups or organizations not only to assist these organizations, but also to observe how groups interact. Like fieldwork, service learning provides you an opportunity to observe and apply concepts learned in the classroom in a real-world setting. Students are often asked to reflect on their service learning activities in the context of what they've been learning in class, so if you're engaged in service learning, be thinking about how the activities you do relate to what you've learned and know.

## WHAT STUDENTS SAY

1. Does your major have any special requirements that must be completed outside of the classroom?
  - a. Fieldwork, internships, and/or student teaching
  - b. Clinicals
  - c. Other (write in)
  - d. None
2. While in college, which of the following do you think you are most likely to do?
  - a. Internship
  - b. Part-time job
  - c. Full-time job
  - d. Study Abroad
3. What has influenced your academic and career plan the most? (rank order)
  - a. The advice of friends and/or family
  - b. The practical, hands-on experiences I've had outside of the classroom
  - c. The knowledge and skills I've learned in class
  - d. The advice I've gotten from mentors, advisors, or college faculty

You can also take the anonymous What Students Say surveys to add your voice to this textbook. Your responses will be included in updates.

Students offered their views on these questions, and the results are displayed in the graphs below.

Does your major have any special requirements that must be completed outside of the classroom?

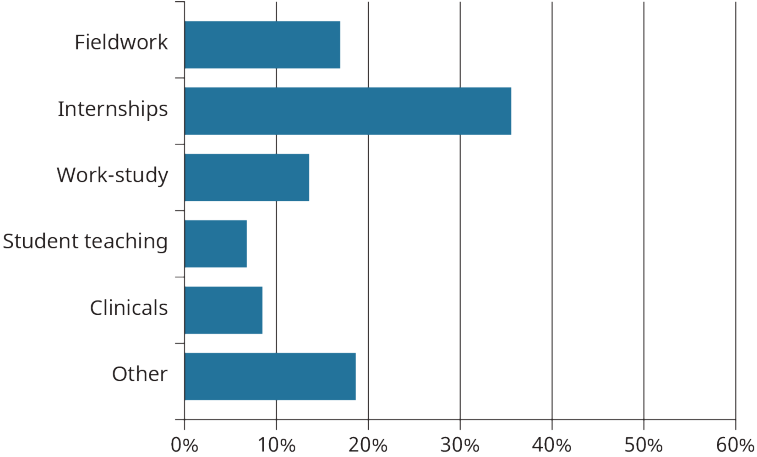


Figure 4.12

While in college, which of the following do you think you are most likely to do?

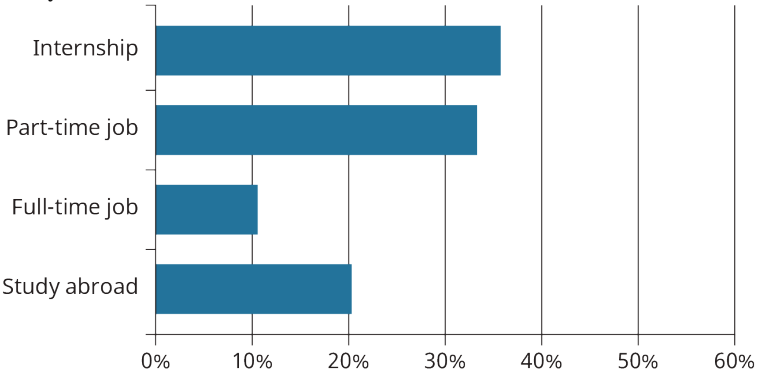


Figure 4.13



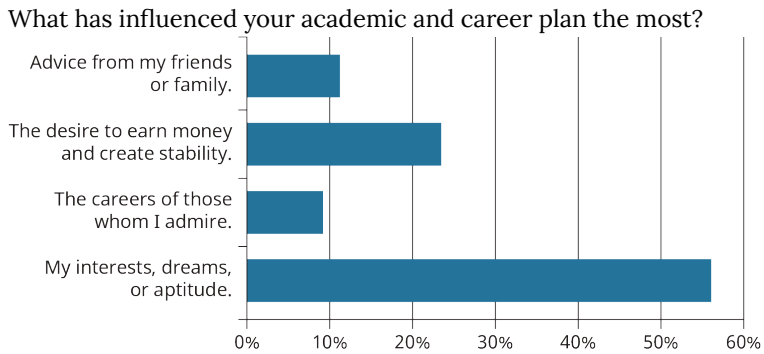


Figure 4.14

## Footnotes

- 2Minimum degree qualifications may vary by state.
- 3United States Census Bureau. (2019, February 21). Number of People with Master's and Doctoral Degrees Doubles Since 2000. Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2019/02/number-of-people-with-masters-and-phd-degrees-double-since-2000.html>

## 23. Making a Plan

### Questions to consider:

- What resources are available to help me understand my degree program requirements?
- Who can assist me in making a plan?
- What tools are available to help me develop and track the progress of my plan?
- Is there anything else I can do now to plan for after I graduate?

As previously noted, most associate's degrees require a minimum of 60 credit hours for completion, and bachelor's degrees minimally require a total of 120 credits. Some individuals refer to these degrees as "two-year" and "four-year" degrees, respectively. To complete a 60-credit associate's degree in two years, you would need to take 15 credits (about five classes) in the fall and spring semesters during both years of your attendance. To complete a 120-credit bachelor's degree in four years, you would need to take 15 credits in the fall and spring semesters each of your four years. It is therefore entirely possible to complete these degrees in two and four years, particularly if you use the three primary resources that colleges provide to help you with your planning: curriculum maps, academic advisors, and interactive planning technology.

### Curriculum Maps

Many colleges and universities will provide *curriculum maps*, or course checklists to illustrate the sequence of courses necessary to follow this timeline. These timelines often assume that you are ready to take college-level math and English courses and that you will be attending college as a full-time student. If placement tests

demonstrate a need for prerequisite math and English coursework to get you up to speed, your timeline will likely be longer.

Many students attend college part-time, often because of family or work responsibilities. This will obviously have an impact on your completion timeline as well. Programs that have special requirements may also require that you plan for additional time. For example, it may be the case that you cannot take other courses while completing clinicals or student teaching, so you will need to plan accordingly. Alternatively, you may be able to speed up, or *accelerate*, your timeline to degree by taking courses during summer or winter terms. Or if you take fewer than 15 credits per semester, you can take courses during the summer terms to “make up” those credits and stay on track toward those two- or four-year graduation goals.<sup>4</sup>

## Academic Advisors

All colleges and universities provide resources such as a curriculum map to assist you with your academic planning. Academic advisors may also be called success coaches, mentors, preceptors, or counselors. They may be staff members, or faculty may provide advisement as an additional role to their teaching responsibilities. Regardless of what your college calls this role, academic advisors are individuals who are able to assist you in navigating the puzzle of your academic plan and piecing your courses and requirements together with your other life obligations to help you meet your goals.

An advisor is an expert on college and major requirements and policies, while you are the expert on your life circumstances and your ability to manage your study time and workload. It is also an advisor's responsibility to understand the details of your degree requirements. This person can teach you how to best utilize college resources to make decisions about your academic and career path.

An advisor can help you connect with other college staff and faculty who might be integral to supporting your success. Together with your advisor, you can create a semester-by-semester plan for the courses you will take and the special requirements you will meet. Refer to the end of this section for a detailed planning template that you could use in this process. Even if your college does not require advising, it is wise to meet with your advisor every semester to both check your progress and learn about new opportunities that might lend you competitive advantage in entering your career.

### **Common Functions of Academic Advisors**

Academic advisors can help you:

- Set educational and career goals
- Select a major and/or minor
- Understand the requirements of your degree
- Navigate the online tools that track the progress of your degree
- Calculate your GPA and understand how certain choices may impact your GPA
- Discuss your academic progress from semester to semester
- Assist with time management strategies
- Connect with other support and resources at the college such as counseling, tutoring, and career services
- Navigate institutional policies such as grade appeals, admission to special programs, and other concerns
- Strategize how to make important contacts with faculty or other college administrators and staff as necessary (such as discussing how to construct professional emails)
- Discuss transfer options, if applicable
- Prepare for graduate school applications

## Interactive Planning Technology

In addition to a curriculum map and an advisor, colleges and universities usually have technological tools that can assist you in your academic planning. Degree audit reporting systems, for example, are programmed to align with degree requirements and can track individual student progress toward completion. They function like an interactive checklist of courses and special requirements. Student planning systems often allow students to plan multiple semesters online, to register for planned courses, and to track the progress of their plan. Though friends and family are well-intentioned in providing students with planning advice and can provide important points for students to consider, sometimes new students make the mistake of following advice without consulting their college's planning resources. It's important to bring all of these resources together as you craft your individual plan.

Despite all of the resources and planning assistance that is available to you, creating an individual plan can still be a daunting task. Making decisions about which major to pursue, when to take certain courses, and whether to work while attending school may all have an impact on your success, and it is tough to anticipate what to expect when you're new to college. Taking the time to create a plan and to revise it when necessary is essential to making well-informed, mindful decisions. Spur-of-the-moment decisions that are not well-informed can have lasting consequences to your progress.

The key to making a mindful decision is to first be as informed as possible about your options. Make certain that you have read the relevant resources and discussed the possibilities with experts at your college. Then you'll want to weigh your options against your values and goals. You might ask: Which option best fits my values and priorities? What path will help me meet my goals in the timeframe I desire? What will be the impact of my decision on myself or on others? Being well-informed, having a clear sense

of purpose, and taking the necessary time to make a thoughtful decision will help to remove the anxiety associated with making the “right” decision, and help you make the best decision for you.

## APPLICATION

**Academic Planning Readiness Checklist:** Review the checklist below and mark each item if you agree. For those you cannot yet answer, consult your instructor, academic advisor, or college website to locate these important details.

1. I know the total number of credits required to graduate from my program.
2. I know the difference between general education, major, and elective classes.
3. I know whether I am required to take preparatory or developmental courses in math and English, and whether these courses will count among my total credits toward my degree.
4. I am aware of the special requirements of my major (if any) and the prerequisites I must complete.
5. I am aware of the minimum entry requirements for my desired career field and know whether I should be preparing to plan for a graduate degree as well.

## ACTIVITY

### *Draft an Academic Plan*

With the assistance of your instructor or academic advisor, find the curriculum map for your major or for an example major that you

might be considering if you're still exploring. Use the information in the curriculum map to draft an academic plan for your undergraduate degree. This plan should include both a semester-by-semester sequence of courses and a list of related activities to help you progress toward your career or graduate school goals. Keep in mind any personal circumstances that may impact your plan (such as whether you'll need to attend part-time or full-time). You may use the grid provided or utilize your college's student planning software if available. For your reference, you will find the start of an example grid from a dedicated environmental science student below.

Note: If your college offers courses using the quarter system rather than semesters, you may need to draft your own grid. You can find example planning grids for quarter systems online.

Example Semester # 1 : Fall 20__	Example Semester # 2 : Spring 20__
<p><b>List your planned courses here:</b></p> <p>English Composition 1 (3 credits)</p> <p>General Biology 1 + lab (4 credits)</p> <p>Environmental Science (4 credits)</p> <p>History of Western Civilization (3 credits)</p> <p><u>First Year Success Seminar (2 credits)</u></p> <p>Total semester credits – 16</p> <p><b>List your planned activities here:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meet with my advisor to review my plan.</li> <li>● Attend an environmental science student club meeting.</li> </ul>	<p><b>List your planned courses here:</b></p> <p>English Composition 2 (3 credits)</p> <p>General Biology 2 + lab (4 credits)</p> <p>Principles of Sustainability (3 credits)</p> <p><u>Pre-Calculus Mathematics (4 credits)</u></p> <p>Total semester credits – 14</p> <p>Total first year credits planned – 30</p> <p><b>List your planned activities here:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Visit with Career Services Office early to ask about summer volunteering related to my major</li> </ul>
<p><b>Example Summer Plans:</b></p> <p><b>List your planned courses here:</b> None this summer</p> <p><b>List your planned activities here:</b> Volunteer for local road or park clean-up days or start one if none exist in my area, follow and read that blog I found about becoming an environmental policy advocate, and research possible internships for my 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> year.</p>	

Figure 4.15 This sample of an academic plan was completed with the help of a college advisor. Below you'll find a blank template that you can use (or adapt) for your own plan.





## Planning for After Graduation

Students usually pursue a college degree with some additional end goal in mind, whether that goal is further study as a graduate student or entry into a desired career. As you develop a plan for your undergraduate studies, you can also plan pursuits outside of the classroom to prepare for these future goals. To begin planning for life after graduation, consider the experiences that would best complement your coursework. If you are not required to participate in fieldwork or internships, perhaps you could plan a summer internship to help you gain workplace experience and learn more about what you do and do not want to do. It is also valuable to gain leadership experience through participation in student clubs and organizations. Plan to find a club that matches your interests. Set a goal to attend regularly your first year and then run for a club leadership role in your second or third year.

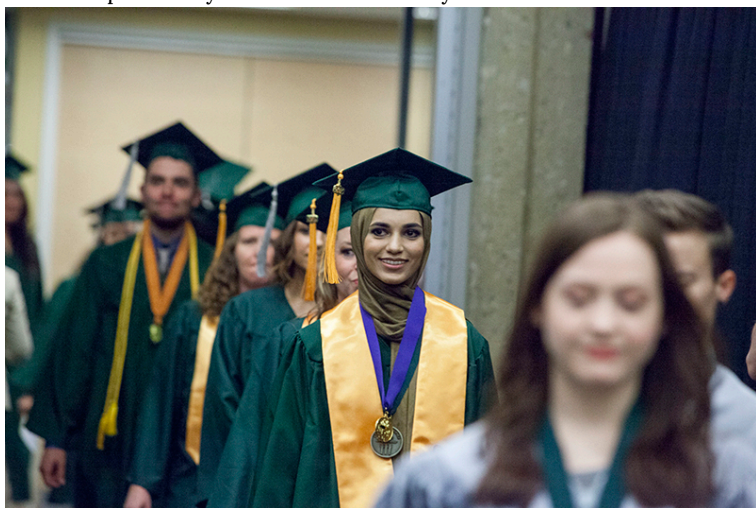


Figure 4.17 Graduation is a significant milestone, both for students and often for their families, friends, and support networks. A good academic plan will help you reach this important step, and then go far beyond it. (Credit: COD Newsroom / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Even before you begin an internship or career search in earnest, sites like Internships.com can be helpful simply to explore the possibilities and get ideas. Often, a dedicated career-oriented website will provide more filtered and specific information than a general search engine.

Consult with services or offices at your college that can assist with you with making your future plans and incorporating experiences into your academic plan that will prepare you to enter your career. These services are often accessible both to current students as well as to graduates, providing assistance with résumé writing and job searches. Chapter 12: Planning for Your Future provides further insight into career planning and college career services.

Alumni associations help graduates connect with other former students of all ages so that they can begin to build and strengthen their professional networks, leading to further job opportunities. And don't discount the role of your professors in helping you build your network as well! In addition to providing valuable letters of recommendation for both graduate school and job applications, professors often have well-established professional networks and may be willing to help connect dedicated students with additional opportunities. You can plan these experiences to be distributed across your academic semesters and during the summer.

---

## Exploring Options

- Locate and visit your career services office on campus to discover what services are available.
- Take a career assessment that matches your values, interests, and skills to career options.
- Join a student organization.
- Seek volunteer opportunities to gain additional skills.
- Research trends and salary expectations for careers of interest.

## Gain Experience

- Develop relationships with faculty by visiting during office hours and speaking to them after class.
- Network with employers by attending career fairs.
- Pursue an internship or part-time employment that is relevant to your field of interest.
- Take a leadership role on campus or in a student organization.
- Practice for interviews with friends or career counselors.

## Document Experiences

- Begin your resume and continuously update it to include new experiences.
- Create a LinkedIn profile.
- Review and monitor your social media accounts through the lens of a potential employer.
- Solidify relationships with faculty and ask about letters of recommendation.
- Draft additional job application materials, such as cover letters.
- Seek assistance from career counselors on campus in reviewing your resumes/cover letters/portfolios.

---

### Table 4.5 Prepare for Your Career While in College

This Draft an Academic Plan activity provides you an opportunity to consider and plan experiences alongside your coursework that could help you better prepare to meet your career goals. Also, the chapter on Planning Your Career goes into these topics in more depth.

