

First-Year Study Tips

Adjusting to College

Talk to strangers...Not on the subway, but on campus it is perfectly appropriate to get to know as many people as you can. Students need to replace those friends they left at home, and you can help them, especially at Orientation and the first year. Talk to your roommates too... Don't expect them to read your mind... If their hairdryer wakes you up every morning etc., you need to tell them or you will drive each other crazy. Don't expect "instant friends" as true relationships are based on shared history, so take time and effort to develop. It is normal to experience a letdown and some homesickness after the excitement of orientation.

Time Management

Since you are only in class about 16 hours a week, most of your learning takes place outside of the classroom. How will you get yourself to spend enough time on task when there may be so many more fun things to do? And the pace of language courses, for example, may be twice that of high school. Writing your papers the night before they are due may have worked in high school, but may get you a C here.

We suggest taking all of your course outlines and laying out all your test dates, and due dates on your calendar for the semester and doing a weekly plan sheet on Sunday nights. Find a place to study (forget about using your room), establish a routine, and try to use daylight hours, not leaving most work until late at night. Continuing to study is not the problem, but getting on task ... so use place and time as prompts to get started.

Test-Taking

"I got a 53 on the first test, but now I know what to expect..." is a bad way to start off the semester. Typical mistakes are to underestimate the degree to which the instructor expects you to know the material and not to test yourself first. Find out the format of the test or look at old tests if the instructor makes them available. If the test is all multiple choice, use a study guide after you have studied to test yourself with many multiple choice questions and identify any weak areas of recall before the real exam. Use the course outline to anticipate essay questions by looking for themes and also ask yourself why the instructor chose these reading in the first place. Come to the Counseling Center if you want help managing test anxiety.

Seven First-Year Mistakes to Avoid:

- Not using drop/add in the first week if a course is wrong for you for some reason.
- Taking all of your most difficult courses at once, instead of balancing the load.
- Waiting until you "feel like it" to study.
- Waiting until the night before to write Core Humanities papers.

For More Information

Caring psychologists are available at Union College Counseling Center for individual help with developing study skills. Appointments can be made by calling (518) 388-6161 or stopping by the front desk at the Wicker Wellness Center.