



*COLLEGE FRESHMAN  
SUCCESS HANDBOOK*



# WELCOME!!!

Welcome to **your** College Freshman Success Handbook! This handbook represents a golden opportunity for you to gain an understanding of the time-honored secrets to a successful college experience. In the following pages, you will read all about the most important topics in preparing for and excelling in college. For example, you will discover what it takes to complete the perfect scholarship application – and learn about the benefits of doing this even after you have started college! – as well as learning suggestions for planning out a schedule that maximizes your chances for college success. You will also read about tactics you can use to make sure you stay healthy and avoid gaining the dreaded “Freshman Fifteen.”

The tested tips in this handbook will help to ensure that you get the most out of your higher education, while also helping you to avoid some the numerous – and all too common – traps that ensnare college students every year... including unmanageable credit card debt, nightmare roommate situations, homesickness, Spring Break mistakes, and many, many more!

So... we are not exaggerating when we tell you that this is some important information that you are holding in your hands. With that in mind, we invite you to sit back, turn off your mobile phone – or at least put it on “vibrate” – fluff up your favorite pillow, and read away... the valuable tips found within the pages of this handbook could very literally save your college career! Regardless, this information will help to make your life as a college student far more manageable and enjoyable along the path to graduation!

# WELCOME TO THE COLLEGE CAMPUS

## **Involvement**

Being involved in school activities will keep you busy, therefore reducing your time to be homesick. Some students join a sorority or fraternity. Others participate in intramural sports. Many choose to attend campus events and concerts. Not only do these types of activities keep you engaged and active in your college community, but they also allow you to meet more people and make new friends. The fact is, the more great friends you make at college, the less homesick you will feel.

## **Exploration**

Get to know your campus and surrounding community by walking around. You will discover places where you feel comfortable hanging out. Once your environment becomes more familiar to you, and thereby starts to feel a bit homey, your feelings of homesickness should start to diminish.

## **Familiarity**

Having a few beloved and familiar items from home displayed around your dorm room will help to make your environment feel more comfortable. Put up a few choice pictures of your family, friends, and pets from home, along with pictures of new friends that you have made at college. If you have a stuffed animal, blanket, or similar item that reminds you of home, it's absolutely OK to display it on your bed! Try to make your dorm room as relaxing and cozy as your bedroom at home.

## **Communication**

It is important to keep in touch with your family and friends from home through phone calls, e-mails, letters, etc. However, most students find that it is best not to try not to call home every single day. The fact is that frequent calls tend to make homesick students feel even worse, and they can dramatically increase a student's longing for home. Many college students make a call home at some point over each weekend, which keeps them in touch and helps them to ease the Taking the time to write a letter or an email home can be cathartic, in and of itself, as well.

## **Planned Travel**

Even though it can be very challenging if you live close to home, try to avoid those sudden-impulse visits back to visit your family and friends. It's far better to plan your trips, so that you don't find yourself being tempted to go home every weekend. The college experience can't be a positive one if you are not there to enjoy it! We recommend that – even if you are well within striking distance of home – try to limit your visits to no more than three times per semester. This will allow you ample opportunity to take advantage of the good things that your college has to offer.

## **Expression**

Similar to writing a letter, it can be amazing how much better you feel if you just take a moment to write your thoughts down on paper. Putting your feelings on paper may allow you to see why you are homesick, and then allow you to subsequently focus on ways to overcome it!

## **Sharing**

Although it is one of the loneliest feelings around, many college students (especially freshmen) experience some degree of homesickness! If you share your feelings with your peers, you will often find that you are not alone. Talking about your homesickness with others who feel the same way will not only help you connect with those students, but it will also help you find more ways to adjust to college life. No bout of homesickness feels as bad once you know that other people are feeling very much the same way, because they are adjusting to college with some of the same challenges!

College offers every incoming freshman student a completely clean slate – in fact, it doesn't so much **offer** you a clean slate, as force one upon you! When you start college, all of a sudden it doesn't matter much whether you were the class president in high school, or a member of the honor society, or any other type of campus all-star. A number of people (in fact, maybe most of the people, depending on the college) will have graduated in the top percentile of their graduating class, and they may have even been selected as their high school's valedictorian. The point is, as a college freshman the pond you are swimming in just got a whole lot bigger... and whatever you accomplished in high school matters a lot less.

High school accomplishments (or, frankly, the lack thereof) don't automatically "carryover" once you arrive at your college or university destination. Every freshman starts college with a shiny academic record, a fresh social scene, and a lot of sudden independence. These elements combine to provide a myriad of critical decisions, especially as you begin making some very adult determinations. These choices made and the actions taken during this first year of college will have a major impact on the rest of your college experience, and even your professional career.

While almost every college student starts out looking brightly to the future, the alarming fact is that a significant number of these freshmen never accomplish their college goals. In fact, according to American College Testing (ACT), 25% of college students (yes, that is one out of every four!) drops out before completing their sophomore year! Equally as striking is the fact that nearly half of all freshmen will either drop out before obtaining a degree, or decide to complete their college education at another institution.

Now, this is not intended to scare you as a college-bound student, nor is it meant to take away any of the joy, excitement, and anticipation you feel about going to college. As a matter of fact, we tell you this because we want to share with you the things you need to know (and DO) to survive your first year of college... but above and beyond that, we want you to thrive in college. It isn't enough just to show up at the university, because this new environment will absolutely require something of you. In fact, many of the tools, skills, and habits you read about in these pages, and develop throughout college, will help you succeed both in college and in your future career.

# THE FIRST FEW WEEKS ON CAMPUS

The first few weeks on campus are extremely critical for all new students. It is during this time that you make critical decisions that will have an effect on the rest of your life. Some of these 25 tips are critical during your first weeks, while the others are meant for longer-term guidance and survival.

## **Attend the orientations**

A freshman might wonder if you really need to go on yet another campus tour? Yes, as a matter of fact, you do! The faster you learn your way around campus – and around all the red tape – the more at ease you'll feel at school. This helps a lot when (**not** “if”) issues or problems arise.

## **Get to know the people around you**

The people you live with, most of whom are going through similar experiences and emotions, are your main safety net. This will be true not only this year, but for all your years in college. It is worth your time to get to know your fellow first-year students, and meet people who are like you!

## **Get organized... now**

In high school, the teachers tend to lead students through all the homework and due dates. Don't bank on this being the case in college! Professors at this level will post the assignments for the semester, and hand out a syllabus... and from that point, you are expected to be prepared! Know what it takes for you to stay on top of things – an organizer, a PDA, a big wall calendar... whatever – make sure that you are organized from Day One.

## **Find the ideal place for you to study**

It may be your dorm room, if you have an equally studious roommate or a cozy corner of the library – but find a place that works best for you to get your work done -- while taking care to avoid as many distractions as possible.

## **Actually go to class**

This seems pretty obvious, right? Well, freshman students often find sleeping in and skipping that 8:00 am class to be tempting, because in college nobody forces you to attend. Avoid the temptation. Besides learning the material by attending classes, you'll also receive vital information from the professors about what to expect on tests, changes in due dates, etc. Also, it helps when your professor recognizes you from the lectures if you have questions during office hours, or you request a letter of recommendation later.

## **Know course requirements and due dates**

Professors spend hours and hours preparing course syllabi and calendars so that you will know exactly what is expected of you -- and when. One of the lamest excuses a student can give a professor is "But I didn't know it was due today!" There are no excuses at this level. Part of organization is staying on top of the class work without outside prompting.

