

Before the First Day of Class



Academic Preparation
Strategies

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Print out your detailed student schedule from Banner

- ❑ Add class times to your calendar, day planner, or pda.
- ❑ Plan each day around your class times.
- ❑ Build in uninterrupted blocks of productive time.

Note: Reserve 3 to 4 hours a day, seven days a week for studying.

Visit Blackboard for each course

Obtain as much information as possible. If provided by the instructor, print out the following:

- ❑ Syllabus
- ❑ Course Objectives
- ❑ Grading Matrix/Scale
- ❑ Assignments/Projects and Due Dates
- ❑ Exam Dates
- ❑ Handouts/Required Readings
- ❑ Carefully read all of the information and jot down any questions that come to mind regarding each course.



Obtain a three-ring binder/folder for each class

- ❑ Build your binders as you progress through each course. Make each one a personal, comprehensive review site that you can refer to at any time.
- ❑ If you prefer to use to use a laptop for note taking, plan on printing out hard copies of your notes to add to your binders.
- ❑ Allow room for handouts and hard copies of additional reading assignments.
- ❑ Keep extra sheets of paper in the binder for pop quizzes, class activities, etc.

Have a note-taking strategy in place

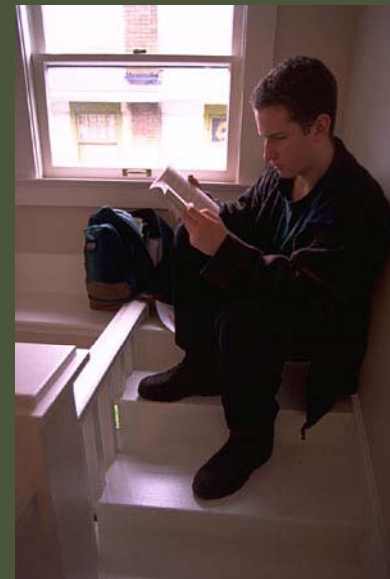
- Use a notebook for each course.

Note: Refer to the Note-Taking Strategies section in the Academic Compass.

- If you prefer to take notes on your laptop, set up electronic folders for each class in advance.
- Set up your own Word template for note-taking.

Purchase textbooks as far in advance as possible

- ❑ Get familiar with your textbooks.
- ❑ Read the table of contents.
- ❑ Get psyched! Read any sections that capture your interest.
- ❑ Check Blackboard for newly posted assignments.



Start your reading assignments

- ❑ Begin by reviewing the title of the chapter, the bolded subheadings, and the conclusion or summary, if the chapter has one.
- ❑ Try to stay ahead as much as possible. As the semester gets under way, it will become more challenging to simultaneously juggle the assignments in all of your classes.
- ❑ Get out ahead while you can!

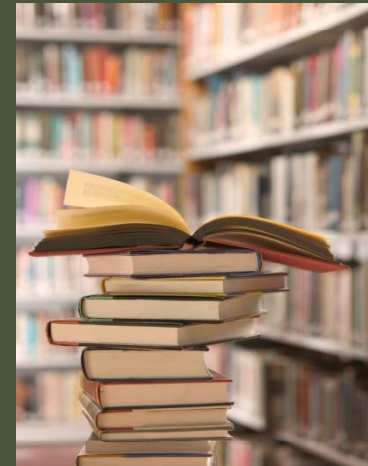
Get familiar with all of the resources associated with your major

- ❑ See if your academic area has its own resource library.
- ❑ Find out which electronic databases on the Swem website are the most useful research tools.
- ❑ Check for resource folders posted by your professors on Blackboard.



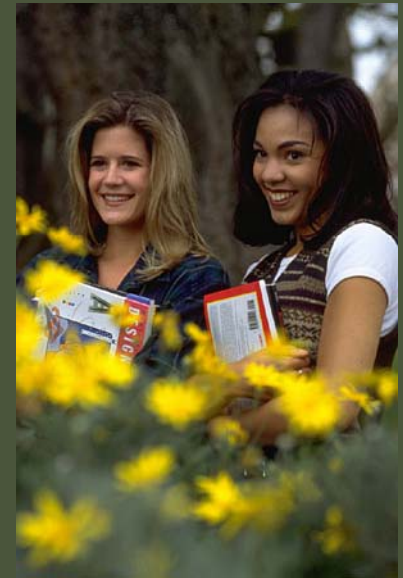
Research your professors

- Use one of the Swem databases associated with a particular discipline or field of study to conduct an “author” search on the names of your professors.
- Peruse what your professors have published to determine their areas of interest.