## Footnotes

- 4Brookdale Community College Office of Career and Leadership Development. (2016). *Your Career Checklist*. Retrieved from: <http://www.brookdalecc.edu/career>

## 24. Developing a Reflective Practice



Photo by Sheryl Third CC-BY-NC-SA

“Reflective practice is the ability to reflect on one’s actions so as to engage in a process of continuous learning”  
– Donald Schön

### What is Reflective Practice?

Whether we are conscious of this or not, we all undertake activities to think about our experiences, learn from them, and develop a plan for what we will continue to do (or stop doing). Can you think of a time when you came home at the end of a week where everything had gone wrong? Or maybe when everything had gone well? What

are your next steps? Are you able to answer the question, “Why am I doing what I am doing?”

In order to continue to develop a reflective practice that will serve us in college and in the workplace, we need to examine and understand the reasons for our reactions, our feelings, and our interactions with others. Creating a formal practice of reflection leads us to become a *reflective practitioner*.

Reflective practice has developed across many academic disciplines to help us intentionally learn from our experiences. There was a time when reflective practice would have been considered an optional skill or a desired disposition, but over the past few years, reflective practice is no longer considered an optional skill or disposition—it’s now essential to success.

Reflective practice has been explored and defined by many scholars including Bolton (2010), Moon (2001), Rodgers (2002), and Schön (1983). Reflective practice is a systematic, rigorous, self-directed meaning-making process where a person moves from one experience to another through the development of insights and practice with the intention of coming to a deeper understanding of one’s personal values and intellectual growth. Schön (1983) suggests that in practice, reflection often begins when a routine response produces a surprise or an unexpected outcome. The surprise gets our attention, which may begin a process of reflection. Reflective practice is “a dialogue of thinking and doing through which one becomes more skillful” (Schön, 1983, p. 56).

### **Example from the Workplace: Reflective Practice according to the**

## College of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario

Reflective Practice is an approach used by educators to analyze and think critically about their professional practice with the intention to better understand and improve their practice. Reflective practice is thoughtful, action-oriented and often, a collaborative effort. Educators use reflective practice to plan, evaluate their strengths and challenges, make decisions and create change, if necessary. Self-reflection, critical reflection and collaborative inquiry are all important elements of reflective practice (2017).

Notwithstanding the definitions given above, it's important to remember that reflection is a highly personal skill or disposition, and different people will define it in different ways. There is no one “right” way of defining what reflection is or how it should be done. Your ability to develop an effective reflective practice will depend on your own personal circumstances and school or work environment.

For this reason, this resource will explore elements of reflective practice that will help the practitioner develop their own practice. In describing reflective practice, I have interchangeably referred to it as a skill and/or a disposition . In the workplace, a skill is something that can be acquired, while a disposition is a way of being or a mindset. Current thinking suggests that reflection is not a skill but rather a way of being or disposition. Reflection involves

an evaluation of our ethics, values, and feelings around our experiences, both positive and negative.

To learn more about reflective practice, watch the video *Understanding Reflective Practice* by Lifetime Training.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://cwi.pressbooks.pub/pathwaystocollegesuccess/?p=161#oembed-1>

## Learn More about Reflective Practice

For more information on this topic, check out the resource links below.

- Reflective Practice and Self-Directed Learning by the College of Early Childhood Educators
- Getting started with Reflective Practice by Cambridge International Education Teaching and Learning Team
- Research Article Revisiting reflective practice in an era of teacher education reform: A self-study of an early childhood teacher education program by Sophia



Han, Jolyn Blank and Ilene R. Berson.

## References

Bolton, G. (2010). *Reflective Practice: Writing and Professional Development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ↵

Moon, J. (2001). *Short courses and workshops: Improving the impact of learning and professional development*. Kogan Page: London. ↵

Rodgers, C. (2002). *Defining Reflection: Another Look at John Dewey and Reflective Thinking*. *Teachers College Record*, 104, 842-866. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9620.00181> ↵

Schön, D. A. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. New York: Basic Books. ↵

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Reflective Practice. (2020). Understanding reflective practice. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/iBmtH0Qx0YU> ↵

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PART VIII

# CAREER EXPLORATION



## 25. Networking

LUMEN LEARNING AND LINDA (BRUCE) HILL

*“Communication—the human connection—is  
the key to personal and career success.”*

– Paul J. Meyer

In the context of career development, networking is the process by which people build relationships with one another for the purpose of helping one another achieve professional goals.

When you “network,” you exchange information.

- You may share business cards, résumés, cover letters, job-seeking strategies, leads about open jobs, information about companies and organizations, and information about a specific field.
- You might also share information about meet-up groups, conferences, special events, technology tools, and social media.
- You might also solicit job “headhunters,” career counselors, career centers, career coaches, an alumni association, family members, friends, acquaintances, and vendors.

Networking can occur anywhere and at any time. In fact, your network expands with each new relationship you establish. And the networking strategies you can employ are nearly limitless. With

imagination and ingenuity, your networking can be highly successful.



*A series of stick figures connected by dotted lines.*

## Strategies for Networking

We live in a social world. Almost everywhere you go and anything you do professionally involves connecting with people. It stands to reason that finding a new job and advancing your career entails building relationships with these people. Truly, the most effective way to find a new job is to network, network, and network some more.

Once you acknowledge the value of networking, the challenge is figuring out how to do it. What is your first step? Whom do you contact? What do you say? How long will it take? Where do you concentrate efforts? How do you know if your investments will pay off?

For every question you may ask, a range of strategies can be used. Begin exploring your possibilities by viewing the following

energizing video, *Networking Tips for College Students and Young People*, by Hank Blank. He recommends the following modern and no-nonsense strategies:

1. Hope is not a plan. You need a plan of action to achieve your networking goals.
2. Keenly focus your activities on getting a job. Use all tools available to you.
3. You need business cards. No ifs, ands, or buts.
4. Attend networking events. Most of them offer student rates.
5. Master LinkedIn because that is what human resource departments use. Post updates.
6. Think of your parents' friends as databases. Leverage their knowledge and their willingness to help you.
7. Create the world you want to live in in the future by creating it today through your networking activity. These are the times to live in a world of "this is how I can help."

### *Video: Networking Tips for College Students and Young People, Hank Blank*



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## *International Student Series: Finding Work Using Your Networks*

If you are an international student, or perhaps if English is not your native language, this video may especially appeal to you. It focuses on the importance of networking when looking for jobs and keeping an open mind. Simply talking to people can help you move from casual work to full-time employment.

### *Video: International Student Series: Finding Work Using Your Networks*



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## *... And More Strategies*

### *Strategies at College*

- **Get to know your professors:** Communicating with instructors is a valuable way to learn about a career and also get letters of reference if and when needed for a job. Professors can also give you leads on job openings, internships, and research possibilities. Most instructors will readily share information



and insights with you. Get to know your instructors. They are a valuable part of your network.

- **Check with your college's alumni office:** You may find that some alumni are affiliated with your field of interest and can give you the "inside scoop."
- **Check with classmates:** Classmates may or may not share your major, but any of them may have leads that could help you. You could be just one conversation away from a good lead.

### *Strategies at Work*

- **Join professional organizations:** You can meet many influential people at local and national meetings and events of professional and volunteer organizations. Learn about these organizations. See if they have membership discounts for students, or student chapters. Once you are a member, you may have access to membership lists, which can give you prospective access to many new people to network with.
- **Volunteer:** Volunteering is an excellent way to meet new people who can help you develop your career, even if the organization you are volunteering with is not in your field. Just by working alongside others and working toward common goals, you build relationships that may later serve you in unforeseen and helpful ways.
- **Get an internship:** Many organizations offer internship positions to college students. Some of these positions are paid, but often they are not. Paid or not, you gain experience relevant to your career, and you potentially make many new contacts. Check [CollegeRecruiter.com](http://CollegeRecruiter.com) and [internships.com](http://internships.com) for key resources.
- **Get a part-time job:** Working full-time may be your ultimate goal, but you may want to fill in some cracks or crevices by working in a part-time job. Invariably you will meet people who can feasibly help with your networking goals. And you can gain

good experience along the way, which can also be noted on your résumé. Check your college career center website. Many have online job boards for full and part-time employment.

- **Join a job club:** Your career interests may be shared by many others who have organized a club, which can be online or in person. If you don't find an existing club, consider starting one.
- **Attend networking events:** There are innumerable professional networking events taking place around the world and also online. Find them listed in magazines, community calendars, newspapers, journals, and at the websites of companies, organizations, and associations.
- **Conduct informational interviews:** You may initiate contact with people in your chosen field who can tell you about their experiences of entering the field and thriving in it. Many websites have guidance on how to plan and conduct these interviews.

### *Strategies at Home and Beyond*

- **Participate in online social media:** An explosion of career opportunity awaits you with social media, including LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, and many more. You will find an extensive list of suggested sites at CareerOneStop. Keep your communication ultra-professional at these sites. Peruse magazine articles, and if you find one that's relevant to your field and it contains names of professionals, you can reach out to them to learn more and get job leads. Realize that social media is public and posting pictures of yourself at parties or commenting in an unbecoming way could cost you an opportunity.
- **Ask family members and friends, coworkers, and acquaintances for referrals:** Do they know others who might help you? You can start with the question "Who else should I be talking to?"

- **Use business cards or networking cards:** A printed business card can be an essential tool to help your contacts remember you. Creativity can help in this regard, too. Students often design cards themselves and either hand print them or print them on a home printer.

## Activity: Networking for Career Development

### *Objectives*

- Examine five strategies for obtaining and engaging with networking contacts
- Develop relationships with new contacts to enhance your career

### *Instructions*

- Find information about five companies or people in your field of interest and follow them on Twitter.
- Research which social media platform is popular in your field of interest currently interested in, and find leaders and experts in that field who are good models for how to interact with the audience of that platform. Be thoughtful about creating an account. Remember that these accounts will be highly searchable for a long time. What you post and how and when you post matters. That may enhance (or hurt) your career.
- Find names of three people who interest you (peruse magazine articles, online sites, or other resources), and write an email to them explaining your interests and any requests you may have for information.
- Sign up for newsletters from two professional organizations in

a field you want to know more about.

- Find and attend one in-person or online event within a month.
- Now write about this experience on one of your social media sites.
- Keep your communication on social media positive. It's poor form to attack or bully someone and may have regretful consequences. If you disagree with someone, do so respectfully.

For additional ideas and inspiration about networking for career development, watch the following video, *Hustle 101: Networking For College Students and Recent Grads*. The speaker, Emily Miethner, is a recent college graduate and the founder and president of NYCreative Interns, “dedicated to helping young creatives discover and then follow their dream careers.”

*Video: Hustle 101: Networking for College Students and Recent Grads, Emily Miethner*



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## Sources for Developing Professional Networks

The bottom line with developing professional networks is to cull

information from as many sources as possible and use that information in creative ways to advance your career opportunities. The strategies listed in the section above provide you with a comprehensive set of suggestions. Below is a summary of sources you can use to network your way to career success:

- Meet-up groups
- Conferences
- Special events
- Technology tools
- Social media
- Career centers
- Alumni associations
- Professional organizations
- Volunteer organizations
- Internships
- Part-time job
- Job club
- Networking events
- Magazine articles
- Websites
- Career coaches
- Headhunters
- Career counselors
- Family members
- Friends
- Coworkers
- Vendors
- College professors
- Advisers
- Classmates
- Administrators
- Coaches
- Guest speakers

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Adaptions: Relocated learning objectives. Removed career fair image.

## 26. Résumés and Cover Letters

LUMEN LEARNING AND LINDA (BRUCE) HILL

*“The most important tool you have on a résumé is language.”*

– Jay Samit

A résumé is a “selfie” for business purposes. It is a written picture of who you are—it’s a marketing tool, a selling tool, and a promotion of you as an ideal candidate for any job you may be interested in.

The word *résumé* comes from the French word *résumé*, which means “a summary.” Leonardo da Vinci is credited with writing one of the first known résumés, although it was more of a letter that outlined his credentials for a potential employer, Ludovico Sforza. The résumé got da Vinci the job, though, and Sforza became a longtime patron of da Vinci and later commissioned him to paint *The Last Supper*.

Résumés and cover letters work together to represent you in the most positive light to prospective employers. With a well-composed résumé and cover letter, you stand out—which may get you an interview and then a good shot at landing a job.

In this section, we discuss résumés and cover letters as key components of your career development tool kit. We explore some of the many ways you can design and develop them for the greatest impact in your job search.



## Your Résumé: Purpose and Contents

Your résumé is an inventory of your education, work experience, job-related skills, accomplishments, volunteer history, internships, residencies, and/or more. It's a professional autobiography in outline form to give the person who reads it a quick, general idea of who you are, and what skills, abilities, and experiences you have to offer. With a better idea of who you are, prospective employers can see how well you might contribute to their workplace.

As a college student or recent graduate, though, you may be unsure about what to put in your résumé, especially if you don't have much employment history. Still, employers don't expect recent grads to have significant work experience. And even with little work experience, you may still have a host of worthy accomplishments to include. It's all in how you present yourself.

The following video is an animated look at why résumés are so important. Read a transcript of the video.

### Video: *Why Do I Need a Resume?*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online

here: <https://cwi.pressbooks.pub/pathwaystocollegesuccess/?p=32#oembed-1>

## Elements of Your Successful Résumé

Perhaps the hardest part of writing a résumé is figuring out what format to use to organize and present your information in the most effective way. There is no correct format, per se, but most résumés follow one of the four formats below. Which format do you think will best represent your qualifications?

1. **Reverse chronological résumé:** A reverse chronological résumé (sometimes also simply called a chronological résumé) lists your job experiences in reverse chronological order—that is, starting with the most recent job and working backward toward your first job. It includes starting and ending dates. Also included is a brief description of the work duties you performed for each job, and highlights of your formal education. The reverse chronological résumé may be the most common and perhaps the most conservative résumé format. It is most suitable for demonstrating a solid work history, and growth and development in your skills. It may not suit you if you are light on skills in the area you are applying to, or if you've changed employers frequently, or if you are looking for your first job. Reverse Chronological Résumé Examples
2. **Functional résumé:** A functional résumé is organized around your talents, skills, and abilities (more so than work duties and job titles, as with the reverse chronological résumé). It emphasizes specific professional capabilities, like what you have done or what you can do. Specific dates may be included but are not as important. So if you are a new graduate entering your field with little or no actual work experience, the functional résumé may be a good format for you. It can also be useful when you are seeking work in a field that differs from what you have done in the past. It's also well suited for people in unconventional careers. Functional Résumé Examples
3. **Hybrid résumé:** The hybrid résumé is a format reflecting both

the functional and chronological approaches. It's also called a combination résumé. It highlights relevant skills, but it still provides information about your work experience. With a hybrid résumé, you may list your job skills as most prominent and then follow with a chronological (or reverse chronological) list of employers. This résumé format is most effective when your specific skills and job experience need to be emphasized. Hybrid Résumé Examples

4. **Video, infographic, and website résumé:** Other formats you may wish to consider are the video résumé, the infographic résumé, or even a website résumé. These formats may be most suitable for people in multimedia and creative careers. Certainly with the expansive use of technology today, a job seeker might at least try to create a media-enhanced résumé. But the paper-based, traditional résumé is by far the most commonly used—in fact, some human resource departments may not permit submission of any format other than paper based. Video Resume Examples; Infographic Résumé Examples; Website Résumé Examples

An important note about formatting is that, initially, employers may spend only a few seconds reviewing each résumé—especially if there is a big stack of them or they seem tedious to read. That's why it's important to choose your format carefully so it will stand out and make the first cut.

## Résumé Contents and Structure

For many people, the process of writing a résumé is daunting. After all, you are taking a lot of information and condensing it into a very concise form that needs to be both eye-catching and easy to read. Don't be scared off, though! Developing a good résumé can be fun, rewarding, and easier than you think if you follow a few

basic guidelines. In the following video, a résumé-writing expert describes some keys to success.