## **Meet with your professors**

There are huge upsides to getting to know your professors, especially if later in the semester you run into some snags, or you need help. Professors schedule office hours for the sole purpose of meeting with students -- take advantage of that time. You may find that your teachers can be very approachable, that they appreciate your questions, and you could even develop a mentoring relationship with a professor in your area of interest.

### **Get to know your academic advisor**

This is the professor who will help you with course conflicts, adding or dropping courses, scheduling of classes for future semesters, and deciding on your major (and minor) areas of study. This person is a key resource for you, and should be the person you turn to with any academic issues. S/he is an important advisor, so definitely request reassignment if you don't get along with the first one assigned to you.

### **Seek a balance**

College life is a mixture of social and academic happenings. Balance this mix! It can be disastrous to tip the balance too far in either direction – too much studying or no relaxation leads to burnout, while too much fun and no study leads to an early exit from college. Excellent students may follow the motto to "study hard so that you can play hard." This lifestyle will keep you in good grades, and you will have a wonderful time doing it!

### **Get involved on campus**

A big problem for a lot of new students is a combination of homesickness and a feeling of not quite belonging. One very good solution can be to join a select group (being careful not to go overboard, here) of student organizations. There are clubs, sororities or fraternities, sports teams, and service organizations at almost every college. This allows you to meet new friends, learn skills, and feel connected to your school.

### **Strive for good grades**

While this may also seem obvious, remember that while good grades may have come easily to you in high school, you will have to work harder to earn them in college. For almost any student, this means setting some goals for yourself and then working diligently to achieve them. It also means knowing when it's the right time to buckle down with studies, projects and exams, and when it's the right time to relax and have fun.

### **Take advantage of the study resources on campus**

Just about all colleges have learning labs and tutors available. If you're having some troubles, these resources are another valuable tool available to you – usually at no additional cost. Another possibility is to create informal study groups with other students from your classes.

**Make time for you.** Be sure you set aside some time and activities that help you relax and take the stress out of your day or week. Some students focus on yoga or jogging, others just take an hour to watch a favorite television show, and others may simply write in a journal or join a club on campus. Whatever you do to be good to yourself, don't ignore it! Your grades and health can suffer.

### **Don't feel pressured into a career or major**

It doesn't matter if it seems as though everyone else seems to know what they're doing with their lives – because the fact is, they usually don't! Among other things, college is a time to really discover who you are, what you enjoy doing, what your individual talents are, and what you want to become. College is not a race, so it is OK to take some time finding your niche. Enjoy the opportunity to explore your options!

### **Take responsibility for yourself and your actions**

Don't look to place the blame on others for your mistakes; own up to them and move on. Being an adult means taking responsibility for what you have done, for good and bad.

### **Make connections with students in your classes**

Finding interesting and similar people in your classes will do a few things for you... it will expand your social network, give you other resources for understanding and discussing class topics, and help you with notes in the even you miss a class due to illness!

### **Find (and utilize) the Career Services Office**

Regardless of whether you are entering college with an undeclared major, or have your entire future mapped out, seek out the professionals in your college's career services office. These counselors are able to help you with your planning, preparing, and acting on your future – and they can even often assist with career suggestions.

### **Don't procrastinate; prioritize your life**

Once again, college is not like high school! Waiting until the last minute to complete an assignment at this level essentially assures that you will sacrifice your good grade. Procrastination starts to work against you very quickly in college. Now that you are at this level, learn to set and stick to deadlines. Putting things off in college is a sure fire way to add to your stress level and ruin your GPA.

### **Stay healthy and eat right**

When first-year college students run into academic trouble, it is surprising how often this is due to an illness that kept them away from classes for an extended period of time. There is almost no way to avoid a downward spiral in that situation! Avoid illness. Get enough sleep, take your vitamins, and eat right. If you haven't heard the jokes about college food, you soon will. Students on their own for the first time often are tempted to gorge on extra French fries or load up on cookies. This, of course, can lead to the dreaded extra "Freshman 15" pounds, which can be avoided by simply sticking to a balanced diet and exercising regularly.

### **Learn to cope with homesickness**

It's only natural that there are times when most students miss their families, even when they couldn't wait to get away in the first place! Find ways to deal with those feelings, such as making phone calls or sending email home. Sometimes a little taste of home can make a big difference!

### **Stay on campus as much as possible**

Freshmen can often find reasons to head homeward, but it's not usually advisable. Whether it is because of homesickness, a job, or a boyfriend or girlfriend, it is generally best to try to remain on campus most of the time. This helps students to integrate more effectively, and too much travel tends to come at the expense of grades in most cases. Obviously, head home for the holidays whenever you can!

### **Seek professional help when you need it**

Most colleges have health and counseling centers. If you're sick or feeling isolated or depressed, please take advantage of the many services these offices provide students. You don't have to face these issues by yourself, and the services really can make a difference.

### **Keep track of your money**

If you've never had to create a budget, now is the time to do so. Wise students find ways to stretch their money, and live more frugally while in school. Whatever you do, try to avoid those credit card solicitations you'll soon be receiving! Using credit wisely is one thing (and it is a rarity on college campuses)... but the average credit card debt of college grads is staggering and getting worse. This creates an unnecessary stressor for new graduates, and can really make the later college years a pain, as well.

### **Don't cut corners**

College is all about learning. If you procrastinate and cram, you may still do passably well on tests, but you'll learn very little. Whatever you do, don't cheat or plagiarize on your term papers and tests. At some schools it may even seem like a commonplace occurrence, but it is a bad idea... besides, there are consequences for dishonesty and they can be very severe.

**Be prepared to feel overwhelmed**

There's a lot going in your life right now. Expect to have moments where college seems like it is a bit too much. Traditional college wisdom states that this is the time to "be prepared to feel completely unprepared." The trick, of course, comes through understanding that you're not the only student who is feeling that way... and what to do to overcome it!

# COMPARING ON-CAMPUS VS. OFF-CAMPUS LIVING

It's one question that every college student must answer... should you live on-campus or off-campus? Both options have their advantages and disadvantages, so it is crucial for you to weigh your choices before you make a final decision.

Remember that some schools absolutely require freshman students to live on-campus for their first year of college, while others do not. If you are attending a school that requires you to live on campus for at least the freshman year, then be sure to read through the pros and cons below, so that you can be prepared for them!

## On-Campus – Pros:

### Accessibility to the school

If you choose to live on-campus, you can usually walk comfortably to classes, libraries, computer labs, cafeterias, etc. You don't have to waste time and money on driving to school, finding a parking space, and so forth.

### Increased social life

Living on-campus will often allow you to meet more people and establish more college friendships than if you live off-campus. Living in a dorm means that there will always be someone around to hang out with. You will also usually be kept aware of any campus activities and how to be involved in them.

### Simplicity

If you live on-campus, you don't have to worry about making monthly rent payments, covering utility bills, and grocery shopping. It gets rid of that stress so that you can focus on school and other important things! In fact, most students who live in a dorm also get a meal plan through the university in order to make eating easy and convenient at the cafeteria or other on-campus eateries.

## On-Campus – Cons:

### Little privacy

When living in a dorm, it can be very hard to find some time to yourself. This is simply because there are a lot of people packed into a relatively small space! All of the residents must share bedrooms, bathrooms, common areas, etc. These close living quarters mean that you may never have some truly quiet time in your dorm, because there will almost always be something going on around you!