Review the class rosters (if available) on Blackboard

- Knowing the names of your new potential friends helps to make stronger mental connections with those whom you will be engaging with in class.



The First Day of Class

Have a Plan Set in Motion



Allow yourself plenty of time to travel to class without rushing

- ❑ Plan on arriving at the classroom at least 10 minutes prior to the start of class.
- ❑ If you live off campus, take into account the extra time needed to park and walk from the distant “day” student lots.
- ❑ Relax, get a drink of water and meet other students.
- ❑ Use the time to collect your thoughts and focus in on this new experience.

Think about seat selection

- ❑ Select a seat that best will serve *your* needs and ability to effectively interact with the instructor.
- ❑ Sit where you will be able to concentrate.

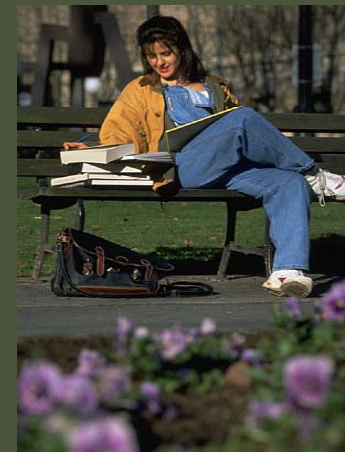


This may mean NOT sitting next to a friend.

- ❑ If you do feel uncomfortable in crowded classrooms, you may wish to sit along a wall or near a window.
- ❑ If you are sensitive to noise and activity, it may be best to sit further from the door.
- ❑ If you use a laptop, keep the battery charged or sit where you can have access to an electrical outlet.

Stay Productive In Between Classes

- ❑ Just like a job, make the most of your daytime hours. Don't go back to the dorm for a nap or to watch TV.
- ❑ Use these breaks to review lecture notes, jot down ideas for an upcoming project, or begin researching a topic in the Library.
- ❑ Get some personal errands out of the way to free up your evenings for uninterrupted study time.



Allow Time for Reflection

- ❑ Think back on your entire day and make adjustments.
- ❑ Sometimes our expectations do not match those of the instructor or the class has requirements that were not anticipated. If that is the case, think about ways to “conquer” the course.

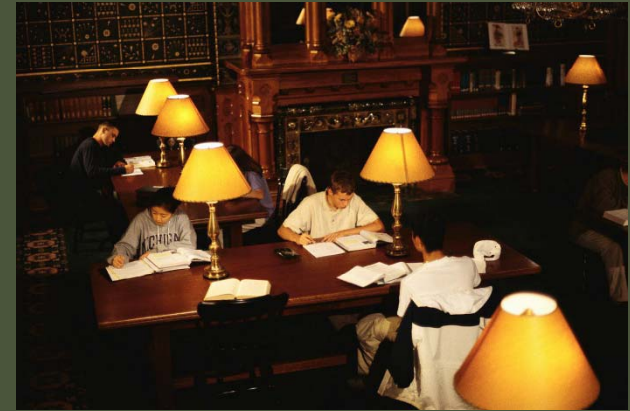


Develop a realistic plan of action for each class

- ❑ Ask yourself the following:
- ❑ Can I build more study/ assignment time for this particular course into my schedule?
- ❑ Can I provide an advance draft of my work to the professor for feedback?
- ❑ Are there individuals in the class with whom I can discuss the work?
- ❑ Are there other resources on campus that can assist me in the class, such as the Writing Resource Center or research services provided through Swem Library?

Find Places to Study Outside of Your Dorm Room or Apartment

- ❑ Our living spaces are places of socialization and are subject to many interruptions.
- ❑ Find several places on campus that are conducive to developing good study habits such as the Library, a computer lab or a departmental study lounge.



Utilize Your Sundays to Plan and Build Momentum

- ❑ Make sure that you are “hitting the books” no later than 7 p.m. every Sunday.
- ❑ Use Sunday to plan and strategize your work. Then get started on your assignments.
- ❑ By Monday, you will feel a greater sense of accomplishment and more “in control” of your classes.

Study Skill Resources

Web Sites:

W &M Dean of Students—Academic Support

www.wm.edu/deanofstudents/asupport/

W&M Writing Resource Center

<http://www.wm.edu/wrc/>

Study Guides and Strategies

<http://www.studygs.net/>

■ Books:

How to Win at College by Cal Newport (2005)