## Video: *Resume Tutorial*



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## *Contents and Components To Include*

1. **Your contact information:** name, address (note that some recommend not sharing for security purposes, others recommend sharing to be complete), phone number, professional email address
2. **A summary of your skills:** 5–10 skills you have gained in your field
3. **Work experience:** depending on the résumé format you choose, you may list your most recent job first; include the title of the position, employer's name, location, employment dates (beginning, ending); Working for a family business is valid work experience and should definitely be on a resume.
4. **Volunteer experience:** can be listed in terms of hours completed or months/years involved. Use the same format as that used to list work experience.
5. **Education and training:** formal and informal experiences matter; include academic degrees, professional development, certificates, internships, etc.

6. **Other sections:** may include a job objective, a brief profile, a branding statement, a summary statement, additional accomplishments, and any other related experiences

### *Caution*

Résumés resemble snowflakes in as much as no two are alike. Although you can benefit from giving yours a stamp of individuality, you will do well to steer clear of personal details that might elicit a negative response. It is advisable to omit any confidential information or details that could make you vulnerable to discrimination, for instance. Your résumé will likely be viewed by a number of employees in an organization, including human resource personnel, managers, administrative staff, etc. By aiming to please all reviewers, you gain maximum advantage.

- Do not mention your age, gender, height or weight.
- Do not include your social security number.
- Do not mention religious beliefs or political affiliations, unless they are relevant to the position.
- Do not include a photograph of yourself or a physical description.
- Do not mention health issues.
- Do not use first-person references (I, me).
- Do not include wage/salary expectations.
- Do not use abbreviations.
- Proofread carefully—absolutely no spelling mistakes are acceptable.

## Top Ten Tips for a Successful Résumé

1. Aim to make a résumé that's 1-2 pages long on letter-size

paper.

2. Make it visually appealing.
3. Use action verbs and phrases.
4. Proofread carefully to eliminate any spelling, grammar, punctuation, and typographical errors.
5. Include highlights of your qualifications or skills to attract an employer's attention.
6. Craft your letter as a pitch to people in the profession you plan to work in.
7. Stand out as different, courageous.
8. Be positive and reflect only the truth.
9. Be excited and optimistic about your job prospects!
10. Keep refining and reworking your résumé; it's an ongoing project.

Remember that your résumé is your professional profile. It will hold you in the most professional and positive light, and it's designed to be a quick and easy way for a prospective employer to evaluate what you might bring to a job. When written and formatted attractively, creatively, and legibly, your résumé is what will get your foot in the door. You can be proud of your accomplishments, even if they don't seem numerous. Let your résumé reflect your personal pride and professionalism. A resume is also a "living document" and will change as your experiences and skills change.

In the following video, *Résumé Tips for College Students From Employers*, several college graduate recruiters summarize the most important points about crafting your résumé. Download a transcript of the video.

# Video: *Résumé Tips for College Students From Employers*



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## Résumé Writing Resources

	WEBSITE	DESCRIPTION
2	The Online Resume Builder (from My Perfect resume)	The online résumé builder is easy to use. Choose your résumé design from the library of professional designs, insert prewritten examples, then download and print your new résumé.
3	Résumé Builder (from Live Career)	This site offers examples and samples, templates, tips, videos, and services for résumés, cover letters, interviews, and jobs.
4	Résumé Samples for College Students and Graduates (from About Careers)	This site offers a plethora of sample résumés for college students and graduates. Listings are by type of student and by type of job. Résumé templates are also provided.
5	Job Search Minute Videos (from College Grad)	This site offers multiple to-the-point one-minute videos on topics such as print résumés, video résumés, cover letters, interviewing, tough interview questions, references, job fairs, and Internet job searching.
7	42 Résumé Dos and Don'ts Every Job Seeker Should Know (from The Muse)	A comprehensive list of résumé dos and don'ts, which includes traditional rules as well as new rules to polish your résumé.

## *Activity: Create Your Résumé*

### *Objectives:*

- Compile data reflecting your professional and educational skills and accomplishments.
- Assess the main résumé formats and select one that meets your needs.
- Create a first draft of your professional résumé.

### *Directions:*

1. Compile all needed information for your résumé, including your contact information, a summary of your skills, your work experience and volunteer experience, education and training (including your intended degree, professional development activities, certificates, internships, etc.). Optionally you may wish to include job objective, a brief profile, a branding statement, additional accomplishments, and any other related experiences.
2. Select one of the résumé builder tools listed above in the Résumé Writing Resources table.
3. Create your résumé, following instructions at your selected site.
4. Save your document as a PDF file.
5. Follow instructions from your instructor on how to



submit your work.

## Your Cover Letter

A cover letter is a letter of introduction, usually 3–4 paragraphs in length, that you attach to your résumé. It's a way of introducing yourself to a potential employer and explaining why you are suited for a position. Employers may look for individualized and thoughtfully written cover letters as an initial method of screening out applicants who may lack necessary basic skills, or who may not be sufficiently interested in the position.

Often an employer will request or require that a cover letter be included in the materials an applicant submits. There are also occasions when you might submit a cover letter uninvited (also called a letter of interest). For example, if you are initiating an inquiry about possible work or asking someone to send you information or provide other assistance.

With each résumé you send out, always include a cover letter specifically addressing your purposes.

### Cover Letter Examples

### *Characteristics of an Effective Cover Letter*

Cover letters should accomplish the following:

- Get the attention of the prospective employer
- Set you apart from any possible competition
- Identify the position you are interested in

- Specify how you learned about the position or company
- Present highlights of your skills and accomplishments
- Reflect your genuine interest
- Please the eye and ear

The following video features Aimee Bateman, founder of Careercake.com, who explains how you can create an incredible cover letter. Download a transcript of the video.

## Video: *5 Steps to an Incredible Cover Letter*

<https://youtu.be/mxOli8laZos>

## Cover Letter Resources

	WEBSITE	DESCRIPTION
1	Student Cover Letter Samples (from About Careers)	This site contains sample student/recent graduate cover letters (especially for high school students and college students and graduates seeking employment) as well as cover letter templates, writing tips, formats and templates, email cover letter examples, and examples by type of applicant.
2	How to Write Cover Letters (from CollegeGrad)	This site contains resources about the reality of cover letters, using a cover letter, the worst use of the cover letter, the testimonial cover letter technique, and a cover letter checklist.
4	Cover Letters (from the Yale Office of Career Strategy)	This site includes specifications for the cover letter framework (introductory paragraph, middle paragraph, concluding paragraph), as well as format and style.

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Foundations of Academic Success: Words of Wisdom  
essay removed (exists elsewhere in this work).

Adaptions: Relocated learning objectives. Image of  
helping write a resume removed. Image of piles of paper  
on a table removed.

## 27. Pathways Plan A, B, and C

Where will you be in five years?

At the beginning of this book, we asked you to consider your personal “why” for college. Most students who choose to invest their time and resources in a college education do this because they think they will realize a return on their investment, perhaps in terms of a better career or higher wages.

But what effect will college have on your life? Will your college degree make you happier? What are your goals, dreams, and values? How will you make sure that your life means something?

In their popular book *Designing Your Life*, Bill Burnett and Dave Evans apply the principles of design thinking to create not just one—but three—plans for success in career and life. They argue that creating a Plan A, an Plan B, and a Plan C will help you to achieve more clarity about what you really want from your life and better understand how college fits into your true desires.

In this video, Brenda Fisher, CWI’s Visual and Performing Arts Department Chair, explains more about Pathways plans and how they work.



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here: <https://cwi.pressbooks.pub/pathwaystocollegesuccess/?p=146#oembed-1>

We have referenced Burnett and Evans’s ideas in our Pathways plans assignments. You will create three very different five-year plans for your life. For each plan, you will consider both career and life goals.

## ***PATHWAYS PLAN A: DEFAULT***

Default career: In terms of your career and employment situation, where would you like to be in five years? What's your default career goal? For example, do you intend to be a certified nurse in five years? Do you want to be a high school math teacher?

Personal goal: Aside from your educational/career goals, what aspect of your personal life would you like to work on over the next five years? For example, do you have a health goal? Would you like to travel more? Are there certain skills you'd like to develop?

## ***PATHWAYS PLAN B: BACKUP***

Backup career: If your default career goal (above) doesn't work out, what's the second-best option? What's your backup career? (tip: Look back at the Next Steps Idaho assignment)

Personal goal: Aside from your educational/career goals, what aspect of your personal life would you like to work on over the next five years? For example, do you have a health goal? Would you like to travel more? Are there certain skills you'd like to develop?

## ***PATHWAYS PLAN C: FUN***

Fun career: If money weren't a factor and you didn't need to consider what other people think about your decisions, what fun or completely out-of-the-box career option would you pursue?

Personal goal: Aside from your educational/career goals, what aspect of your personal life would you like to work on over the next five years? For example, do you have a health goal? Would you like to travel more? Are there certain skills you'd like to develop?

To see examples of what a completed plan looks like, you can try the Google image search: Odyssey Plans. Note that our worksheet is slightly different, and the directions for this Pathways

assignment may ask for things you don't see in some examples. Completing this activity will help you to connect your career goals to what really matters to you in life.





PART IX

HEALTH AND LIFESTYLE



## 28. Engaging in a Healthy Lifestyle: Introduction



Figure 11.1 Movement, in all its forms, is an important element of health and wellness. Movement contributes to balance, cardiovascular health, strength, and flexibility; it can also help clear your mind in the midst of study and stress. (Credit: Steven Pisano / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

### Student Survey

How do you feel about health and wellness? These questions will help you determine how the chapter concepts relate to you right now. As we are introduced to new concepts and practices, it can be informative to reflect on how your understanding changes over time. We'll revisit these questions at the end of the chapter to help you identify opportunities for improved health. Take this quick survey to figure it out, ranking questions on a scale of 1–4, 1 meaning “least like me” and 4 meaning “most like me.”

1. I eat enough fruits and vegetables every day.
2. I get enough sleep.

3. I have, for the most part, healthy relationships with friends and family.
4. I feel like I know how to manage stress.

You can also take the Chapter 11 survey anonymously online.

## STUDENT PROFILE

“My freshman year of college, I started at a pretty big university. I had what some call “social anxiety” and even cried before getting out the car on my first day. That year was a struggle for me, and I constantly had to fight with myself to step out of my comfort zone in order to succeed. I knew that if I made positive changes to my life then I would easily succeed in school. I joined a group of students who were a support system for me during my first year of college. Together we studied together and even worked out together. It helped me be more involved on my campus and less worried. Being connected with other students has taught me a lot of ways to cope with common problems many students face.

“My first advice would be first and foremost, always make sure you are being kind to yourself. It’s not advisable to work 40 hours a week and also try to be a full time student. You need to set up a realistic home and school life so that way you are balanced with your assignments and other responsibilities. You need to give your body and your brain time to rest so you can absorb as much as you want to without restrictions. I found it useful to start working out to make sure that I’m dedicating the time I should be to myself and not working myself until exhaustion. Little things like exercise, yoga and meditation can do amazing things for your body as well as your mind. If you take care of your body, your body will take care of you.”

–**Felicia Santiago**, Delgado Community College

## About this Chapter

This chapter explores the many ways your health is impacted by your lifestyle choices. The goal of this material is to help you do the following:

- – Describe actions you can take to improve your physical health.
- – Identify ways to maintain and enhance your emotional health.
- – Understand mental health risks and warning signs.
- – Articulate reasons and ways to maintain healthy relationships.
- – Outline steps you can take to be more safety conscious.

Recent headlines were buzzing with news about a 17-year-old boy who lost his eyesight because of a poor diet. While the boy ate enough food and his weight was considered normal, when doctors investigated, they discovered he didn't eat enough **nutrient-rich** food. A self-described picky eater, the teen's daily diet consisted of sausage, deli ham, white bread, Pringles, and french fries. His food choices led to numerous nutritional deficiencies of several essential vitamins and minerals, causing nutritional optic neuropathy.<sup>1</sup>

Have you heard the saying “you are what you eat”? If so, likely a parent or someone who loves you said it while coaxing you to eat your vegetables. Are we really what we eat, and what does this phrase actually mean? While the example of the boy who lost his vision may be extreme, the food we eat does impact our physical and mental health. What's at the end of our fork can keep us healthy or eventually make us sick. Every 27 days, our skin replaces itself and our body makes new cells from the food we eat.<sup>2</sup> And according to Dr. Libby Weaver, every three months we completely rebuild and replace our blood supply. What you eat becomes you.

It's not only what you eat that impacts your health but also how

much you exercise, how effectively you deal with stress, how well you sleep, your work habits, and even your relationships—these things all have an impact on your well-being.

There are two primary reasons we become unhealthy. First, we do not deliver enough nutrients for our cells to operate properly, and second, our cells are bombarded with too many toxins. Keeping it simple, good health is proper nutrients in, toxins out. Toxins come from a host of sources—certain foods, the environment, stressful relationships, smoking, vaping, and alcohol and drug use. And if we don't sleep and exercise enough, toxins can hang around long enough to cause us harm.

As a first-year college student you will make many choices without parental oversight, including the food you eat and the way you take care of your body and brain. Some choices put you on a path to health, and other choices can lead you down a path toward illness. There is a strong connection between success in college and your ability to stay healthy.

Health is more than a strong body that doesn't get sick. Health also includes your overall sense of well-being (mental, emotional) and healthy relationships. Good health is about making positive choices in all of these areas, and avoiding destructive choices. It's about learning to be smart, to set boundaries, to watch out for your safety, and to take care of the one body that will carry you through life.

While health and wellness are often interchanged, it is important to differentiate the two concepts. **Health** is a state of physical, mental, and social well-being, while **wellness** is a process through which people become aware of and make choices toward a healthy and fulfilling life.

## Footnotes

- 1Harrison, Warburton, Lux, and Atan. Blindness caused by a

junk food diet. *Annals of Intern Med.* September 3, 2019.

- 2<https://www.webmd.com/beauty/cosmetic-procedures-overview-skin#1>

## 29. Taking Care of Your Physical Health

### Questions to consider:

- What is healthy eating?
- Why is it important to stay hydrated?
- How important is exercise to a healthy body?
- Are you getting enough sleep to be healthy?
- What are toxins, and how can they affect your health?

You have one body. Treat it well so as to maximize its ability to serve you throughout your life. Often physical health gets moved to the bottom of the priority list when we are busy. Taking care of your physical health doesn't mean six-pack abs or training for a marathon. It means honoring your physical needs so your body can function properly, feeding your cells the nutrients that will keep your body working well your entire life, and minimizing exposure to toxins to reduce your risk of disease.

### Healthy Eating

While it's not the only thing that contributes to great health, what you eat makes a huge difference. We have 37 trillion cells in our body. The only way they function optimally is with good nutrition. As a college student, you will be surrounded by temptations to eat poorly or even to overeat. It's now up to you to make wise choices in the face of these temptations. Your grocery store is likely full of many healthy foods and just as many unhealthy foods. You may grab food on the run while racing to class or order a pizza at midnight while studying for a test. Lobby vending machines or a stash of



snacks in your room should not turn into a substitute for real meals. The downside of fast food and easy access treats is that many are loaded with sugar, salt, or both.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) updated their Healthy Plate Guidelines in 2011. MyPlate illustrates five different food groups considered the building blocks for a healthy diet—vegetables, fruits, protein, grains, and dairy.

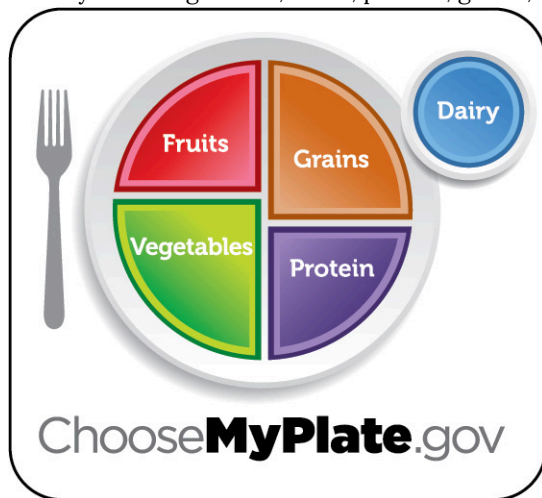


Figure 11.2 Eating healthy is a journey shaped by many factors, including our state of life, situations, preferences, access to food, culture, traditions, and the personal decisions we make over time. The USDA recommends that vegetables and fruits make up the largest portions of your diet, and dairy the smallest portion. All your food and beverage choices count. MyPlate offers ideas and tips to help you create a healthier eating style that meets your individual needs and improves your health. (Credit: USDA / Public Domain)

It's also important to know what is not a healthy plate. A healthy plate is low in refined carbohydrates (donuts, pastries, pasta, cookies), low in sugar, and low in saturated fat (although we need healthy fats like avocado and nuts). You can learn more at <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/>.