### Limited space

At most colleges and universities, the dorm rooms are quite tiny. This means that students really have to limit what they bring with them to school, or the living space will simply become too crowded. That reality can place a serious dent in the storage space available for the college wardrobe, as well as recreational equipment and other items.

**Possible low GPA** Because dorm life is usually very social, some students may find that their grades may be affected in a negative way. If you constantly choose hanging out with your dorm buddies over studying at the library, then your GPA will certainly suffer as a consequence – college is not as forgiving as high school when it comes to study habits. Academic success while living in the dorms requires self-discipline... and sometimes you may need to find a separate place to study!

## **Off-Campus – Pros:**

### **Independence**

You will not have to follow as many rules if you live off-campus. Residence halls always have strict regulations that students must abide by when living on-campus. (Bear in mind that these rules are usually designed for the overall protection and safety of the residents). Living off-campus will give you some freedom from those rules and allow you to work within your own comfort level.

### **Privacy**

Living off-campus means that you will more than likely have your own bedroom... this gives a place to sneak off and have time alone, away from your roommate/s. The extra space also means that you can probably find a quiet place to study in the convenience of your own home, which can be very handy when finals roll around and the entire university is trying to find space to study in the library!

### **Sense of responsibility**

Living off-campus will help you be more responsible. If you live off-campus, you will be in charge of paying bills, cleaning house, grocery shopping, and cooking. Being responsible is a good quality to possess for any college student, and living on your own really can bring that out in a person! You also gain the knowledge that you are truly living on your own, which is a pretty good feeling in and of itself.

## **Off-Campus – Cons:**

### **More expensive**

Often times, off-campus housing is more expensive than on-campus housing. Utilities and cable can be an added monthly expense, and you may have to pay for your own internet access. You may also need to buy furniture, kitchen essentials, bath necessities, cleaning supplies, etc., which can be a hefty start-up cost. Food can be quite the expenditure, as well, and you have to cook for yourself! (Fast food can be an absolute budget-buster for many college students, so beware...)

### **Transportation**

When living off-campus, it may not be convenient for you to walk to campus. This can necessitate reliable transportation, whether a bike (consider the weather at your school!), a car, or even public transportation. Whether you drive your car, take a bus, or catch a subway, transportation is still going to cost you money. Traffic and parking can also be a serious issue if you live in a crowded area.

### **Isolation and Safety**

If you live off-campus, you may not be as involved with campus activities as you would if you lived on-campus. This could cause you to feel a sense of detachment from your college community, and make it challenging to meet new friends. In addition, living off-campus means living outside of the safety net provided by the on-campus community. While this does not mean that you will necessarily be unsafe living off campus, there will not generally be security guards and late-night cafeterias available.

With all of these factors in mind, when deciding whether to live on-campus or off-campus it is important to think about what elements are of most worth to you. You may even want to put together a list of your own pros and cons. Again, check to see if your college allows first-year students live in an off-campus apartment – if not, you may be required to live in a residence hall (or at home with your family). Check with your chosen school for regulations, and contact their housing office with any questions. Often, they can even help with finding apartments near campus.

## DOES THE “PERFECT ROOMMATE” EXIST?

Choosing the right roommate is a difficult process to begin with... and maintaining a good relationship with the person you live with can be even harder! There are certainly enough things to worry about in college without having to stress over fighting with your roommate, or having other roommate-related difficulties. Every college student needs to know how to effectively choose a good, reliable (and normal?) roommate... not to mention how to live with him or her when the time comes.

The experience you have with your college roommate will have a significant effect on your initial college experience. Living with this person can dramatically affect both your study habits and your social activities. To help you choose the right person as a roommate, we urge you to carefully consider each of the following questions:

### **Should you live with your friend?**

Of course, friends can be terrific roommates... assuming you already know – and are okay with – the way that they live. Having a friend as a roommate can be ideal in some respects, because you already know that you like the person. You obviously also have common interests. In addition, you may be aware of their faults, and consider them easy enough to live with. Certainly, living with someone who is already your good friend may also make being away from home a lot easier.

However, if you find that you are easily annoyed by your friend’s habits, recognize that living together will only magnify these traits once you are roommates. Dirty clothes all over a dorm room, loud music, snoring, or other situations can put even the best of friendships to the test... is it possible that little habits could end your friendship? Every student must decide for him/herself whether living together with a friend is worth the possible risk of losing that friend.

### **Should you live with a stranger?**

Like living with a friend, having a stranger for a roommate has its pros and cons. On the one hand, if you have a lot of disagreements then at least you don’t have to worry about damaging a long-term relationship... that didn’t exist to begin with! It can also be refreshing not to feel compelled to be sociable with a roommate who you don’t know very well. Another potential benefit to living with a stranger is that have the opportunity to meet someone new, and hopefully begin another friendship. Many people have even become lifelong friends with their first college roommate – and this can happen whether they knew each other beforehand, or not!

On the other hand, having a stranger for a roomie may sometimes cause more conflict than accord. This can be especially frustrating if the two roommates are complete opposites? In the wrong circumstances, something as seemingly insignificant as differing tastes in music can cause real stress in a small living space. Other differences that can cause discord include social skills, hygiene habits, and other considerations. In addition, not having anything at all in common with your roommate can make for a rather lonely freshman year for some students, especially if they are more reserved and less likely to venture out socially.

### **Do you share common interests?**

It might make your living situation easier if you can find a common ground that connects the two of you together. Try to pick someone that you share at least one common interest with. For instance, even if you don't like the same types of music, maybe you both like to play basketball or spend time outdoors. Having things in common will allow you and your roommate to enjoy being together and possibly make living together bearable. Some schools even also offer special housing arrangements based on an interest in a particular topic, such as speaking (or learning) a foreign language. At the very least, every student residing in one of these houses shares a love for, say, the French language and culture. It isn't everything, but it could be enough to create a positive living environment with your roommate!

### **Do you share the same meaning of clean?**

As hinted above, it is important to select a roommate who has similar cleaning habits to your own. If you are a complete slob, then rooming with a clean freak will only cause conflict – and vice versa. (Hint: generally messy students should not view this arrangement as an ideal situation... because more than likely, your roomie will absolutely not be willing to clean up after you!)

### **Are you an early riser or a night owl?**

If you are an early riser, it could be a good idea to select someone who also likes to get up early. This is especially important in dorms, where it is challenging to sleep while someone is getting ready for class three feet from your bed. Imagine having an 8:00AM class, but being unable to sleep because a roommate has friends over until the wee hours of the morning. Or, imagine how annoying it would be if a roommate's alarm clock went off at 6:00AM while trying to sleep in! In a dorm room, it is generally more convenient for roommates who go to bed and arise at approximately the same time. In an off-campus apartment with one's own room, it's a little easier to compromise on this issue than it can be in the dorms.

### **How do you feel about guests?**

Do you like to have several friends over frequently or do you enjoy your alone time? This is especially important, because there is nothing worse than feeling uncomfortable in your own home. Try to find a roommate who either feels the same way about guests that you do, or is willing to be respectful and compromise with you.

# LIVING WITH YOUR ROOMMATE

The perfect roommate, of course, probably doesn't exist. However, even if you have found a very good candidate, actually living with that person may change your mind. Regardless, it is extremely important to maintain a good relationship with your roommate in order to enjoy your time at college as much as possible. This doesn't always mean that you and your roommate have to be best buddies who are joined at the hip... it does mean co-existing with mutual respect. The following are some useful hints to help you sustain a peaceful relationship with your roommate:

## **Set rules**

Create rules with your roommate that both of you agree to follow. Decide when and how many friends to have over, whether there is a designated study time, and whether or not you can borrow each other's belongings. Divide cleaning chores in an equitable manner to which you both can agree. This may seem elementary, because it could be one of the reasons that you wanted to move away from your parents, but setting ground rules for your home or dorm will make your living situation much easier.

