

10 Tips for Academic Success

From the Academic Advising Office, Grinnell College

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1. Location, location, location

If you are serious about getting your work done, find a place to study that is relatively free of distractions.

2. Make it a habit: work every day

Avoid late night (or even all-night!) cram sessions. Spend time on your studies each day; use small blocks of time throughout your day. You will be amazed what can get done between classes.

3. Help exists! Seek it out and improve your grades

Meet with friendly staff at the Academic Advising Office, Tutoring Program, Writing Lab, Reading Lab, Science Learning Center, and Library.

4. Write it down

Remember important dates. Use your syllabi and dates for other obligations (work, activities, etc) to map out your daily, weekly, and monthly schedule. Keep a day planner (paper or electronic) and a wall calendar.

5. Prioritize

Once you have a calendar for the “big stuff,” prioritize the little stuff you have to do every day. It’s not critical that you schedule every minute, but that you know what you need to accomplish by the end of each day.

6. Get energized – eat, exercise, sleep

Your brain will not function to your full potential when you are hungry, tense, or tired. It is crucial to eat well, exercise, and get adequate sleep.

7. Get to class prepared and take good notes

Make sure you attend every class – having done the reading so you know what is being covered – and take a thorough set of notes. You will be thankful when it comes to writing assignments and preparing for exams.

8. Be study smart

Become an active and creative learner. Form study groups or work with a tutor to be sure that you understand the main concepts covered in the course – not just that you recognize or can ‘regurgitate’ them, but that you fully understand and can articulate connections among the ideas.

9. Be test smart

Think through specific strategies to tackle different types of tests (e.g., short answer, essay), carefully read instructions, budget time, and do less difficult questions first to build confidence.

10. Communication is key

Talk regularly with your professors about your course assignments and performance. Developing a good relationship with your profs helps your learning and can prove extremely useful if you ever run into serious difficulty.