## *Whole Foods vs. Processed Foods*

Choose whole foods. Whole foods are any foods that have not been processed, packaged, or altered in any way. Whole foods are an essential part of a healthy diet because they contain the vitamins and minerals our bodies need.

Examples of whole foods include the following:

- **Vegetables:** Carrots, broccoli, kale, avocados, cauliflower, spinach, peppers
- **Fruits:** Apples, bananas, blueberries, strawberries, grapes, melons, peaches
- **Grains:** Brown rice, oatmeal, barley, buckwheat, quinoa, millet
- **Beans:** Black, pinto, kidney, black-eyed peas, chickpeas

Minimize **non-whole foods**. These are foods that have been processed, such as cookies, hot dogs, chips, pasta, deli meat, and ice cream. Even seemingly healthy foods like yogurt, granola, and protein bars are processed and should be checked for added sugar and other unhealthy ingredients.

The average American eats 62 percent of their daily calories from processed foods.<sup>3</sup> In order for your body to be as healthy as possible, it's extremely important to include lots of whole foods in your diet.

## *How to Read a Food Label*

The U.S. government requires food manufacturers to put a label on every processed food product. This is so we, as consumers, know what we are putting into our bodies and can make good dietary choices. A quick review of the label will provide a lot of important information about what you are eating, yet most people don't take the time to read the label. This is a big mistake.

Think of the front of the package as a marketing billboard. Don't

be fooled by the marketing. Every day millions of dollars are spent to persuade us to eat foods that are not healthy for us. Through visuals (like the strawberry on the bottle of dressing below) and words (like natural, healthy, or gluten free), the food industry wants us to make assumptions about the nature of a food product without looking at the facts. For example, many people eat protein bars thinking they are a healthy choice, but protein bars can have up to 30 grams of sugar! Understanding the nutrition information and ingredients will help you make healthier choices. When you take the time to read the labeled ingredients, you are no longer being marketed to—you are staring at the facts.

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
8 servings per container	
<b>Serving size</b>	<b>2/3 cup (55g)</b>
<b>Amount per serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>% Daily Value*</b>	
<b>Total Fat</b> 8g	<b>10%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	<b>5%</b>
<i>Trans</i> Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 160mg	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g	<b>13%</b>
Dietary Fiber 4g	<b>14%</b>
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	<b>20%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 240mg	6%
* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.	

Figure 11.3 This label displays the key nutritional information about a common container of fruit salad. Though fruit is generally healthy, be aware of the amount of calories and sugars, and particularly the serving size to which those amounts are tied. Note

that the US government has updated food label requirements and this version of the label will soon be the only one you'll see. (Credit U.S. Food and Drug Administration / Public Domain)

Look at the label on the back of what appears to be a healthy item: fruit salad or fruit cocktail. One of the first things to look for is the amount of sugar. 12 grams equals just under 2.5 teaspoons. The serving size indicated is 2/3 cups, so if you have double that amount, it's the equivalent of spooning out 5 teaspoons of sugar. The lower the sugar the better.

It's also important to avoid high amounts of sodium, to minimize saturated fats, and to avoid all trans fats. Trans fats are unhealthy substances made through the process of solidifying liquid oils to increase the shelf life of foods. Also called partially hydrogenated oil, trans fats are often found in margarine, microwave popcorn, crackers, cookies, and frozen pizza. Saturated fat usually comes from animal products like butter and meat fat. Saturated fat tends to raise the level of cholesterol in the blood, and while some is OK, moderation is best.

Dietary fiber is a good thing; the higher the number the better. Fiber has virtually no calories, but it holds water in your stomach, makes you feel full, and helps with digestion. Vitamins are very important. Aim to get to 100 percent of your recommended daily value through the food you eat throughout the day.

Next, look at the ingredient list that can be found at the bottom of the nutrition label. A long list of ingredients likely contains fillers and preservatives you should avoid. If you can't pronounce an ingredient, you can generally assume it is not a healthy option. And it's not only what you eat, it's what you don't eat. As a rule, the fewer the ingredients, the better.

This video on how to read a food label is a helpful overview on what else to look for.

You can also download the **Fooducate** app, which allows you to scan the bar code of any food item and quickly see a report card and suggestions for healthier alternatives.

While food tracking and label reading can be useful tools for many individuals in achieving a balanced diet, it's crucial to acknowledge that these strategies may not be suitable for everyone. If you're managing an eating disorder or have a history of disordered eating behaviors, these approaches can sometimes reinforce obsessive tendencies or unhealthy habits. In such instances, the guidance of a qualified healthcare provider or therapist is strongly advised. Individualized care is paramount, and a one-size-fits-all approach to diet and nutrition often misses the nuances of each person's relationship with food. Hence, consider engaging with healthcare professionals to devise strategies that are sensitive to your individual needs, history, and lifestyle. Always remember, what works for one person may not be appropriate for another; the key is to choose methods that suit your unique situation.

## What You Drink

What is your go-to drink when you are thirsty? Soda? Juice? Coffee? How about water? Most of your blood and every cell in your body is composed of water. In fact, water makes up 60 to 80 percent of our entire body mass, so when we don't consume enough water, all kinds of complications can occur. To function properly, all the cells and organs in our body need water. Proper hydration is key to overall health and well-being. By the time you feel thirsty, you

are already dehydrated. Dehydration is when your body does not have as much water and fluids as it needs. Researchers at Virginia Polytechnic discovered that mild dehydration (as little as losing 1 to 2 percent of body water) can impair cognitive performance.<sup>4</sup> Water increases energy and relieves fatigue, promotes weight loss, flushes toxins, improves skin complexion, improves digestion, and is a natural headache remedy (your brain is 76 percent water). Headaches, migraines, and back pains are commonly caused by dehydration. Your body will also let you know it needs water by messaging through muscle cramps, achy joints, constipation, dry skin, and of course a dry mouth.

Aside from feeling thirsty, the easiest way to tell if you are dehydrated is to check your urine. If it is a dark shade of yellow, your urine is over-concentrated with waste. This happens because water helps flush out waste and when you're hydrated there's a higher ratio of water to waste, turning your urine a lighter color.

One of the best habits you can develop is to drink a large glass of water first thing in the morning. Your body becomes a little dehydrated as you sleep. Drinking water first thing in the morning allows your body to rehydrate, which helps with digestion and helps move the bowels for regularity in the morning. It also helps to eliminate the toxins your liver processed while you slept.

Check out this video for more benefits of drinking water.

Staying hydrated is important to keep your body healthy, energized, and running properly. As a general guideline, aim to drink eight glasses of water a day, although a more helpful guide is to drink half your body weight in ounces (for example, if you weigh 150 lb, try to drink 75 oz of water a day). One of the best ways to remind yourself to drink throughout the day is to buy a reusable bottle and bring it everywhere you go. There are two reasons to use a refillable water bottle instead of a plastic bottle:

1. **Your own health.** Most plastic water bottles have a chemical called bisphenol A (BPA), which is added to plastics to make them more durable and pliable. BPA is known to disrupt

hormones and has been linked to sperm dysfunction.

2. **The health of the planet.** Do you know that every time you drink from a plastic water bottle and casually toss it in the trash, it can stay on the planet approximately 450 years?<sup>5</sup> Even when you recycle, the complex nature of recycling doesn't guarantee your plastic bottle will make it through the process. Americans purchase about 50 billion water bottles per year, averaging 13 bottles a month for each of us. By using a reusable water bottle, you can save an average of 156 plastic bottles annually.<sup>6</sup>

*"But I don't like the taste of water!"* It may take time, but eventually you will. Add a little more each day, and eventually your body will feel so fantastic fully hydrated that you will have water cravings.

Water remains the quintessential beverage for overall health, but it's understandable that one might opt for variety. Instead of admonishing soda or commercial fruit juice consumption, it's helpful to focus on informed choices. Checking the nutrition label on your beverage—something you're likely adept at already—can reveal the sugar content or presence of artificial sweeteners.

As for fruit juices, while some store-bought options do contain high levels of sugar, a careful scan of the nutrition label can guide you toward alternatives with higher real fruit content and lower added sugars.

The key takeaway here is empowerment through knowledge: knowing what goes into your drink allows you to make choices that align with your health goals.

## Exercise

Many people exercise to maintain or lose weight, but weight loss is only one potential benefit of exercise. Regular exercise can improve the quality of your sleep, strengthen your bones, increase your



energy levels, and reduce your risk of high blood pressure, diabetes, and even some forms of cancer.<sup>7</sup> Regular exercise is key to living a long, healthy life.

There are three basic types of exercise—flexibility, strength training, and cardiovascular.

1. **Flexibility** is the range in motion of the joints in your body, or the ability for your muscles to move freely. Without adequate flexibility, daily activities can become difficult to do. Stretching increases your body's flexibility, improves circulation, and sends more blood to your muscles. Just a few minutes a day of deep stretching can have a powerfully positive impact on your health. Yoga and Tai Chi are other wonderful ways to improve your flexibility.
2. **Strength** is the body's ability to produce force. Strength training helps improve muscle strength and muscle mass, which will become increasingly important as you age. Increased muscle helps your body burn calories more efficiently. Strength training also helps maintain bone strength. In addition to lifting weights, other ways to build strength include push-ups, pull-ups, squats, lunges, and yoga.
3. **Cardiovascular** is the body's ability to use oxygen efficiently during exercise. As one's ability to use oxygen improves, daily activities can be performed with less fatigue. Great cardiovascular modes of exercise include jogging, swimming, biking, and HIIT (high intensity interval training). HIIT is short bursts of intense activity followed by a rest period. With HIIT, you can squeeze a lot of benefit into a short period of time. [Click here for an example of HITT workouts.](#)



Figure 11.4 Your college may offer a variety of unique and interesting exercise programs and classes, which you can take advantage of to learn new things and stay fit. (Credit: Jo Allebon / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Research suggests that aerobic exercise holds benefits for memory and cognition, including the promotion of neural growth in the brain's memory center and reduced inflammation—a factor implicated in neurodegenerative conditions.

At the same time, the relationship between exercise and cognitive function is complex and not fully understood. The emphasis here is on regular, sustainable movement. A target of 150 minutes per week is a well-supported guideline,<sup>1</sup> but the focus is less about hitting a specific quota and more about incorporating consistent activity into your life. Understand that exercise is but one facet of a multi-dimensional approach to well-being; it's not a panacea. Diseases and conditions like high blood pressure can arise from a complex interplay of factors, many of which may be beyond one's control.

1. CDC, "How much physical activity do adults need?", <https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/adults/index.htm>

Therefore, the most efficacious exercise regimen is one that you will adhere to. Choose activities that resonate with you, as the act of moving—rather than the specific form it takes—holds the most sway in contributing to a healthier life.

## Toxins

We live in an increasingly toxic world. Since the Industrial Revolution, we have released thousands of man-made chemicals into the environment. These chemical toxins are in our food (pesticides, conventional fertilizers), in food packaging, in household products, and in our personal care products. Many of these chemicals have been linked to infertility, asthma, migraines, ADHD, and cancer.

The complicated thing about these chemicals is that their effects can take years or even decades to appear. The chemicals build up over time *and they interact with each other*, which can result in problems that are not considered by “single chemical” testing (which is the majority of the limited testing that is done).

Now the good news—there are simple things you can do right now to limit the amount of toxins in your environment. First, it is best to avoid any products with “artificial colors” or “fragrance.”

- **Artificial colors:** Synthetic dyes like Yellow 10, Blue 1, and Red 28 may contain carcinogens and neurotoxins and can be absorbed by your skin and go directly into your bloodstream.
- **Fragrance:** Have you ever walked down the cleaning and laundry soap aisle and been assaulted by so many fragrances you couldn't get to the next aisle fast enough? Claiming trade secrets, companies don't have to tell us what's in “fragrance,” which can include highly toxic ingredients, hormone disruptors, and carcinogens. Fragranced products come in the form of soaps, cleaners, air fresheners, hand sanitizers, laundry

detergents, and personal care products. Studies have repeatedly shown that the synthetic fragrances and other toxic chemicals included in these products are causing a range of health problems.<sup>9</sup>

There is a long and ever-growing list of common chemicals to avoid, but it's hard to remember the names when you are shopping. That's where a handy app like Healthy Living from the EWG comes in.

Simply scan the bar code of any products you use and learn about any potential health hazards.

**“Many Americans are surprised to learn that the ingredients in their makeup, shampoo and body lotion are largely unregulated and, in some cases, harmful to their health. The fact is that companies can put potentially dangerous ingredients into the products they sell without ever having to prove they are safe.”**

— Heather White, *Environmental Working Group Executive Director*

Your skin is your largest organ, and in seconds will absorb what you put on it. It's important to be wary of conventional skin care products that could potentially leak toxins into your body. Think of your skin as one giant mouth. If you wouldn't eat the ingredients in your products, think twice before applying them to your skin.

## ANALYSIS QUESTION

Are your eating and sleeping habits currently affecting your ability to have a super-successful college experience? Describe the health and wellness changes a commitment to eating clean and sleeping well will bring about, and how you will benefit in the short and long term.

## Footnotes

- 3Dr. Joel Fuhman <https://www.mensjournal.com/features/joel-fuhrman-the-doctor-is-out-there-20121107/>
- 4University of Virginia <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4207053/>
- 5<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/01/10/stark-truth-long-plastic-footprint-will-last-planet/>
- 6[https://www.earthday.org/2018/03/29/fact-sheet-single-use-plastics/#\\_ftn5](https://www.earthday.org/2018/03/29/fact-sheet-single-use-plastics/#_ftn5)
- 7Harvard Medical School [https://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter\\_article/Exercise\\_as\\_medicine](https://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter_article/Exercise_as_medicine)
- 8Kelty, Journal of Applied Physiology
- 9<https://www.ewg.org/>

## 30. Sleep

### Questions to consider:

- How much sleep is enough?
- What are the impacts of sleep deprivation?
- Which strategies and support can enhance sleep?

How often do you wake up filled with energy, eager to embrace the day? How often do you wake up still tired, with heavy eyes that just don't want to open? Your answer to these questions has a direct bearing on the quality of your decisions, your ability to use good judgement, the extent to which you can focus in the classroom, and ultimately your long-term health.

A great night's sleep begins the minute you wake up. The choices you make throughout the day impact how quickly you fall asleep, whether you sleep soundly, and whether your body is able to successfully complete the cycle of critical functions that only happen while you sleep.

Sleep is the foundation of amazing health, yet almost 40 percent of adults struggle to get enough sleep.<sup>10</sup> Lack of sleep affects mental and physical performance and can make you more irritable. The diminished energy that results from too little sleep often leads us to make poor decisions about most things, including food. Think about the last time you were really tired. Did you crave pizza, donuts, and fries—or a healthy salad? Studies have shown that people who sleep less are more likely to eat fewer vegetables and eat more fats and refined carbohydrates, like donuts.<sup>11</sup>

With sufficient sleep it is easier to learn, to remember what you learned, and to have the necessary energy to make the most of your college experience. Without sufficient sleep it is harder to learn, to remember what you learned, and to have the energy to make the most of your college experience. It's that simple.

## What Happens When We Sleep?

Sleep is a time when our bodies are quite busy repairing and detoxifying. While we sleep we fix damaged tissue, toxins are processed and eliminated, hormones essential for growth and appetite control are released and restocked, and energy is restored. Sleep is essential for a healthy immune system. How many colds do you catch a year? How often do you get the flu? If you are often sick, you do not have a healthy immune system, and sleep deprivation may be a key culprit.

A review of hundreds of sleep studies concluded that most adults need around eight hours of sleep to maintain good health. Some people may be able to function quite well on seven and others may need closer to nine, but as a general rule, most people need a solid eight hours of sleep each night. And when it comes to sleep, both quantity and quality are important.