## **Communicate**

In order to maintain a good relationship, you must communicate openly with your roommate. Deal with problems immediately. Don't keep a problem to yourself – it is far better to talk with your roomie about it. If your roommate is slacking off on cleaning, tell him/her that since you are cleaning your half, you expect the same in return. If you don't communicate with your roommate, then your anger will just grow and lead to major fighting. If you get no response or there is not a change, then you at least know the kind of person you are dealing with, and there is no wondering about it.

## **Be considerate**

The old adage of "treating others as you would want to be treated" is especially pertinent with college roommates. It's also a pretty good way to live life, anyway! If your roommate falls ill, offer to take his/her assignments to class, or maybe make him/her a bowl of soup. If you are nice and considerate to your roommate, then hopefully s/he will remember that the next time you need something. Consideration also extends to common courtesies regarding cleaning, division of chores, and private time.

## **Be flexible**

Be willing to change your daily schedule a bit, if the need arises. Sometimes an unforeseen problem may arise for which you will have to accommodate a bit. For example, a roommate may be having a huge fight with a significant other while you are watching the Thursday night lineup on television. The polite response in this (hopefully rare) instance is to simply go watch TV in the lounge until they have talked their problems through. Any good roommate would appreciate that kind of flexibility, and the fact that they have been given some space in an extenuating circumstance.

## **Respect each other**

Respect for the people with whom you live is an absolute must, or there will definitely be problems. It is not necessary to always agree with a roommate, but it IS necessary to offer respect, decency, and common courtesy. With this in mind, it is uncalled for to degrade a roommate for something (which is neither illegal nor unethical) about which you don't approve. Discussion is always appropriate, while judging is not. Remember that your roommate may not agree with everything that you do, either.

Having a roommate can be difficult at times, whether you choose to live with your best friend or a complete stranger. Whatever you do, make an honest effort to get along with your roommate. However, some people are just essentially a bad mix together... and some roommates are just impossible, no matter how hard you try! If a serious effort to get along with a roommate fails, leaving you miserable, then it is definitely time to talk with your dorm RA (resident assistant) about your situation. It can often be possible to make a change during the semester, if all else fails and there are reasonable circumstances.

And finally, once you have cultivated a positive roommate situation, be sure to maintain it! Having a good roommate is an underappreciated bonus for any college student.

# DORM ROOM TIPS AND TRICKS

Yes, there **are** a few schools out there with fancy new dormitories that look like luxury apartments (and often cost as much as luxury apartments, as well!) However, with very few exceptions, dorm rooms can be cramped, bland, and overall pretty uninviting! In fact, the idea of living in such a tiny room with two (or three!) people for nine months often has many incoming freshman rethinking their impending living situations. However, it is really not that difficult to re-create the dorm into a much more inviting living environment, making it both cozy and functional at the same time. Follow the steps below to transform your dorm!

## **Step 1: Optimize The Available Space**

The key to living in a dorm room with other people is to use whatever space you have to its fullest extent. For example, if the beds in your dorm room are low on the ground, you can maximize the storage space underneath by raising the bed. A set of drawers under the bed offers space to store clothes, books, or you can even stow boxes of things that you don't use on a regular basis. Some schools will allow students to purchase lofts for the beds, which offer ample space underneath for a couch, TV, and a mini-refrigerator. Other schools even allow students to bunk two beds together, which creates some additional room for a "living area."

In addition to making the most of the space available in the actual dorm room itself, you can also optimize the space in your closet. Closet organizers will make it possible to store shoes, sweaters, hats, and belts in an organized manner, but will also allow space at the bottom of your closet for more storage. There are all sorts of ways to better optimize the space you have in your dorm room; just keep an eye out for new ideas. Some furniture stores even sell furniture that is created specifically for dorm rooms and small studio apartments. This can provide a perfect addition to any dorm.

## **Step 2: Accessorize With The Necessities**

Good lighting is an absolute must in a dorm room to facilitate reading and studying. It is a good idea to invest in a desk lamp – and possibly a floor lamp to keep by the bed for night reading. You will also need a space to store important documents, such as tax information, bills, scholarship information, etc. A small filing cabinet – or even a file holder to place inside your desk – may help you to organize and keep track of these important papers. If you decide on a file cabinet, then it is possible to use the top of the cabinet as a table for your printer, decorative pictures, or other items. Almost anything in the dorm room can be made dual-purpose!

Finally, a bulletin board and a large wall calendar are also dorm room must-haves. These can be used for roommate messages, class schedules, and assignment due dates, and are imperative for keeping organized throughout the semester. Both items can be made more colorful and add to the décor by adding decorations or candid photos of your family and friends, or other pictures you enjoy.

## **Step 3: Find Ways To Express Yourself**

Expressing your individuality through your dorm room décor will allow others to get a feeling for your personality, as well as making you feel more comfortable in your dorm surroundings. If it is allowed, try adding your favorite color of paint to the walls to brighten things up! Other students will want to line their dorm walls with the traditional college covering... posters of favorite musical groups and movies! Other creative students might decide to follow the style of a certain historical era in their décor. The possibilities are endless... as long as you stay within the rules of the university, and your roommate agrees! However you decide to express yourself, just remember to put a bit of yourself into your dorm décor... then you will certainly feel more at home during your semesters at school.

#### **Step 4: Keep Things Comfortable**

To turn your dorm room into a cozy home-away-from-home, it has to be comfortable! Of course, most dorm rooms do not have the reputation of being the most comfortable places around. Fortunately, there are easy steps to improving the comfort level of a small room like a dorm. Firstly, make sure that the bed is comfortable. Dorm beds are usually very durable, but also extremely hard, so remember to use a nice mattress pad to soften it up. A comfortable chair or small couch for lounging – complete with throw pillows – can make the place more comfortable for both residents and guests. Finally, a well-stocked mini-refrigerator can make the place seem right at home with fresh snacks and beverages right nearby. Just remember to keep that refrigerator clean!

Of course, there are pros and cons to living the dormitory life. The fact is, though, that the small rooms don't have to be a detriment! With the right furniture and creative decorations, that little dorm room can be transformed into a terrific sanctuary for study and the creation of terrific memories.

## IS FRATERNITY OR SORORITY LIFE FOR YOU?

For some students, joining a fraternity or a sorority is the right decision for their college career. Others may feel like they wouldn't have time, or for other reasons determine that it's simply not their scene. It is, of course, completely up to each individual to decide whether to be part of a Greek family or not. In the interests of understanding what it means to "Go Greek," here are a few questions to think about to help you make your own decision in this regard.

### **Do you want to enlarge your social circle?**

The Greek system is one of the most effective ways for students to meet new people and make friendships that can last a lifetime. If you are heading off to a university that none of your friends will be attending, then you may want to consider joining a sorority or fraternity. In fact, even if your high school friends are going to the same college, you may want to expand your social circle in order to obtain new perspectives. However, if you feel you can meet people without the help of a club, then you may be content to bypass the Greek life altogether.

### **Do you want to develop leadership skills?**

Fraternities and sororities can help strengthen member's teamwork, time management, motivation, public speaking and organization skills. Greeks are also highly involved in leadership positions on many campuses. However, keep in mind that you can also develop leadership skills through other college organizations, such as student government or clubs.

### **How much free time do you want?**

In some fraternities/sororities, the Greek life can be very time consuming – almost a lifestyle – while in others it can be just another extracurricular activity. If you are the kind of person who doesn't like to give up precious amounts of free time, then going Greek may not be for you. On the other hand, if you thrive off of a busy schedule and want to be involved, then you may want to consider rushing (applying to join a fraternity or sorority). Just remember that by joining a fraternity or sorority, you are making a commitment to participate in their activities, such as community service and social activities.

### **Can you afford to join?**

One important consideration for some students involves the payment of dues if you decide to join a sorority or fraternity. Annual membership dues will vary depending on where you go to school and which sorority or fraternity you join. Membership dues can range from \$100 to \$900 per semester. If you decide to rush, make sure you ask questions about how much dues will be. Some fraternities or sororities may even be able to sponsor you if you decide that you can't afford to join.

Greek life is not for everyone. What some students view as advantages of going Greek, others view as disadvantages. Keep in mind that you do not have to be a freshman to rush a sorority or fraternity. Many students wait until they are sophomores or juniors before they rush. If you are still unsure about whether or not you want to join, there is no harm in rushing a fraternity or sorority to find out more information. Just be sure to take your time checking out your options and making your decision.

# YOUR COLLEGE BUDGET

College is a vital and important time for students to learn money management skills. For many, college is the first time handling money without parental supervision, and this can either be an empowering experience... or a disaster! Whether your parents will be supporting you financially or you are earning your own money through part time work, it is crucial for you to learn how to budget now. Taking care of money in college sets the tone for smart money management skills in the future. With that in mind, sit down now and use these tips to help you plan out a college budget... it can save you thousands of dollars over your undergraduate education!

**Determine Fixed and Variable Costs** The first step in developing a college budget is knowing what costs you have to pay each month. These costs can be broken down into two categories: fixed and variable. Fixed costs remain the same each month, and they might include rent/room and board, car payments, insurance costs, and parking fees. These costs do not usually change from month to month. Variable costs can include entertainment, gasoline, groceries, utilities, hygiene necessities, clothes, car maintenance, books, phone bills, and/or club dues. These costs tend to vary from month to month.

**Identify Sources of Income** Once all of the fixed and variable costs are calculated, it is important to determine whether your sources of income will cover the costs. Income can include pay from a part time job, allowance money from home, grants, scholarships, or loans. If your estimated expenses exceed your estimated income, then there is a problem. You will need to identify ways to either reduce expenses, or increase income. There are many ways to reduce expenses. For example, you may be able to carpool with friends, or limit entertainment or restaurant expenses to once a week. On the other hand, to help increase income you may be able to get a part time job – assuming you don't already have one. It is important for college students to remember that schoolwork comes first. If you determine that you will need to take out a student loan – or that you need more student loans – always be sure to compare lender benefits. Some lenders may offer a reduced origination fee. Others may offer repayment incentives, such as a reduced interest rate. Some lenders may offer both. Lower fees up-front can give you a bigger loan check for books and supplies. Reduced interest rates or rewards for on-time payments can save you money as you leave school and begin a new career. Make sure to pick a lender that is right for you, and that will put you in the best financial circumstances when you leave school.

**Decide on Bank Accounts** When you start college, determine what kind of banking account will be appropriate for you while in school. It is usually best for a student to opt for a checking account and a savings account so you can save a bit of extra money toward future trips or other special events, etc. Look for banks that offer special student checking accounts, which feature no minimum balances and no monthly fees, as well as a savings account that can be used as overdraft protection for the checking. If you are going to attend a college close to home, you can actually set up these accounts in advance. However, if you will be traveling to attend a college that is far away from home, you will want to wait until you move there before you set up accounts.

Once you get enrolled and attending your college classes, and start spending money, you may realize that your original budget needs to be revamped. Costs have a way of being more or less than anticipated sometimes, so it is a good idea to update the budget from time to time, anyway. You may find out that you need more money or that you have way too much money to burn (or put into savings, hopefully!). Either way, remember to make appropriate adjustments to the budget as you progress through your college career!

## CREDIT CARD SMARTS

Once you hit college (or even a little before) you will be bombarded by credit card company advertising. They will try every trick to persuade you to get a credit card. It is true that having credit cards is one way to build a credit history, students can quickly become overwhelmed with debt if they aren't extremely careful. This is a big problem for many college students, who end up using credit cards unwisely and paying for it for years and years later. Keep these tips in mind to help you stay money-conscious and avoid credit card woes.

**Shop around for a card.** Before you sign up for any credit card, be sure to read the fine print. Find out what kinds of fees come along with the card, and determine the Annual Percentage Rate (APR). Try to find a card that offers no annual fee and a low finance charge. Many cards also charge for any cash advances, and may charge extremely high late payment fees.

**Don't fall for the free gift.** Many credit card companies try to get college students to sign up for a card by offering them a free gift... usually something like a tee shirt. If a student were to sign up for a credit card every time a free gift was offered, the result would be far too many cards and the inherent temptation to actually use all of those cards! This is a bad idea, for obvious reasons. Never sign up for more than one or two credit cards, and then only if you can use them responsibly. (Honestly, how many cheap tee shirts do you need?)

**Open an account with a low credit limit.** By selecting a credit card with a lower credit limit, you will still be able to create a good credit history, but you are also far less likely to accrue a lot of debt. It's a good idea to choose a card with a limit of around \$1,000, but be sure never to charge to the limit. Use the card for convenience only, and only when you can pay it off before interest accrues.

**Pay full amount each month.** If you pay the total balance of your credit card each month, then you will build a good credit rating and prevent credit card trouble. Not paying off the entire amount in your account each month can lead to big finance charges. For example, if you have a credit card with a finance charge of 18% (and you **should not** choose a card with an APR that high!) with a balance of \$1,000, it could take you TWELVE YEAR to pay it off if you only make the minimum required payments. The total interest cost over those twelve years would be \$1,115, meaning that you would pay \$2,115 for \$1000 worth of goods. If for some reason you cannot pay your balance off in full during a month, try to pay at least \$25-\$50 over the minimum payment, and pay it off in full as soon as possible. Credit cards will bleed you dry financially if they are not managed correctly!

**Pay bill on time every month.** Late fees are completely avoidable, but credit card companies make a ton of money off of them. If you send in late payments, not only will it hurt your credit score, but you will also be paying through the nose in late fees which do not count toward your interest OR your principal debt! As part of your college organization efforts, make sure you know when your payment is due each month, so you can avoid those extra charges.

**Avoid cash advances.** For most cards, the fees for cash advances are steep, and interest rates are usually higher. If you need cash, use your ATM card.

**Avoid impulse shopping.** Use your credit card wisely, or don't bother with them. Many students are tempted to put new shoes or concert tickets or pizza parties on a credit card, even when they know that they will not have enough money to pay them off when the bill arrives. This is setting up a financial meltdown! Only use your credit card in case of emergencies, or when you know you will have enough to pay off the balance in full when your bill arrives. Otherwise, leave it at home.

**Monitor your credit report.** It's always a good idea to know what is posted on your credit report. You can review your report for free, and look into any discrepancies. Also, credit report agencies can make mistakes, and these are rarely in your favor. If you keep track of your credit report during college, you can come out with a great credit score and set yourself up for a bright financial future.