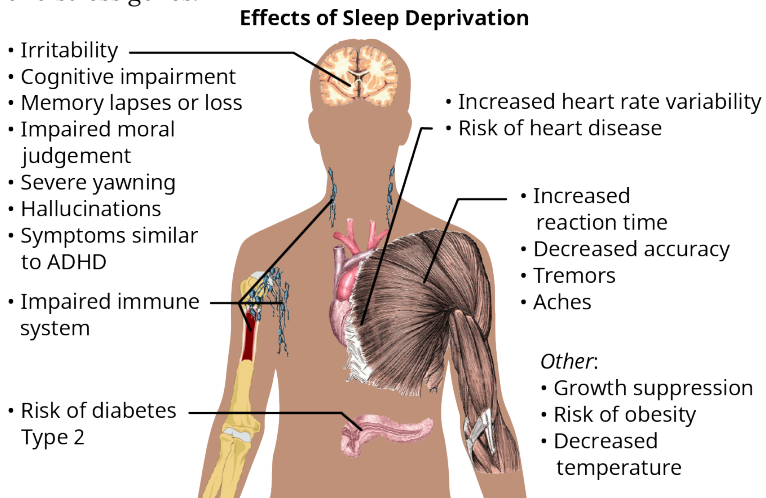
When sleep is cut short, the body doesn't have time to complete all the phases needed for the repair and detoxification.

A tiny lobe called the pineal gland helps us fall asleep. The pineal gland secretes melatonin to calm the brain. The pineal gland responds to darkness. If you are watching TV until the minute you go to bed and then sleep with the artificial light from smartphones and other devices, your brain is tricked into thinking it is still daylight; this makes it difficult for the pineal gland to do its job. In addition, if the TV shows you watch before bed are violent or action-packed, your body will release cortisol (the stress hormone). Anything that creates stress close to bedtime will make it more difficult to fall asleep. A bedtime practice of quiet activities like reading, journaling, listening to music, or meditation will make it much easier to fall asleep.

# What Happens If You Don't Get Enough Sleep?

Lack of sleep has a big impact on your overall state of health and well-being. Studies have linked poor sleep to a variety of health problems. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have identified sleep deprivation as a public health epidemic.

A lack of sleep can change the way your genes express themselves. One notable study involved a group of healthy adults limited to six hours of sleep for one week. Researchers then measured the change in gene activity compared to the prior week when these same people were getting a full eight hours of sleep a night. The lack of sleep caused the activity of 711 genes to become distorted. About half of the genes were switched off by a lack of sleep, and these genes were associated with the immune system. The other half of the genes experienced increased activity from a lack of sleep, and these were genes associated with the promotion of tumors, genes associated with long-term chronic inflammation, and stress genes.<sup>12</sup>



**Figure 11.5 The Effects of Sleep Deprivation** This visual depicts many of the ways we are affected by insufficient sleep. (Credit: Häggström, Mikael (2014). "Medical gallery of Mikael Häggström



2014". *WikiJournal of Medicine*. Public Domain.)

Some of the health risks of insufficient sleep include the following:

**Increased risk of heart attack and stroke:** In his book *Why We Sleep*, Matthew Walker, PhD, shares Japanese research showing that male workers who average six hours of sleep or less are 400 to 500 percent more likely to suffer one or more cardiac arrests than those getting more than six hours of sleep each night. Another study of women between the ages of 20 and 79 found that those who had mild sleep disturbance such as taking longer to fall asleep or waking up one or more times during the night were significantly more likely to have high blood pressure than those who fell asleep quickly and slept soundly.<sup>13</sup>

**Impaired cognitive function:** Even one night of sleeping less than six hours can impact your ability to think clearly the next day.

**Increased risk of accidents:** Sleep deprivation slows your reaction time, which increases your risk of accidents. You are three times more likely to be in a car crash if you are tired. According to the American Sleep Foundation, 40 percent of people admitted to falling asleep behind the wheel at least once. A Governor's Highway Safety Association report estimates there are 6,400 fatal drowsy driving crashes each year. Fifty percent of these crashes involve drivers under the age of 25.<sup>14</sup>

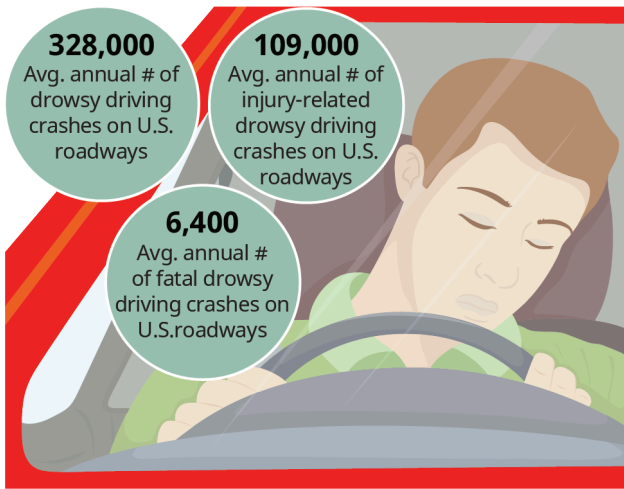


Figure 11.6 Driving while drowsy puts you, your passengers, and many others in danger. (Credit: Modification of work by Governors Highway Safety Association.)

Driving after 20 hours without sleep is the equivalent of driving with a blood-alcohol concentration of 0.08 percent—the U.S. legal limit for drunk driving.

**Weight gain/increased risk for obesity:** Sleep helps balance your appetite by regulating hormones that play a role in helping you feel full after a meal. Also, cortisol is released during times of anxiety, and exhaustion causes your body to produce more cortisol. This can stimulate your appetite.

**Increased risk of cancer:** Tumors grow up to three times faster in laboratory animals with severe sleep dysfunctions. Researchers believe this is because of disrupted melatonin production, as melatonin has both antioxidant and anticancer activity.

**Increased emotional intensity:** The part of the brain responsible for emotional reactions, your amygdala, can be 60 percent more reactive when you've slept poorly, resulting in increased emotional intensity.

For more information on the advantages and health risks of sleep

watch this TED Talk by Matt Walker, PhD, Director of the Sleep Center at U California Berkeley.

## Tips to Improve the Quality of Your Sleep

Now that you are more aware of the ways insufficient sleep harms your body, let's review some of the things you can do to enhance your sleep.

### **Make sleep a priority.**

It can be challenging in college, but try to get on a schedule where you sleep and wake at the same time every day to get your body accustomed to a routine. This will help your body get into a sleep rhythm and make it easier to fall asleep and get up in the morning.

### **Sleep in a cool, quiet, dark room.**

Create a sleeping environment that is comfortable and conducive to sleep. If you can control the temperature in your room, keep it cool in the evening. Scientists believe a cool bedroom (around 65 degrees) may be best for sleep, since it mimics our body's natural temperature drop. Exposure to bright light suppresses our body's ability to make melatonin, so keep the room as dark as possible. A 2010 study in *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* found that individuals exposed to room light "during the usual hours of sleep suppressed melatonin by greater than 50%."<sup>15</sup> Even the tiniest bit of light in the room (like from a clock radio LCD screen) can disrupt your internal clock and your production of melatonin, which will interfere with your sleep. A sleep mask may help eliminate light, and earplugs can help reduce noise.

### **Avoid eating late or drinking alcohol or caffeine close to bedtime.**

It is best to finish eating at least two hours before bedtime and avoid caffeine after lunch. While not everyone is affected in the same way, caffeine hangs around a long time in most bodies.

Although alcohol will make you drowsy, the effect is short-lived and you will often wake up several hours later, unable to fall back to sleep. Alcohol can also keep you from entering the deeper stages of sleep, where your body does most of the repair and healing. A 2013 *Scientific Research* study concluded that “energy drinks, other caffeinated beverages and alcoholic beverages are risk factors of poor sleep quality.” It’s important to finish eating hours before bedtime so your body is able to heal and detoxify and it is not spending the first few hours of sleep digesting a heavy meal.

**Start to wind down an hour before bed.**

There are great apps to help with relaxation, stress release, and falling asleep. Or you can simply practice 4-7-8 breathing to calm your nervous system—breathe in to the count of 4, hold your breath for a count of 7, and release your breath slowly to the count of 8.

Consider the Insight Timer app, or any of the free apps listed by the American Sleep Association.

**Exercise for 30 minutes a day.**

One of the biggest benefits of exercise is its effect on sleep. A study from Stanford University found that 16 weeks in a moderate-intensity exercise program allowed people to fall asleep about 15 minutes faster and sleep about 45 minutes longer. Walking, yoga, swimming, strength training, jumping rope—whatever it is, find an exercise you like and make sure to move your body every day.

**Improve your diet.**

Low fiber and high saturated fat and sugar intake is associated with lighter, less restorative sleep with more wake time during the night. Processed food full of chemicals will make your body work extra hard during the night to remove the toxins and leave less time for healing and repair.

Sleep affects how we look, feel, and function on a daily basis and is vital to our health and quality of life. When you get the sleep your body needs, you look more vibrant, you feel more vibrant, and you have the energy to live your best life.

Now, with a better understanding of the benefits of getting the recommended hours of nightly sleep and the health risks of not

getting enough sleep, what changes can you make to improve the quality and quantity of your sleep?

## What If I'm Doing All These Things and I Still Have Trouble Sleeping?

People that have trouble falling asleep also often have low magnesium levels (sources suggest that over half of the adults in the United States are magnesium deficient). You can ask your doctor to check your magnesium levels, but you can also focus on eating magnesium-rich foods to help. One of the best magnesium-rich snacks is pumpkin seeds. Other great sources are almonds, sesame seeds, and walnuts.

Difficulty sleeping may be a sign that you have a clinical sleep problem, such as insomnia or sleep apnea. If you are doing all the right things and still have trouble falling or staying asleep, talk to your doctor.

These are some resources for insomnia:

- Healthy Sleep, Harvard Medical School Division of Sleep Medicine
- Insomnia Treatment, American Association of Sleep Medicine
- Sleep Medicine, Society of Behavioral Sleep Medicine

## ANALYSIS QUESTION

Do you have a ritual to shut down your day and calm your mind? If yes, can you identify two ways to improve upon your current ritual? If no, what three things can you put in place to prepare your body and mind for a restorative night's sleep?

## Footnotes

- 10<https://news.gallup.com/poll/166553/less-recommended-amount-sleep.aspx>
- 11Cleveland Clinic, <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/lack-sleep-make-crave-junk-food/>
- 12Archer, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23440187>
- 13Matthew Walker, PhD **Why We Sleep**
- 14Governors Highway Safety Association
- 15JCEM, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3047226/>

# 31. Taking Care of Your Emotional Health

## Questions to consider:

- What are some of the ways to tell if you are holding onto stress?
- How do mindfulness and gratitude encourage emotional health?

## Identifying and Managing Stress

According to a 2018 report from the American College Health Association, in a 12-month period 42 percent of college students reported that they have felt so depressed it was difficult to function, and 63 percent reported feeling overwhelming anxiety.<sup>16</sup> Your ability to manage stress, maintain loving relationships, and rise to the demands of school and work all impact your emotional health.

Stress is not always bad. In fact, some stress is helpful. Good stress is stress in amounts small enough to help you meet daily challenges. It's also a warning system that produces the fight-or-flight response, which increases blood pressure and your heart rate so you can avoid a potentially life-threatening situation. Feeling stressed can be perfectly normal, especially during exam time. It can motivate you to focus on your work, but it can also become so overwhelming you can't concentrate. It's when stress is chronic (meaning you always feel stressed) that it starts to damage your body.

## *What Chronic Stress Does to Your Body*

Do you find it difficult to concentrate or complete your work? Are you frequently sick? Do you have regular headaches? Are you more anxious, angry, or irritable than usual? Do you have trouble falling asleep or staying awake? If you answered yes to any or all of these questions, you may be holding on to too much stress.

Stress that hangs around for weeks or months affects your ability to concentrate, makes you more accident-prone, increases your risk for heart disease, can weaken your immune system, disrupts your sleep, and can cause fatigue, depression, and anxiety.<sup>17</sup> To learn more about what stress does to your body, click here: [apa.org/helpcenter/stress](https://apa.org/helpcenter/stress).

Some people refer to the time we are living in as the age of overload. It's easy to get worn down by social media and the constant news cycle, and to be overwhelmed by too many choices. We live in a fast-paced, always-on world with a lot of pressures. The military created the VUCA acronym for the world we currently live in. VUCA stands for volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous, and as a result of living in this VUCA world, many of us are in a constant state of overdrive.

You will have stress. Stress is inevitable. It's how you deal with it that can make all the difference. One of the most important things you can do is to keep perspective on your stressors. When feeling stressed, ask yourself, on a scale of 1 to 100, how stressful a situation is this? Will I even remember this three years from now? When facing potential stressors, the way you view what you're experiencing can intensify your stress or minimize it.

There are many ways to manage stress. Take a look at some of the ideas in the stress toolkit below. Which ones have you tried? Which ones do you want to try? It's helpful to have different tools for different situations—for example, a calming yoga pose in your dorm room and deep breathing in the classroom.



# Mindfulness and Gratitude

Deep breathing, mindfulness, and a practice of gratitude are some of the most effective ways to manage stress and take care of your emotional health.

## *Mindfulness*

Mindfulness means being present with your thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment. Mindfulness is also without judgement—meaning there is no right or wrong way to think or feel in a given moment. When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune into what we're sensing in the present moment rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future.<sup>18</sup>

Anything that keeps you present in the moment and gives your prefrontal cortex (the reasoning and thinking part of your brain) a break is practicing mindfulness. Mindfulness can be a slow walk; looking intently at the grass, trees, flowers, or buildings; and being aware of what you are sensing and feeling. Mindfulness can be sitting quietly—even sitting still in a quiet place for as little as a few minutes can reduce heart rate and blood pressure.<sup>19</sup>

Developing a practice of mindfulness is easier than you may think:

- **Slow down.** From brushing your teeth, to washing your face, to shampooing your hair—can you take the speed out of getting ready in the morning? Focus on the activity, pay attention to what you are doing, stay present (this means don't think about what happened last night or what's in store for the day, just stay focused on the activity), and take your time.
- **Focus on your breath.** How fast are you breathing? Is your breath coming from your chest or your belly? Can you feel the air come through your nose on the inhale? Can you slow down the exhale? Can you feel your body relax when you slow the

exhale?

- **Connect to your environment.** Walk for a few minutes, focused on the world around you—look at the leaves on the trees or the light at the corner, listen to the sounds around you, stay with your surroundings, and observe what you see and hear around you.

**“We can’t change the world, at least not quickly, but we can change our brains. By practicing mindfulness all of us have the capacity to develop a deeper sense of calm.”**

— Rick Hanson, author, *Resilient*

## *Deep Breathing*

When people hear mindfulness they often think meditation. While meditation is one method of mindfulness, there are many others that may be simpler and easier for you to practice. Deep breathing helps lower stress and reduce anxiety, and it is simple yet very powerful. A daily mindful breathing practice has been shown to reduce test anxiety in college students.<sup>20</sup> A 2-4-6-8 breathing pattern is a very useful tool that can be used to help bring a sense of calm and to help mild to moderate anxiety. It takes almost no time, requires no equipment, and can be done anywhere:

- – Start by quickly exhaling any air in your lungs (to the count of 2).
- – Breathing through your nose, inhale to the count of 4.
- – Hold your breath for a count of 6.
- – Slowly exhale through your mouth to the count of 8.

This is one round. Do not repeat the quick exhale again. Instead start round two with an inhale through your nose to the count of 4, hold for 6, and exhale to 8. Repeat for three more rounds to relax your body and mind.

With practice, 2-4-6-8 breathing will become a useful tool for times when you experience tension or stress.

## *Meditation*

UCLA Health offers a robust collection of evidence-based meditation practices, designed to cultivate emotional well-being and resilience. Initially recommended by various counselors and mental health professionals, their free app serves as an accessible gateway into the realm of mindfulness. Their YouTube Channel features enriching content, such as Diana Winston's Breathing Meditation, which guides novices and experts alike through the nuances of meditative breathing.

The foundational premise of UCLA Health's approach to meditation is one of inclusivity and self-compassion. Recognize that your mind will inevitably wander; view these moments not as failures but as opportunities to return to the present. Each re-centering is akin to a "bicep curl for the brain," enhancing mental fortitude over time. You can initiate your practice with brief sessions—perhaps 3 minutes to begin—and gradually extend the duration to 15 or 20 minutes.