Again, there is no doubt that having a credit card can be beneficial if you use it in a responsible manner. It can also be one of the worst financial moves made by many college students. Follow these tips to get the best deal when you sign up for a card, pay off your balance each month by the due date, and you should have no problems avoiding credit card woes... and creating a better financial situation for yourself when you graduate!

# YOUR COLLEGE HEALTH

College can be a stressful time for most entering freshmen. Being away from home for the first time, studying challenging classes in a more demanding environment, and meeting a lot of new people can all add to the stress of the first year of college. For many people, stress leads them to pack on a few pounds, which are commonly known as “The Freshman Fifteen.” However, this doesn’t have to be the case. Follow these tips to avoid unwanted weight gain and remain healthy in your college years.

## **Keep a balanced diet**

Eat healthy foods from the five food groups: grains, fruits, vegetables, dairy, and meats/protein-based foods. Be sure to eat three meals a day. Never skip breakfast, especially in college, because it gives you the energy to get through the morning.

## **Control your portion size**

Eating smaller portions of food can help you maintain your weight. When eating at a restaurant, share your entrée with a friend or save some food to take home for another meal. Don’t go back for seconds at your school’s all-you-can-eat cafeteria. Don’t biggiesize your meal when eating fast food.

## **Stock your dorm room with healthy snacks**

Keep sweets at a minimum. Instead, opt for healthier snacks, such as nuts, fruits, rice cakes, yogurt, pretzels, etc. Tell your mom to leave the chocolate chip cookies out of the care packages... at least most of the time!

## **Keep a food journal**

If you are really worried about gaining extra weight, consider keeping a food journal. It will allow you to keep track of how many calories you consume in a day. Write down everything you eat and drink each day and adjust your calorie intake to your findings. Many people are surprised to see how much mindless eating they do during the course of a day!

## **Avoid alcohol**

Excessive alcohol consumption will make you gain weight quickly. One beer contains about 150 calories. If you do decide to drink (and meet the age requirement), put a limit on how much (and how frequently) you drink.

## **Drink water**

Water is a non-caloric drink, and it keeps you well hydrated. Drinking water instead of sodas and sweetened beverages will help you avoid those unwanted calories. Try to drink at least eight glasses of water each day, and limit the empty calories found in sodas and other sweetened beverages. If you are really interested in cutting beverage calories, mix some fruit juice with soda water for a refreshing beverage with less calories than regular juice!

## **Keep late nights to a minimum**

It is truly unhealthy to stay up all night doing anything, whether it be studying or partying! For one thing, staying up all night tends to make people crave a midnight snack. Also, the lack of sleep wreaks havoc on your body overall, and messes with your metabolism and your overall sleep cycle. (In addition, you may find that your unhealthy friends – the ones who haven’t read these tips – will talk you into ordering a pizza at 2AM, and you’ll regret it the next morning!)

### **Exercise**

You may find it hard to fit exercising into your busy college schedule, but it is an essential part of keeping the weight down. Try to visit the campus gym three times a week. If you don't like a routine workout, grab some of your friends for a brisk walk around campus, a swim in the campus pool, or a bike ride around the park. You have to stay active in order to burn off those excess calories. If you are finding it a challenge, consider adding a physical education or fitness class to your class schedule. This can be just the thing to jump start the motivation for staying active, since it will affect your GPA!

### **Get enough sleep**

Sleep deprivation can often lead to weight gain because people tend to consume more caffeinated foods and beverages in order to make up for the lack of sleep. Try to get at least seven or eight hours of sleep each night, so you will be able to have an energized morning without the caffeine boost.

Unfortunately, gaining weight in college is a commonplace occurrence. However, by following these tips, freshman students can avoid gaining unhealthy weight and remain fit and healthy in spite of the rigors and stresses inherent to a college education.

# YOUR COLLEGE SCHEDULE

Attending classes, studying, working a part-time job or research lab, participating in extracurricular activities, and finding time for your friends, family and yourself can be a tough schedule for college students to balance. It would be challenging for anyone! This is why it is crucial for college freshmen to learn time management skills early, to avoid becoming overly stressed out during the academic year.

Poor time management is one of the most common reasons for sub-standard academic performance in college. In order to be the most successful college student you can be, look for ways to adapt the following time management tips into your lifestyle... and then be prepared to enjoy the benefits of a dramatically more-organized – and more academically successful – life!

## **Set Goals**

Determine exactly what you want to accomplish. This can be a breakdown of the things that you want to accomplish in a day, a week, a semester, a school year, or even longer. What are your academic goals? Maybe you have a goal of going to graduate school, but you must first perform well in all your undergrad classes. A shorter-term goal could be to complete your term paper a little early in one of those undergrad classes. What are your extra-curricular goals? Do you want to join a sorority or fraternity this semester? How much time are you willing (and able) to commit to your extra-curricular activities? Do you have any personal goals? Maybe you want to expand your social circle or start exercising. By setting goals, you will be more inclined to follow through with them and accomplish your tasks.

## **Prioritize**

Once you know what needs to be accomplished, you must prioritize your tasks. This means figuring out which tasks are most important for the current moment, and which ones can be put on hold for a little while. Be sure to stay focused on the most important tasks for each day before you move on to the next ones. To help you better prioritize your tasks, you may want to number them in order of importance. For instance, if you have a paper that is due in a week and a small group project that is due in a month, it makes more sense to put your paper at the top of your priority list followed by your group project. Both need to be completed, and both are important, but one will require more immediate attention. (If you can make small steps toward the second goal, it will make it that much easier as the second due date approaches, as well...)

## **Organize**

Being organized will help you achieve your goals in a timely manner. You need to organize your tasks so you will know what needs to be accomplished and when they need to be accomplished. Create a weekly or monthly calendar that includes your schedule for classes, study time, social events, club meetings, exercise time, and any other activities that are necessary for you to achieve your goals. Also, be sure to include assignment due dates on this calendar, so you don't miss any important class deadlines. Update this calendar every week, so you will develop a regular routine while learning how to manage your time.

## **Avoid Procrastination**

Again, procrastination is one of the main downfalls for people who are attempting to adopt good time management skills. If you plan on doing an activity, stick to your schedule; don't put it off until tomorrow. Delaying the activity will only cause stress at some future time. By setting predetermined goals and prioritizing them, and making goals of the smaller activities that will be required to make the larger ones a reality, you will be less inclined to procrastinate.

### **Utilize Spare Minutes**

Do you ever find yourself aimlessly waiting for an activity to start, or waiting for someone to meet you? If so, it can make a big difference to start using those extra minutes wisely. For instance, if you find yourself waiting for a class to begin, consider starting on those reading assignments from your last class, or select a topic for an upcoming philosophy paper. By accomplishing small tasks while you're waiting, you will find that you have extra time to complete those larger tasks when you start spending more time on them.

### **Know When You're Most Productive**

Most people have a time period during the day when they are inclined to be most productive. For example, some people get more tasks accomplished in the morning than the evening, or vice versa. Make the best use of the times when you have the most energy! By doing this, less time is needed to accomplish the tasks that are more demanding, such as schoolwork. It is then possible to use the times with less energy to work on tasks that are less challenging, such as running errands. It is possible to get more tasks accomplished throughout the day by implementing this strategy into a good time management plan.

Most people find themselves wishing for more hours in a day, especially in college! However, by making the very best use of the hours available, productivity (and recreation) can be enhanced immeasurably. By utilizing these steps, better time management skills will lead directly to better all-around performance as a college student.

# COLLEGE CLASSES

The whole business of starting college is among the most exciting – and confusing – times that people will experience during young adulthood. Entering freshmen suddenly find themselves in a new environment, feeling their way cautiously around campus, while many are adjusting to being away from home for the first time. It's really no wonder that many students may feel overwhelmed. One of the first, and most crucial, tasks that you will be faced with is the creation of your first-term college schedule. Consider the following to help you map out a schedule that is most conducive to your success and your own specific needs.

## General College Requirements

Since the general college requirements for any institution will precede and support more specialized classes later in your college career, it is vital that freshmen enroll in some of the general education requirements during the first semester. These requirements usually include classes in foreign language, math, English, science, history, etc. Remember that if you have taken AP courses during high school, or if you performed well on placement tests, then you may be able to opt out of some core requirements. This will, of course, depend on your particular college or university.

## Course Selection

During the planning of the first-term college schedule, it is a good idea to balance the types of courses you are taking. Mix some classes that require a lot of reading and writing with other types of courses in math, foreign language, or art. Likewise, most students will want to avoid taking two lab science courses along with two math classes. The time commitments for these types of courses will leave most people far too overwhelmed! By having a mixture of courses that include reading, writing, problem solving, etc., it is possible to create a balanced schedule that will require a variety of types of assignments. This way, students can avoid becoming bogged down early in their college career.

## Course Load

For the completion of a degree in four years (which is 8 semesters, or 12 terms), most schools will require that students average about 15 credits a term. To be considered a full-time student, one must be enrolled in a minimum of 12 credit hours. If a student consistently takes the minimum of 12 credit hours each semester, then it becomes necessary to take some summer classes each year in order to be able to graduate within four years. With that in mind, it is a good idea to try to balance the first-term schedule so that you are not too overwhelmed. For example, if you plan on working part-time and going to school, consider taking 12 credit hours during your first semester. After you get used to college courses, then you may be able to register for more credit hours. If there are no plans for part-time work or other extenuating circumstances during the first-term, then most students should be able to handle 15 or 16 credit hours.

## Time of Day

In this regard, college is a far cry from high school! As a college student there is much more flexibility when it comes to when classes are scheduled. There is considerable leeway in selecting the times – and even the days of the week – for class attendance. (Remember, though, that classes do fill up... and if you register late you may find yourself locked out of a desirable class meeting time!) If you have a job which will require you to work evenings, then you can schedule your classes for the morning... or vice versa. On the other hand, if you are just not a morning person, then you can schedule your classes for the afternoons. Furthermore, if you only want to go to classes a few days a week, you can plan your schedule so that you only have classes on Monday/Wednesday/Friday or Tuesday/Thursday. The main thing is to find a schedule that 1) works for you, and 2) maximizes your probability of attendance.

### **Classroom Location**

When planning your first-term college schedule, students need to be aware of the geographical locations of the classrooms. It is imperative to allow enough time to get from one location to another without being late to class. For example, a class that ends at 9:50AM will not allow enough time to make it to a 10:00AM class that is almost a mile away! Many larger university campuses offer shuttles, so be sure to get your campus bus schedule before you plan your own. You should also get a campus map (most are located on the back of the shuttle bus time tables) to help you figure out where your classes are located.

Yes, planning a college schedule can be daunting if you have never done it before. However, you are not in this alone! At Freshmen Orientation, all students will be assigned an academic advisor who can help to plan out the best first-term schedule. This will be a much faster and easier task if you go to your advising meeting prepared! Bring a list of the courses that you would like to take, and don't forget to have some alternates... it is possible that there may not be room for you in all of your first-choice classes.

# MANAGING STRESS

There is no doubt about it – college is a demanding undertaking overall. Professors, class projects, and extracurricular activities can all become contributing factors to the stress that can consume many college students. In fact, students can sometimes become so overwhelmed that they do not know how to efficiently manage their stress, which can lead to a dramatic sense of loneliness, frustration, and even depression. To help ward off these symptoms, here are a few tips that can help keep college stress at a minimum before it becomes too hard to handle.

**Once again... stay organized.** By becoming more organized, you can reduce your stress level drastically. Make a daily schedule of all your activities. Do you have a paper due on Tuesday? When do you have to meet with your academic advisor? Do you have a date on Friday night? Are you supposed to volunteer at the student center tonight? Having all of these projects written down in one place, such as a personal organizer, will help you remember them without stressing out your brain... and that is the same brain that you will need to use during your chemistry mid-term! Another way to become more organized is by keeping school supplies, books, and a study desk in some semblance of organization. It's much easier to study effectively in a well-ordered space! Label folders for each class, and arrange your notes and assignments by topic or date so you can easily find information.

**Prioritize your schoolwork.** Identify what is most important. If you have a presentation to give this coming Monday, don't spend valuable time writing a one-page chapter review that is not due for a couple of weeks! Common sense says to prepare for the upcoming presentation first. (This holds true even if it is in class that you do not enjoy as much as others... it's common to procrastinate the classes that are less pleasant!) Likewise, if you have an assignment that will require a significant amount of work, put tasks for that project near the top of your list. When you prioritize your work, you will be more efficient in finishing your assignments and thus be less stressed.

**Don't procrastinate.** Putting off doing your schoolwork – or other important tasks, for that matter – will only make you more stressed. If you get an assignment that is due in a month, and you don't have any other assignments to finish, go ahead and begin working on it. Heavens, turn it in early, if you have the time to finish it! This can free up untold hours of time as the due date approaches, and you have the luxury of thinking about other classes – or even some down time! If you wait until right before it is due, you will be stressed about finishing it in time... along with many of your other classmates. Procrastination has been the downfall of many college students – don't be one of them.

**Exercise.** Scientific research has shown that regular exercise increases your energy level, staves off depression, and helps relieve tension. Performing some sort of physical activity for thirty minutes, three times a week, will considerably lower your stress level. Any activities can help! Go out and throw a Frisbee with your friends, walk your dog, or just go for a jog and enjoy your alone time. Yoga is also a good stress reliever. It doesn't matter what you decide to do as long as you just do something. Taking the time to exercise will help get your mind off the chaos and stress in your life. Forget the nonsensical thought that "there just isn't enough time for me to exercise during school..." the fact is, you don't have time **not** to be active.

**Get enough rest and sleep.** Most people need between seven to eight hours of sleep per night in order to function optimally during the day. Of course, most college students only dream that they could get that much sleep! However, blocking out a significant amount of time for slumber will actually make you more alert, less irritable, and better able to manage the stresses of college. (Bear in mind that sleeping too much is just as unhealthy as not getting enough sleep... and people who pull consistent all-nighters tend to be on one end of the spectrum of poor sleep patterns, or the other!)

**Live healthy.** Whether you are eating your meals at home or in the cafeteria, there are definite benefits to making good food choices in college. Aside from the aforementioned Freshman Fifteen weight gain, eating well-balanced meals provides students with enough energy to accomplish their daily activities. Foods and treats with high sugar content can be counter-productive, because they only provide a short-term burst of energy, rather than enough to get you through a long day of lectures, labs, and study groups. Instead, try to stick with healthy foods such as vegetables and fruit. Also, in order to manage the stresses inherent to college life, it is crucial for you to eat regularly. Don't skip meals, and bring healthy snacks to class if you need to...

**Talk about your problems.** Talking about the challenges of college and personal issues is one sure way to help ease your tension and anxiety. This can be done with a trusted friend, and can be a nice give-and-take since you are probably both going through similar school stresses. Alternatively, most schools also provide valuable services at a counseling center specifically for students. Whoever you choose, talking to others will not only help you feel better, but it may also assist you with finding more ways to deal with the very problems that are causing difficulty and stress.