For those seeking additional resources, other noteworthy apps in the realm of meditation include Insight Timer, CALM, and Headspace. The College of Western Idaho has also partnered with Therapy Assistance Online (TAO). Students have free access to over 150 educational sessions related to mental health and wellness.

## *Gratitude*

Too often people think it is the external factors that bring us joy and happiness, when really it's all related to internal work. According to UCLA's Mindfulness Awareness Research Center, "Having an

attitude of gratitude changes the molecular structure of the brain, and makes us healthier and happier. When you feel happiness, the central nervous system is affected. You are more peaceful, less reactive and less resistant.”<sup>21</sup>

Numerous studies show that people who count their blessings tend to be happier and less depressed. In a UC Berkeley study, researchers recruited 300 people who were experiencing emotional or mental health challenges and randomly divided them into three groups. All three groups received counseling services. The first group also wrote a letter of gratitude every week for three weeks. The second group wrote about their thoughts and feelings with negative experiences. The third group received only counseling. The people in the group who wrote gratitude letters reported significantly better mental health for up to 12 weeks after the writing exercise ended.

This would suggest that a healthy emotional self-care practice is to take note of good experiences or when you see something that makes you smile. Think about why the experience feels so good. According to Rick Hanson, author of *Resilient*, “Each day is strewn with little jewels. The idea is to see them and pick them up. When you notice something positive, stay with the feeling for 30 seconds. Feel the emotions in your whole body. Maybe your heart feels lighter or you’re smiling. The more you can deepen and lengthen positive experiences the longer those positivity neurons in your brain are firing—and the longer they fire the stronger the underlying neural networks become. Repeat that process a half dozen times a day and you’ll feel stronger, more stable and calmer within a few weeks.”

Build a Stress Toolkit	
Practice self- compassion	Laugh with friends
Eat clean food	Listen to music
Mindfulness	Drink calming tea
Meditation	Watch a funny movie
Deep breathing (2-4-6-8)	Write in a gratitude journal
A walk in nature	Change phone screen to this picture
Exercise/Movement	Change passwords to calming words
Yoga, Tai chi	Keep something in your backpack
Dance	that reminds you to take a deep
HIIT	breath every time you see it
Run, Spin, Lift	
Epsom salt baths	
Hugs	

Figure 11.7 Do you have a stress toolkit filled with a variety of stress-coping tools to help you navigate any stressful situation? (Credit: Modification of work by Robin Benzrihem)

ACTIVITY

Take a look at some of the suggested tools for your stress toolkit. Which ones have you tried? Have they been effective in helping you manage stress? Ask two friends or family members about their favorite stress-management strategies. What has worked for you and others that is not on this list? Identify two new tools you would like to explore and articulate how you will determine if they work for you, and then you can confidently add them to your stress toolkit.

Footnotes

- 16American College Health Association 2018 report  
<https://www.acha.org/documents/ncha/NCHA->

II\_Spring\_2018\_Reference\_Group\_Executive\_Summary.pdf

- 17The University of Maryland Medical Center  
UMMC, <https://www.umms.org/ummc>
- 18Moran, Joan; University of California at Los Angeles,  
<http://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/gratitude-249167>
- 19The Greater Good Science Center, UC Berkeley  
<https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/>
- 20Levitin, Time Special Edition 2018, The New Mindfulness
- 212016 Study Journal of PLoS One, <https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316>

## 32. Taking Care of Your Mental Health

### **Question to consider:**

- What is mental health?
- How can I take care of it?

The World Health Organization ranks mental health conditions as the leading cause of disability in the United States. One in four adults experience a diagnosable mental health disorder in any given year, yet more than half will not seek treatment. The primary reason people don't seek the help they need is shame and fear of judgment from friends, family, and coworkers. It is important to remove any stigma associated with mental health and encourage those who need help to seek support.

### WHAT STUDENTS SAY

1. In your opinion, which of the following is the most significant health issue facing college students?
  - a. stress and/or exhaustion
  - b. drinking and/or substance abuse
  - c. unhealthy eating
  - d. unhealthy relationships
  - e. safety
2. Which of the following best describes your experience or outlook regarding healthy eating while in college?
  - a. I'm generally able to eat healthy food most of the time.
  - b. I have difficulty eating healthy food because of lack of

- choices on campus.
- I don't have enough money to eat healthy food.
  - I don't have enough time to focus on eating healthy food.
  - I need to learn more about healthy eating.
  - It's not something I'm very concerned about.
3. When you are facing an issue regarding your emotions, stress, mental health, or relationships, what do you typically do?
- Wait for it to pass or work through it.
  - Talk to a health professional.
  - Talk to friends or family.
  - Talk to another trusted person such as a teacher, RA, or religious person.
  - Use a method such as meditation, exercise, or something similar.

You can also take the anonymous What Students Say surveys to add your voice to this textbook. Your responses will be included in updates.

Students offered their views on these questions, and the results are displayed in the graphs below.

In your opinion, which of the following is the most significant health issue facing college students?

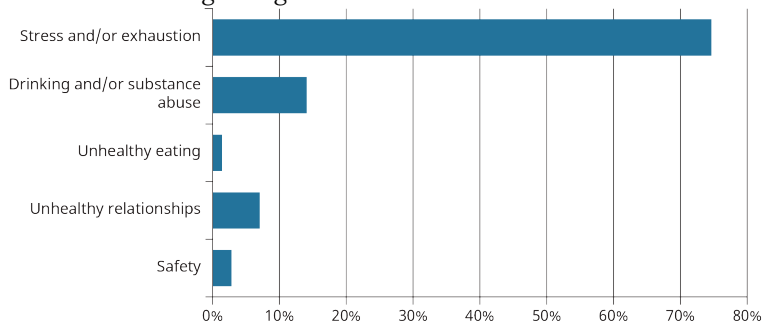


Figure 11.8

Which of the following best describes your experience or outlook regarding healthy eating while in college?



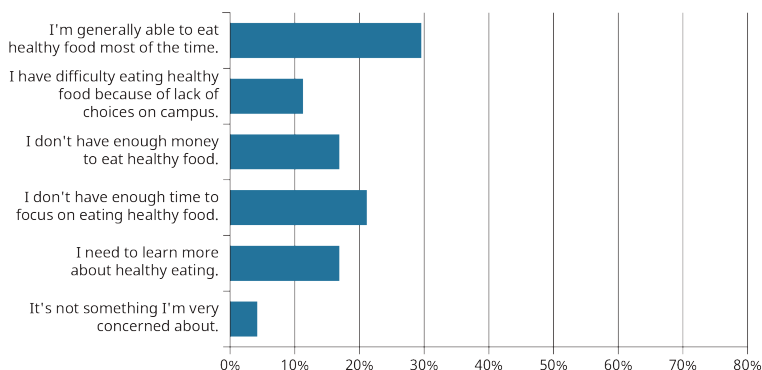


Figure 11.9

When you are facing an issue regarding your emotions, stress, mental health, or relationships, what do you typically do?

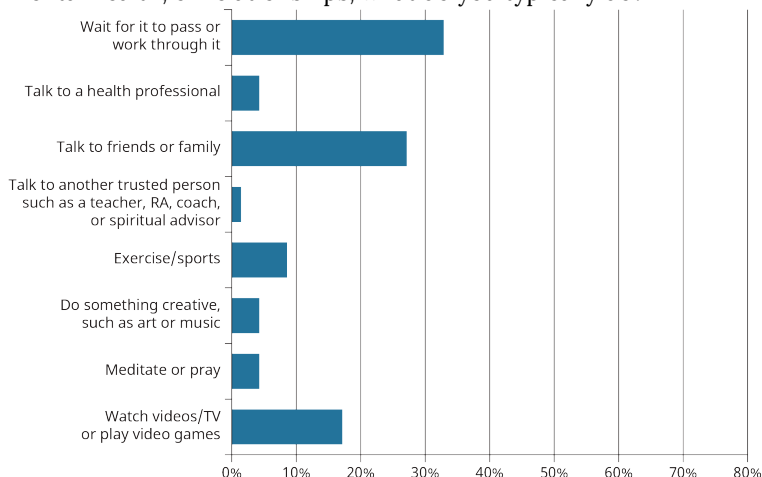


Figure 11.10

## What Is Mental Health?

Mental health serves as more than a mere absence of mental disorders; it is an empowering state that equips individuals to effectively navigate life's complexities, actualize their capabilities,

perform meaningful work, and positively impact their communities.<sup>1</sup> This state of well-being is a dynamic interplay of emotional, behavioral, and cognitive facets.

In contrast, a mental disorder disrupts this harmonious state, impeding an individual's ability to function across multiple spheres. The roots of such disorders are often multifactorial, stemming from biological, psychological, social, and environmental influences.<sup>2</sup> Prevalent categories of mental disorders include mood disorders, anxiety disorders, eating disorders, substance use disorders, and psychotic disorders. A range of treatments exists to manage these conditions, from psychotherapy and medication to self-guided strategies.

## *Anxiety Disorders*

We all experience the occasional feeling of anxiety, which is quite normal. New situations, meeting new people, driving in traffic, and public speaking are just a few of the common activities that can cause people to feel anxious. It is important to seek help when these feelings become overwhelming, cause fear, or keep us from doing everyday activities. Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health concern in the United States, and while there are many types of anxiety disorders, they all have one thing in common: “persistent, excessive fear or worry in situations that are not threatening.”<sup>23</sup> Physically, your heart may race, and you may experience shortness of breath, nausea, or intense fatigue. Talk with a mental health care professional if you experience a level of anxiety that keeps you from your regular daily activities.

1. American Psychological Association, <https://www.apa.org/topics/mental-health>

2. Ibid.

## *Eating Disorders*

Eating disorders are not uncommon among students. Stress or anxiety may create a desire for some students to overeat, while others may develop a concern about body shape or weight and significantly reduce their food intake.

**Anorexia nervosa** is a potentially fatal illness marked by self-starvation. People with anorexia usually have an irrational concern about body shape or weight and eat a very restricted diet. They may also feel the need to exercise all the time, even when they are sick or exhausted.

**Binge eating** is frequent consumption of large amounts of food in a short period of time. People who binge regularly (more than once a week) and feel a lack of control over their eating may have binge eating disorder (BED). It is important to seek treatment if you suspect there is an issue with binge eating. Treatment can address any underlying psychological issues that will help control urges to binge eat.

**Bulimia** involves cycles of excessive eating followed by eliminating food through vomiting or with laxatives. Eating disorders can lead to many complications, some of them very serious, like heart conditions and kidney failure. It is crucial for anyone with an eating disorder to stabilize their health, then continuing medical care and counseling to reach full recovery. Eating disorders can be treated successfully with medical care, psychotherapy, counseling, or coaching.

If you think you might have an eating disorder, visit a doctor or your local health center. The National Eating Disorders Association also offers information, help, and support.

## *Depression*

Most people feel sad at times. This is a normal reaction to loss or

struggles we face. Being sad is not the same as having depression. When intense sadness lasts for several days or even weeks and you are no longer interested in activities you once enjoyed, it may be depression. Depression can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems and can decrease a person's ability to function at work and at home.

Depression does not have a single cause. It can follow a life crisis or physical illness, but it can also occur spontaneously. Several factors including trauma, a significant life change, brain injury, and drug and alcohol misuse may contribute to depression. Depression is a treatable medical condition. Talk with a mental health care professional if you experience an ongoing level of sadness that keeps you from your regular daily activities.

### *Suicidal Behavior*

Suicide is when people direct violence at themselves with the intent to end their lives, and they die because of their actions.<sup>24</sup>

People who contemplate suicide often experience a deep feeling of hopelessness. They often don't feel they can cope with challenging life events and are not able to see solutions to problems. In the moment, they are unable to see that the challenges are really only temporary. Most survivors of suicide attempts go on to live wonderful, full lives.

Depression is a key risk factor for suicide, along with substance abuse, chronic debilitating pain, mental health disorders, and a family history of suicide.

These are some of the warning signs to help you determine if a friend or loved one is at risk for suicide, especially if the behavior is new, has increased, or seems related to a painful event:

- talking about wanting to die or to kill themselves
- looking for a way to kill themselves, like searching online or buying a gun

- talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- talking about being a burden to others
- increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly
- sleeping too little or too much
- withdrawing or isolating themselves
- showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- extreme mood swings<sup>25</sup>

Help is available all day, every day, for anyone who might be in crisis. By offering immediate counseling to everyone that may need it, crisis centers provide invaluable support at the most critical times. If you or someone you know has warning signs of suicide, get help as soon as possible. Family and friends are often the first to recognize any warning signs and can help take the first step in finding treatment.

If someone is telling you that they are going to kill themselves, do not leave them alone. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A Crisis Text Line is also available 24/7 by texting HOME to 741741, 85258, or 686868. There are also near-term plans to implement a 988 suicide hotline number that will work similarly to 911.

### *Additional Resources*

Because entering college is such a big transition, it is important to know what health services are available on your campus. Some help may be beyond the scope of a college counseling program, and if this is the case, your college health center can refer you to off-campus resources to support you.

Regardless of where you attend college, OK2TALK and NAMI offer online, text, and phone support.

- OK2TALK is a community for young adults struggling with mental health problems. It offers a safe place to talk.
- Call the NAMI helpline at 800-950-6264, or txt NAMI to 741741.

Your brain requires a constant supply of energy to function. What you eat and are exposed to have a direct impact on its processes, your mood, and your ability to make good decisions. A majority of college students feel anxious, lonely, or depressed at some point during the year. We all have bad days, and sometimes bad days string into weeks. It's OK to feel bad. What's important is to acknowledge and work through your feelings, and find a friend or a counselor to talk to.

## Footnotes

- 22Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mental\\_health](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mental_health)
- 23NAMI, <https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/Images/FactSheets/Anxiety-Disorders-FS.pdf>
- 24NIMH, <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/suicide-faq/index.shtml>
- 25<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/how-we-can-all-prevent-suicide/>; <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/suicide-faq/index.shtml>

# 33. Maintaining Healthy Relationships

## Questions to consider:

- How does self-care benefit relationships?
- Why is community so important to healthy relationships?
- What is sexual health?

Relationships are key to happy and healthy lives. According to Dr. Robert Waldinger, director of the Harvard Study of Adult Development, people with the best health outcomes were people who “leaned into relationships, with family, with friends, with community.”



Figure 11.11 Healthy relationships involve trust, respect, and support. (Credit: Garry Knight / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

The quality of our relationships is important, however. What makes a relationship healthy? Relationships come in many forms: lovers, family, friends, coworkers, team members, and neighbors. Think of

a relationship where you have mutual respect and trust, supporting each other in tough times, celebrating the good times, and communicating with ease and honesty. This is a healthy relationship. Do you have someone in mind? On the other hand, if communication is often tense or strained, confidences are broken, or you don't feel listened to, appreciated, or valued, these are signs of an unhealthy relationship. Unhealthy relationships can have both immediate and longer-term health impacts. If you are unhappy in a relationship, try to improve the relationship, or end it. Do not stay in a relationship for the wrong reasons, such as fear of being alone or guilt.

If a partner tries to force you to do something sexually, harms you physically, or is verbally abusive, you are in an unhealthy relationship. Even if you believe the person loves you, it does not make up for the harm they are doing to you. End the relationship.

Take a moment to assess the health of your relationships. Who are the people who make you smile, who boost your confidence, who truly listen when you need to talk, and who want only the best for you? Investing in these relationships is likely to make you happier and healthier. Relationships are two-way streets. How committed are you to your relationships? How much effort do you put into nurturing your relationships?

## Self-Care

Healthy relationships start with healthy individuals. Self-care is learning to take good care of yourself and to prioritize your own needs. Self-care involves any activity that nurtures and refuels you, such as taking a walk in the woods, going to a yoga class, attending a sporting event, reading a good book, or spending time with friends. When you are feeling calm and nourished, you are going to look forward to your day, and despite how busy it is, you will prioritize time with friends and family. If you don't take care of and learn to



love yourself, you will never be able to bring your best self to any relationship.

An important dynamic you bring to any relationship is how you feel about yourself. Self-esteem is about loving yourself and being happy for who you are. Building healthy self-esteem impacts how you see yourself, which can drastically improve your relationships. While low self-esteem won't keep us from romantic love, it can act as a barrier to a healthy relationship. If you do not believe you are good enough, how can you expect your partner to think so?

When you feel secure in yourself, this allows you and your partner to feel more secure about the relationship. If you have insecurities, it may show in your relationship as jealousy, defensiveness, or tension that leads to unnecessary arguments. Healthy self-esteem goes hand in hand with self-confidence, and feeling confident about yourself will translate into a stronger and more satisfying relationship. If you are experiencing low self-esteem, you may give your partner too much credit or stay in a relationship that is not healthy for you. If you find yourself changing your personality for someone else, that is never a sign of a healthy relationship.

You can reverse negative self-talk and build your self-esteem. If you catch yourself thinking you are unlovable, unattractive, or not good enough, it's important to start talking to yourself in a positive way and to celebrate all that is uniquely you.

Self-care includes self-forgiveness. We all make mistakes. A misstep isn't the end of the world. Pick yourself up, put things in perspective, acknowledge any lessons to be learned, focus on all that makes you special, and move forward. Be kind to yourself.

## The Importance of Community

The Nicoya Peninsula in Costa Rica is home to some of the highest number of centenarians (people who are 100 years old or older) in the world. Costa Ricans in general report a high level of life

satisfaction. Dan Buettner, author of the Blue Zones study of the longest living populations in the world, explains that Costa Rica “is a place where religion, family, and social interaction are the main values, unlike trying to get ahead, or financial security, or status. Their cities are set up so they’re bumping into each other all day long. They walk to the markets, where they have conversations with people.”<sup>26</sup>

In Costa Rica, multiple generations live together under the same roof or nearby where they can be involved in each other’s lives. Neighbors are like extended family, and people often stop in for a visit and go out of their way to help one another.

While this isn’t the way many of us live in the United States, the lessons from the Blue Zone study underscore the importance of community and the health benefits of connecting to and staying close to a community. What communities do you belong to? The people you live with? A sports team? A club or people you volunteer with? When you start seeing the social circles you connect to as communities and prioritize your time to develop more closeness with those communities, you will experience many physical, mental, and emotional health benefits.



Figure 11.12 Joining clubs in college can be an outstanding way to

join and build communities. (Credit: SupportPDX, Cerritos College / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

According to an analysis of research on college students (Joe Cuseo, *The Most Potent, Research-Based Principles of College Success*), college students who have a higher sense of belonging and are more involved in their college community are more successful. Additionally, college students who are involved in extracurricular, volunteer, and part-time work experiences outside the classroom (less than 20 hours per week) earn higher grades than students who do not get involved in any out-of-class activities at all.

## APPLICATION

Make a list of the communities you belong to. Your list should include formal communities—for example, sports teams, fraternities or sororities, and membership in clubs and other organizations. Your list should also include informal communities—for example, your neighbors or the people you always see at your favorite exercise class.

Next to each community, write how being a member of this community benefits you and how your involvement benefits the community. Now, make a new list of your personal interests and passions. How well do these align with the communities you already belong to? Are there new communities that would be a good fit for you?

If you are struggling to identify communities you already belong to, think about your passions, causes you care about, and ways you love to spend your time. Find a group or club that aligns with your interests. If you can't find one that already exists, start a new club!

Research has shown that friends provide a sense of meaning or purpose in our lives, and that having a healthy social life is important to staying physically healthy. In a meta-analysis of the research

results from 148 studies of over 300,000 participants, researchers found that social relationships are important in improving our lifespan. Social support has been linked to lower blood pressure and better immune system functioning. The meta-analysis also showed that social support operates on a continuum: the greater the extent of the relationships, the lower the health risks.<sup>27</sup>

According to a 2018 report from the American College Health Association, in a 12-month period, 63 percent of college students have felt very lonely. If you are feeling lonely or having a hard time making friends, know that the majority of people around you have also felt this way. Joining a group or a club of people who share your interests and passions is one of the best ways to make great friends and stay connected.

## Sexual Health

Affection, love, and sexual intimacy all play an important role in healthy relationships, and a responsible approach to intimacy is essential for sexual health. Whether you are already sexually active or become sexually active in the future, your choices can affect your safety as well as the health and safety of your sexual partners. It's important to understand what you can do to protect yourself from sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Common Sexually Transmitted Infections

Infection	Symptoms	Diagnosis and Treatment
Human papillomavirus (HPV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HPV can be passed even when an infected person has no signs or symptoms.</li> <li>• Most people with HPV do not know they are infected.</li> <li>• Symptoms can include genital warts, abnormal Pap test results, and cancer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no test for HPV.</li> <li>• There is a vaccine to prevent it.</li> <li>• There is no treatment for HPV, although there are treatments for the health problems it can cause.</li> <li>• Routine Pap tests can identify problems.</li> </ul>
Chlamydia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symptoms include a burning sensation when urinating and/or discharge from the penis or vagina; however, most people who have chlamydia have no symptoms.</li> <li>• In women, it can cause damage to the reproductive system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Testing usually involves a urine sample or vaginal swab.</li> <li>• It can be cured with the right treatment.</li> </ul>
Genital herpes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genital herpes is caused by two types of viruses, herpes simplex type 1 and herpes simplex type 2.</li> <li>• The virus can be released through sores or through the skin even when sores are not visible.</li> <li>• Get examined by your doctor if you notice an unusual sore, a smelly discharge, or burning when urinating.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It can be diagnosed through the symptoms, testing a sample from the sore(s), or a blood test.</li> <li>• There is no cure for herpes; however, there are medicines that can prevent or shorten outbreaks.</li> </ul>

Infection	Symptoms	Diagnosis and Treatment
Gonorrhea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Symptoms can include a burning sensation when urinating, abnormal discharge from the penis or vagina, and bleeding between periods.</li> <li>Rectal infection symptoms include itching, burning, and bleeding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get examined by your doctor if you or your sexual partner notice any of these symptoms.</li> <li>Testing is usually a urine sample and possibly a throat or rectum swab.</li> <li>It can be cured with the right treatment.</li> <li>Medication will stop the infection, but it will not undo any permanent damage caused by the disease.</li> </ul>
Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HIV damages the body's immune system cells.</li> <li>The most advanced stage of HIV infection is commonly referred to as AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome).</li> <li>It most often spreads through fluid exchange via unprotected sex or by sharing drug needles with an infected person.</li> <li>Women can pass HIV to their babies during pregnancy or childbirth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medications such as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) can reduce risk when taken consistently and with other prevention measures.</li> <li>People can live with the disease for many years, especially if they are diagnosed and treated early.</li> <li>Early diagnosis is also important to reduce the risk of transmitting HIV to others.</li> </ul>

Table 11.1 STI data, symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment information courtesy of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,

## How You Can Protect Yourself against STIs

For the most certain protection against STIs, abstinence—avoiding any form of vaginal, anal, or oral sex—is your most definitive safeguard. That said, if you are contemplating sexual activity, thoughtful preparation is crucial. Ensure both you and your partner undergo testing and adhere consistently to condom usage. Condoms remain necessary until both parties have clear test results, are engaged in mutual monogamy, and employ alternative methods for birth control. Mutual monogamy refers to a shared agreement to exclusively engage in sexual activity with one another, providing a layer of protection against STIs, given that both parties are verified to be STI-free. Resourceful tools for locating confidential STI testing locations are readily available online.

Engage in an open dialogue with your partner about strategies for STI and pregnancy prevention before commencing sexual activity. Being ready for sexual encounters signifies readiness to guard your well-being and long-term health. Clearly establish boundaries and activities that you are comfortable with; your partner should unequivocally respect your ability to decline any actions that make you uneasy. In all scenarios, consent and mutual respect are non-negotiable prerequisites.

Prompt consultation with a healthcare provider is vital should you discover you have an STI. Openness about your STI status with your partner, although potentially awkward, is essential. Such candor enables your partner to make well-informed decisions that protect their health as well.

## Footnotes

- 26<https://www.bluezones.com/2017/10/costa-rica-singapore-two-happiest-places-earth/>
- 27Holt-Lunstad, *PLoS Medicine*, <https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316>



PART X  
INTRODUCTION TO  
RESEARCH



## 34. Research Skills in the Workplace: A Brief Overview

In most of your college courses, you will be asked to research topics so that you can learn more about them. But the same research skills you are practicing in your classes are also critical to success in the workplace. Here are some general ways that you may use research in your future career, regardless of your pathway:



Photo by UX Indonesia on Unsplash

1. **Decision-making:** Research skills are crucial for making informed decisions. In any workplace, there are always decisions to be made, and having the ability to research and analyze information can help you make more informed choices.
2. **Problem-solving:** Research skills are also important for problem-solving. When faced with a problem, it is essential to be able to gather and analyze information to come up with the best possible solution.
3. **Innovation:** Research skills can also lead to innovation in the workplace. By researching new ideas and technologies, you can help your organization stay ahead of the competition and be more innovative.
4. **Credibility:** In many industries, credibility is crucial. Research skills can help you establish credibility by demonstrating your ability to gather and analyze information accurately and effectively.
5. **Continuous learning:** Research skills are also important for

continuous learning. In today's fast-paced work environment, it is essential to keep up with new developments in your industry, and research skills can help you do that.

As you can see, research skills are an essential part of many jobs and can help you make better decisions, solve problems, innovate, establish credibility, and keep up with new developments in your industry. You can and should showcase your research skills on your resume, and you should take as many opportunities as possible to practice these skills.

An article from the employment website GlassDoor.com notes several important skillsets we've already learned about that are important to successful research in the workplace. These skills include:

- **Time Management:** From meeting deadlines to decision making to managing stress, time management skills will help you to manage projects and tasks that require research.
- **Critical Thinking:** Being open to new ideas and having the ability to evaluate them will make you a more effective workplace researcher.
- **Problem Solving:** The ability to be an active listener and to communicate effectively will help you to use research to solve problems in your workplace.

This video goes over some ways to refine your Google searches so that you can get better results:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://cwi.pressbooks.pub/pathwaystocollegesuccess/?p=170#oembed-1>

### Knowledge Check

When you are researching something related to your career, what are some red flags you may find with sources? How do you know if a source is credible and reliable? Investigate the kinds of research you might need to do as part of your future career. You might be able to find this information from a Google search, descriptions from online job postings, or a conversation with someone in that field. Spend some time and try to get a solid idea of the kinds of topics you might need to research and what research tools you might use. Make notes of the information from the article and the results of your research.

Now that we've thought about research skills more broadly, let's consider some specific ways research can be used in a variety of fields. If you're not sure what you plan to study yet, look through all the options to see if one of them speaks to you.

## Research in STEM

STEM researchers study a wide range of topics that fall under the categories of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Some of the areas of study include:

1. **Biology:** researchers in this field study living organisms, including cells, genetics, and ecosystems.
2. **Chemistry:** researchers in this field study the composition,

properties, and reactions of matter.

3. **Physics:** researchers in this field study the properties and behavior of matter and energy.
4. **Mathematics:** researchers in this field study abstract concepts such as numbers, quantity, and structure.
5. **Engineering:** researchers in this field apply scientific and mathematical principles to design and build new products, systems, and structures.
6. **Computer Science:** researchers in this field study computation, algorithms, programming, and artificial intelligence.
7. **Environmental Science:** researchers in this field study the natural environment, including its ecosystems, biodiversity, and sustainability.
8. **Materials Science:** researchers in this field study the properties and behavior of materials, including metals, polymers, and ceramics.
9. **Astronomy:** researchers in this field study celestial objects, including planets, stars, and galaxies.

Some websites that may help you with your STEM research include:

- NASA
- National Institutes of Health
- National Science Foundation
- Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics
- CWI Library Biology LibGuide
- CWI Library Math LibGuide

## Research in Social Sciences

Social scientists study a wide range of phenomena related to human

behavior and social interactions. Some of the main areas of study within social sciences include:

1. **Sociology:** the study of human society, social structures, and social interactions.
2. **Psychology:** the scientific study of behavior and mental processes, including perception, cognition, emotion, and motivation.
3. **Education:** the study of how people learn and how to improve the teaching process.
4. **Anthropology:** the study of human cultures, societies, and behavior across time and space.
5. **Economics:** the study of how individuals, organizations, and societies allocate resources and make decisions about production, consumption, and distribution.
6. **Political science:** the study of politics, government, and political behavior at local, national, and international levels.
7. **Geography:** the study of the relationships between people and their physical and social environments.

Social scientists use a range of research methods and tools to study these phenomena, including surveys, experiments, observations, and statistical analysis of data. They may also use interdisciplinary approaches that combine multiple fields of study to gain a more comprehensive understanding of complex social phenomena. Ultimately, social scientists aim to generate new knowledge and insights that can inform policies, practices, and interventions that improve people's lives and well-being.

Some websites that may help you with your social science research include:

- Social Sciences Research Network (SSRN)
- Educational Research Information Center (ERIC)
- National Institutes of Mental Health
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

(SAMHSA)

- National Institute of Justice
- Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI)
- National Archives
- CWI Criminal Justice LibGuide
- CWI History LibGuide
- CWI Psychology LibGuide
- CWI Sociology LibGuide

## Medical Research

Medical researchers investigate a wide range of subjects related to human health and disease. Some of the most common subjects investigated by medical researchers include:

1. **Basic science research:** This includes research on the fundamental aspects of human biology and physiology, such as genetics, molecular biology, and cellular biology.
2. **Clinical research:** This involves studying the effectiveness and safety of medical treatments and interventions, as well as the development of new diagnostic tools and therapies.
3. **Epidemiology:** This field focuses on studying the distribution, determinants, and patterns of health and disease in populations.
4. **Health services research:** This involves investigating the organization, delivery, and financing of healthcare systems, with the goal of improving healthcare quality and reducing costs.
5. **Behavioral and social sciences:** These fields focus on understanding the psychological, social, and cultural factors that influence health behaviors and outcomes.
6. **Public health:** This involves studying the health of populations and the prevention of disease through public health policies



and interventions.

Overall, medical research covers a broad range of subjects, and the field is constantly evolving as new technologies and approaches are developed.

Some websites that may help you with your health sciences/medical research include:

- National Institutes of Health
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control
- Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)
- Library of Congress Research Guides (Medicine)

## Business Research

Researchers in business investigate a wide range of topics related to various aspects of the business world. Some examples of the areas that business researchers might focus on include:

1. **Marketing:** Researchers might study consumer behavior, market trends, advertising strategies, and brand management.
2. **Management:** Researchers might investigate topics such as leadership, organizational behavior, human resource management, and operations management.
3. **Finance:** Researchers might explore topics such as financial markets, investment strategies, and corporate finance.
4. **Entrepreneurship:** Researchers might study topics related to starting and growing new businesses, such as innovation, business models, and venture capital.
5. **International business:** Researchers might investigate topics related to global markets, international trade, and cross-cultural management.
6. **Information systems:** Researchers might explore topics

related to the design, development, and management of information systems and technologies in businesses.

7. **Corporate social responsibility:** Researchers might investigate topics related to sustainability, ethical business practices, and corporate social responsibility.

Overall, the field of business research is broad and interdisciplinary, and researchers may draw on theories and methods from economics, psychology, sociology, and other fields to investigate a wide range of topics.

Some websites that may help you with your business research include:

- Library of Congress Business Research Guide
- Statista
- New York Stock Exchange
- Securities and Exchange Commission
- Business Case Studies Resources from Sheridan College
- Entrepreneur.com
- CWI Business LibGuide

In the next chapter, we will learn more about research questions and how to come up with important questions that you want to answer.

This chapter was developed with assistance from ChatGPT Version 3.5. I used ChatGPT to develop preliminary outlines and to suggest definitions, which I then checked and enhanced. I accessed ChatGPT on April 20-23, 2023 to assist with content creation for this chapter. For more information about the specific chats, please see “Notes on ChatGPT, Research, and Academic Integrity”



# 35. What Is a Research Question?

Most research, both in college and in the workplace, starts with a research question. A research question is a clear and concise statement that identifies the focus of a research project and provides a direction for the research process. It is the fundamental question that the researcher aims to answer through their study.



*Photo by Emily Morter on Unsplash*

A research question should be specific, well-defined, and answerable based on available evidence. It should be grounded in a clear understanding of the existing literature and should address a gap or limitation in current knowledge or practice. It should also be feasible and realistic in terms of the scope and resources available for the research project.

A good research question should be relevant, interesting, and meaningful to the researcher and the intended audience. It should be formulated in a way that allows the researcher to collect and analyze data that will help to answer the question and advance understanding in the field.