**Adopt a positive attitude.** This can be a challenge for some people, but there is no doubt that a consistently negative mindset increases stress. Taking a moment to try to view things in a more positive manner (or even in a pragmatic light) can reduce stress almost immediately. It can be very useful to try to view a stressful situation as a minor obstacle that can be overcome, rather than as a barrier to your goals. If you find that it helps, go ahead and give yourself some pep talks throughout the day! The fact is, you can do this... and believing that fact will go a long way toward making it happen.

**Take time to relax.** To maintain peak performance and reduce your amount of stress, you simply must schedule in some quality time to relax. It is detrimental to performance – any performance, whether mental or physical – to continue working without ever taking a break! Remember the previous adage of “Work hard; play hard?” Well, be sure to enjoy hanging out with your friends for a little while, or watching your favorite TV show. Taking the time to allow your brain and body to relax will help rejuvenate you. This makes any college student better prepared to face the challenges of college head on – and to do a better job at it, as well!

**Realize that it's okay to say NO.** If you already have a full schedule, don't attempt to add anything else to it. If an extra-curricular group wants you to be its new president, but you are already pulling your hair out with your class load... it might be a good time to say “No, thanks!” If your friends want you to go out at the last minute, but doing so would conflict with your completion of an important project or exam prep... then don't feel bad about turning them down. Good friends will understand, especially if they are decent students... after all, they have been stressed before, too! Above all, remember that saying “NO” at the right time will allow you to say “YES” later, and really enjoy yourself in the process.

Yes, college is a stressful time, and freshman students are adapting to it on the fly. However, while new students will undoubtedly experience challenges and stressors as a college freshman, following these tips may help reduce the negative effects that it can have on their studies... and them as individuals.

# STAYING SAFE ON CAMPUS

The average college student tends to have enough going on without wanting to worry too much about school safety. Unfortunately, in this day and age, staying safe on campus is an issue that students and school administrators must think about. Because crime on college campuses has been on the rise within the past few years, it is crucial for students to follow certain safety tips. We urge you to note the following tips, so that you can have a better chance of being protected during your time on campus.

## Residential Safety

Only admit your own visitors to the residence halls.

Make sure outside doors of residence halls are shut securely behind you when entering or leaving.

Insist that your resident assistant or security guard check for doors left ajar during the day and at night.

Do not loan your room key to anyone.

Make sure your apartment or dorm room has secure locks on doors and windows.

Always lock your apartment or dorm room, even if you are going to be gone for just a few minutes. Be sure to lock your doors at night as well.

Have the locks changed if you ever lose the keys to your residence.

Leave lights or a radio on in your apartment, so that it always appears that someone is home.

Never open the door for someone you do not know.

Ask anyone who gives you a ride home to wait around until you have safely entered your apartment or dorm building.

## Parking Lot Safety

Always lock your car.

Place valuables out of sight in your car, preferably in the trunk.

Have your keys in hand before you leave to go to your car.

If possible, have someone walk you to your car – especially at night.

Utilize your campus escort service if you ever feel you might be in danger.

Check your backseat before entering your car.

## **Personal Safety**

Never walk alone, especially at night.

Be alert to your surroundings and walk with confidence.

Walk where the sidewalks are well-lit and well-traveled.

Trust your instincts. If you feel like someone is following you or waiting for you, go to a populated place where people can help you. Call campus security immediately.

Do not wear a music headset when you are walking on campus.

Know where campus emergency phones are located.

## **ATM Safety**

Pay attention to the people and environment around the ATM. Use a busy one if possible.

Take a friend with you whenever you can.

Have your ATM card in your pocket for easy access.

Do not give anyone your personal identification number (PIN).

Stand directly in front of the teller machine so no-one can see your information.

Make eye contact with anyone standing in line. If anyone seems suspicious, cancel your transaction and return later.

Store your cash in a safe place as soon as you receive it. You can always count it later.

Report any lost ATM cards to your bank.

Following the tips listed above will help to make you a more safety-oriented person in general, and could actually help save your life one day. If you are ever a victim of or a witness to a campus crime, report it immediately! Try to retain any pertinent information that will help catch the assailant, such as a description of the attacker's approximate age, weight, height; eye, hair, and skin color; and distinctive scars or tattoos. Report any crimes to your campus or local police department, and inform your school of the crime so administrators may implement improved campus safety precautions.

## SPRING BREAK DO'S & DON'TS

It's a college student tradition that makes headlines every year. It's true that Spring Break is a wonderful time for students to get away from school for a whole week (or maybe more) without having to worry about the stresses of school. For a brief moment, you can completely forget about term papers, group projects, and grades. Many students make plans to travel to a renowned Spring Break hotspot, such as Key West, Cancun or the Caribbean. If you are going on a trip for Spring Break, be sure to keep these "dos and don'ts" in mind, so you can have an enjoyable time.

**DO** keep safety first. If you are driving to your spring break destination, make sure to have your car checked to make sure it will travel the entire distance without any trouble. Once you are on the road, be sure to switch out drivers regularly, so no one gets sleepy while driving. Once you get to your destination, try to always go out with a friend. Remember that there is safety in numbers.

**DON'T** get arrested. Spring Break is a time to have fun and let loose, but you can have fun and let loose without doing anything illegal. To help keep your activities legal, think of how angry your friends would be if they had to use their extra spring break money to bail you out of jail. Not a pretty mental picture. Then there is the long-term effect of a police record, not to mention parents!

**DO** be respectful of others. Even if you are pretty sure that your hotel is only filled with fellow Spring Breakers, you never know who could be in the room next door. Try not to make a lot of noise in your hotel room or in the hallways, and avoid altercations. They are unnecessary and unattractive, and can lead to really tragic (or just embarrassing) consequences.

**DON'T** forget the sunscreen. If you plan on spending any time on the beach or by the pool, remember to apply the sunscreen. Not only will it help prevent skin cancer, but it will also keep you from looking like a lobster – and feeling like a stinging nettle – during your trip. Hello, SPF 45!

**DO** take lots of pictures. Spring Break is a time to make memories with your friends. Be sure to capture moments on film so you will have photos to cherish. Smaller digital cameras make it easy to have your camera accessible at all times because you never know when a perfect moment will occur.

**DON'T** be reckless with your belongings. Always be aware of where you put your wallet, purse, money, credit cards, mobile phone, etc. Be especially vigilant when you are at the beach or a nightclub. Not everyone is there to enjoy Spring Break, and criminals work these areas, too! You never know when someone might try to swipe a valuable that has been left unattended.

**DO** have fun. Spring Break is designed to be memorable, and we encourage you to enjoy it! You want to return to your school happy, rested and ready, with terrific memories... not sunburned, battered, and poor with a police record!

## FINAL WORDS OF ADVICE

If you are reading this, then you have already completed all the prep work -- you've earned good grades in high school, scored well on a standardized test, and been accepted into a college that you want to attend -- so now is the time to enjoy all your hard work while laying the groundwork for a successful college career.

Whatever you do, make sure that you are prepared for college so that you won't become a statistic! Determine right now that you will do what it takes to make it through your freshman year – and beyond. Please take advantage of your network of new friends and professors in your college or university environment. This will help you to have fun while learning as much as you can, and enable you to get the most out of your successful college experience.

**Good luck to you in your academic endeavors!**