Examples of research questions include the following:

- What is the relationship between physical exercise and mental health in older adults?
- What are the factors that influence the adoption of renewable energy technologies in developing countries?
- How does gender affect leadership styles and outcomes in the workplace?

- What is the impact of social media on body image and self-esteem in young adults?

### Knowledge Check

Have you ever developed a research question for an assignment in a class? What about in the workplace? What concerns do you have about developing good research questions?

Overall, a research question is a critical component of the research process, as it helps to guide the design, implementation, and analysis of the study and ensures that the research project is focused and meaningful. What kinds of research questions interest you? What are some topics that are currently being researched in your future career?

Watch this short video for tips on how to develop a good research question:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://cwi.pressbooks.pub/pathwaystocollegesuccess/?p=178#oembed-1>

In the next chapter, we will learn more about research methods we

can use to answer research questions, both in school and in the workplace.

This chapter was developed with assistance from ChatGPT Version 3.5. I used ChatGPT to develop preliminary outlines and to suggest definitions, which I then checked and enhanced. I accessed ChatGPT on April 20–23, 2023 to assist with content creation for this chapter. For more information about the specific chats, please see “Notes on ChatGPT, Research, and Academic Integrity”

## 36. Primary Research and Research Methods

When you are curious about something, how do you learn new things? Maybe you Google the subject or post a question in an online community. Or maybe you research your question in a library to find credible, high-quality sources. Or maybe, depending on your question, you survey your friends for their opinions or interview people who may know more about the subject than you do.



*Photo by Kaleidico on Unsplash*

Working with existing written sources is called secondary research. Primary research involves collecting information yourself.

### What is Primary Research?

Primary research is the process of collecting original data and information directly from the source or subject being studied. It involves conducting new research, often with a specific research question or objective in mind. Primary research can take various forms such as surveys, interviews, experiments, observations, and focus groups. This type of research can be used to gather both qualitative and quantitative data and can be conducted in a variety of settings, including in the field or in a laboratory. The data collected through primary research is often used to inform decision-making, develop new products or services, or further academic research.

### *Knowledge Check*

Primary research skills are useful in every career. Think about a job that you have worked at or a future job that you would like to have. What are some questions that might come up in your job? How could you use primary research to answer those questions?

As you progress in your academic studies, you'll encounter some new approaches to primary research. Qualitative and quantitative research are both used in a variety of fields to answer research questions. The scientific method, which you may have learned in high school, is also an important approach to learning and testing knowledge. What follows is a brief overview of these three research methods.

## **What is Qualitative Research?**

What can we learn from people? Qualitative research is a method of inquiry that focuses on exploring and understanding the subjective experiences and perspectives of individuals or groups. It involves collecting and analyzing data in the form of words, images, or other non-numerical forms, and seeks to uncover deeper insights into the meaning and context of human behavior and social phenomena.

Qualitative research methods include interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis. These methods allow researchers to gather rich and detailed information about people's



attitudes, beliefs, values, and experiences, and to gain an in-depth understanding of complex social processes and relationships.

Qualitative research is used in a wide range of fields, including social sciences, psychology, education, healthcare, business, and marketing. It can be used to explore a variety of research questions, such as:

- How do people experience and cope with chronic illness?
- What are the factors that influence students' academic achievement?
- What are the barriers to effective communication in healthcare?
- How do consumers perceive and respond to advertising messages?

Qualitative research is particularly useful when the research question involves exploring the meanings and interpretations that people give to their experiences, or when the research context is complex and multifaceted. It can also be used to generate hypotheses and ideas for further research, and to inform the development of interventions or policies that are more responsive to people's needs and perspectives.

## What is Quantitative Research?

What can we learn from data? Quantitative research is a method of inquiry that focuses on collecting and analyzing numerical data to answer research questions and test hypotheses. It involves the use of statistical analysis to draw objective and generalizable conclusions about populations and phenomena.

Quantitative research methods include surveys, experiments, and statistical analysis of secondary data. These methods allow researchers to measure and quantify variables, such as attitudes,

behaviors, and outcomes, and to test the relationships between them.

Quantitative research is used in a wide range of fields, including social sciences, psychology, education, healthcare, business, and marketing. It can be used to explore a variety of research questions, such as:

- What is the prevalence of a particular health condition in a population?
- What is the effect of a new medication on patient outcomes?
- What is the relationship between socio-economic status and educational attainment?
- What is the impact of advertising on consumer behavior?

Quantitative research is particularly useful when the research question involves measuring and comparing variables, or when the research context is relatively straightforward and can be operationalized in terms of numerical data. It can also be used to inform evidence-based policies and interventions that are more effective and efficient in achieving desired outcomes.

## What is the Scientific Method?

What can we learn from testing a hypothesis? The scientific method is a systematic approach to acquiring knowledge and understanding of the natural world through empirical observation, experimentation, and analysis. It is a set of guidelines that scientists follow to ensure the accuracy, reliability, and reproducibility of their findings. The scientific method typically involves the following steps:

1. **Observation:** Scientists observe and describe a phenomenon in the natural world, gathering as much data as possible.

2. **Question:** Based on their observations, scientists form a question that they want to answer through their research.
3. **Hypothesis:** Scientists propose a hypothesis, which is a testable explanation for the observed phenomenon.
4. **Prediction:** Scientists use the hypothesis to make predictions about what should happen in future experiments or observations.
5. **Experimentation:** Scientists design and conduct experiments to test their hypothesis and collect data.
6. **Data analysis:** Scientists analyze the data they have collected to determine whether their hypothesis is supported or not.
7. **Conclusion:** Based on their analysis, scientists draw conclusions about their hypothesis, and communicate their findings to the scientific community.
8. **Replication:** Other scientists attempt to replicate the experiment and confirm or refute the initial findings.

This process is iterative, meaning that scientists may repeat certain steps or modify their approach based on new observations or data. Through this process of experimentation and analysis, scientists are able to make increasingly accurate and reliable observations about the natural world.

### *Knowledge Check: Qualitative or Quantitative?*

Think back to what you have already learned about the types of research questions that are common in your field. Which type of primary research—qualitative or quantitative—do you think you'll most often use in your future workplace? Can you think of some examples of

research questions that you might use primary research to answer?

We've just scratched the surface when it comes to research methods. If you are interested in learning more, check out this Creative Commons licensed textbook: *Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices* by Anol Bhatthercherjee. In your major, you may take a research methods course that focuses on the types of research done in your field. Here are some examples of courses at CWI (taken from the CWI 2023/2024 Catalog):

**PSYC 190 Writing for the Social Sciences (3 Credits, Fall/Spring)**

This course is for students majoring in the social sciences, in order to teach an understanding of scientific reading and writing. Upon completion of this course, students will be better prepared for future writing and research intensive courses within their major. An emphasis will be placed on collaboration, information literacy, comprehension, synthesis of empirical research, and the use of APA style to document and write. PREREQ: ENGL 101 or equivalent placement score. (3 lecture hours, 0 lab hours, 3 credits)

**SCIE 225 Essential Principles of Scientific Research**

(1 Credit, Varies)

This course is designed for Biology and Chemistry majors who have an interest in Biomedical Research. The course will serve as a prerequisite for participation in the CWI INBRE Summer Research Fellowship and will also benefit any student who hopes to engage in scientific research during their academic or professional career. This course will allow students to explore research conducted by local scientists; students will read and discuss scientific journal articles and attend presentations by research scientists. The culmination of the course will be the completion of a research fellowship application. This course meets for the equivalent of one

contact hour per week. There are no prerequisites, except an interest in scientific research. (1 lecture hours, 0 lab hours, 1 credits)

### **ENGL 211 Literary Analysis (3 Credits, Fall/Spring)**

This course refines literary analysis skills with emphasis on critical approaches and methods. Students will learn techniques in literary research and apply researched, critical perspectives to a variety of texts. PREREQ: ENGL 102, ENGL 190, ENGL 191, or PERM/INST. (3 lecture hours, 0 lab hours, 3 credits)

### **PHIL 211 Philosophical Writing (3 Credits, Spring)**

This course provides a detailed examination of a small number of focused philosophical topics, with an emphasis on improving students as readers and writers of philosophical texts and developing their ability to communicate philosophical ideas in formal academic writing supported by research. (3 lecture hours, 0 lab hours, 3 credits)

### **HIST 190 Introduction to the Study of History (3 Credits, Fall/Spring)**

Using a major historical theme as a foundation, students will examine the philosophy of history, historiography, and methods of historical research. One component of the course will be researching and writing a historical paper. The historical content of the course will vary. Required of all History majors. (3 lecture hours, 0 lab hours, 3 credits)

### **CRIJ 190 Writing for Criminal Justice (3 Credits, Fall)**

This course is for Criminal Justice majors who want to gain a more in-depth understanding of the technical writing that is commonly used in the criminal justice field. Upon completion of this course, students will be better prepared for future writing opportunities within their major, as well as writing demands of the workplace.

PREREQ: ENGL 101 or equivalent placement score. PRE/  
COREQ: ENGL 102 or equivalent placement score. (3 lecture hours, 0  
lab hours, 3 credits)

### **SOC 280 Sociological Research**

(3 Credits, Fall)

This course is an introduction to the design of sociological research methods and the systematic analysis of social data. Students will learn how to move from a general question to formulate a researchable question with measurable hypotheses as well as how to design and execute a research project. This course will cover quantitative and qualitative methodological and analytical techniques used in sociology. Students will confront the conceptual and ethical issues encountered while conducting sociological research. (3 lecture hours, 0 lab hours, 3 credits)

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# 37. Notes on ChatGPT, Research, and Academic Integrity

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ChatGPT is a large language learning model that was introduced to the public in November 2022. This tool can be useful in research, but it must be used with caution and should not replace your own work or ideas. Some ways I encourage my own students to use ChatGPT in their research and writing include the following:



*Photo by Hitesh Choudhary on Unsplash*

1. Outlining a paper
2. Refining a research question
3. Learning more about basic terms/definitions (Wikipedia can also be a good resource for starting your research, though you should not use Wikipedia as a cited source)
4. Proofreading written work for grammar and syntax

However, you have to be careful with this technology. It sometimes lies (also called “hallucination”). It can reveal cultural biases. And it frankly lacks the creativity and “human” touch that makes academic work truly excellent.

When my students use ChatGPT, I ask them to include a citation to this tool and also to provide a brief reflection about how they used ChatGPT and how they checked the information for accuracy.

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), ChatGPT should be cited like this:

When prompted with “Is the left brain right brain divide real or a metaphor?” the ChatGPT-generated text indicated that although the two brain hemispheres are somewhat specialized, “the notation that people can be characterized as ‘left-brained’ or ‘right-brained’ is considered to be an oversimplification and a popular myth” (OpenAI, 2023).

### **Reference**

OpenAI. (2023). *ChatGPT* (Mar 14 version) [Large language model]. <https://chat.openai.com/chat>

Chat GPT includes the ability to share links to specific chats. It's a best practice to include those links in your reference. For other tools like Google Doc's Writing Assistant, links are not yet available, so it's important to be transparent with your reader about how and when you are using AI in your writing.

It's also important to remember that not all instructors allow students to use ChatGPT. You should check with your individual instructor for their policies. At CWI, the official academic integrity policy, including the use of ChatGPT and other AI assistance, is as follows:

“Practicing academic integrity includes, but is not limited to, non-participation in the following behaviors: cheating, plagiarism, falsifying information, unauthorized collaboration, facilitating academic dishonesty, collusion with another person or entity to cheat, submission of work created by artificial intelligence tools as one's own work, and violation of program policies and procedures.” (CWI Syllabus Template, 2023).

To show you how ChatGPT can be useful in the research and writing process, I used ChatGPT 3.5 in creating some of the content in this part of your textbook. I have included an example screenshot from a chat below. Note: I did not use ChatGPT to recommend



any sources or websites because it often provides fictional sources rather than real ones.

I have copied and pasted the prompt and response below.

*Prompt: What is qualitative research, and how is it used?*

*Response: Qualitative research is a method of inquiry that focuses on exploring and understanding the subjective experiences and perspectives*

*of individuals or groups. It involves collecting and analyzing data in the form of words, images, or other non-numerical forms, and seeks to uncover deeper insights into the meaning and context of human behavior and social phenomena.*

*Qualitative research methods include interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis. These methods allow researchers to gather rich and detailed information about people's attitudes, beliefs, values, and experiences, and to gain an in-depth understanding of complex social processes and relationships.*

*Qualitative research is used in a wide range of fields, including social sciences, psychology, education, healthcare, business, and marketing. It can be used to explore a variety of research questions, such as:*

- How do people experience and cope with chronic illness?*
- What are the factors that influence students' academic achievement?*
- What are the barriers to effective communication in healthcare?*
- How do consumers perceive and respond to advertising messages?*

*Qualitative research is particularly useful when the research question involves exploring the meanings and interpretations that*



What is qualitative research, and how is it used?



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Qualitative research is particularly useful when the research question involves exploring the meanings and interpretations that people give to their experiences, or when the research

people give to their experiences, or when the research context is complex and multifaceted. It can also be used to generate hypotheses and ideas for further research, and to inform the development of interventions or policies that are more responsive to people's needs and perspectives (OpenAI, 2023).

### **Reference**

OpenAI (2023). *ChatGPT* (Feb version) [Large Language Model]. <https://shareg.pt/GkQN6za>

### *Knowledge Check: Prompt Engineering*

Many career and employment experts believe that prompt engineering for large language models like ChatGPT is becoming a highly valued job skill. As start-up specialist Gunjan Karan notes, “These technologies can be likened to a parrot, capable of reciting the perfect poem for you, but only if you give the right instructions.”

Karan walks you through an exercise of locating a job in your field, then using prompt engineering to write a draft of a cover letter to apply for that job. Locate a current job posting for a position in your future career field and try this exercise for yourself. How does providing more specific information change the results that ChatGPT gives you?

### **Reference**

Karan, G. (2023, February 16). *Prompt engineering: The game-changing skill you need to master in 2023!* Linked In. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/prompt-engineering-game-changing-skill-you-need-master-gunjan-karun/>





Below is a short assessment of eight key areas that have been assessed during the production process. The checklist has been drawn from the BCcampus Open Education Accessibility Toolkit. While a checklist such as this is just one part of a holistic approach to accessibility, it is one way to begin work on embedded good accessibility practices in OER textbooks.

## Accessibility Checklist

### Accessibility Checklist

Category	Item	Status
<b>Organizing Content</b>	Content is organized under headings and subheadings	Yes
<b>Organizing Content</b>	Headings and subheadings are used sequentially (e.g. Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.) as well as logically (if the title is Heading 1 then there should be no other Heading 1 styles as the title is the uppermost level)	
<b>Images</b>	Images that convey information include Alternative Text (alt-text) descriptions of the image's content or function	
<b>Images</b>	Graphs, charts, and maps also include contextual or supporting details in the text surrounding the image	
<b>Images</b>	Images do not rely on color to convey information	
<b>Images</b>	Images that are purely decorative contain empty alternative text descriptions. (Descriptive text is unnecessary if the image doesn't convey contextual content information)	
<b>Tables</b>	Tables include row and column headers	
<b>Tables</b>	Tables include a title or caption	
<b>Tables</b>	Tables do not have merged or split cells	
<b>Tables</b>	Tables have adequate cell padding	
<b>Weblinks</b>	The weblink is meaningful in context, and does not use generic text such as "click here" or "read more"	
<b>Weblinks</b>	Weblinks do not open new windows or tabs	
<b>Weblinks</b>	If weblinks must open in a new window, a textual reference is included in the link information	
<b>Embedded Multimedia</b>	A transcript has been made available for a multimedia resource that includes audio narration or instruction	
<b>Embedded Multimedia</b>	Captions of all speech content and relevant non-speech content are included in the multimedia resource that includes audio synchronized with a video presentation	
<b>Embedded Multimedia</b>	Audio descriptions of contextual visuals (graphs, charts, etc.) are included in the multimedia resource	

<b>Formulas</b>	Formulas have been created using MathML	
<b>Formulas</b>	Formulas are images with alternative text descriptions, if MathML is not an option	
<b>Font Size</b>	Font size is 12 point or higher for body text	
<b>Font Size</b>	Font size is 9 point for footnotes or endnotes	
<b>Font Size</b>	Font size can be zoomed to 200%	