This workbook is for prospective college students. It contains helpful information, tips, strategies, and resources for developing fundamental skills needed for success in college. This information applies specifically to public universities and colleges as well as private/independent colleges in California.

The tips, strategies, and resources in this workbook are especially aimed toward first-generation college students or anyone who may not have had previous guidance preparing for success in college.

Note: This is not a holistic list of tips and strategies. This includes general information that may be applies to college. It is recommended that you research your specific school for further any unique requirements and expectations.
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PART ONE

Expectations and Preparation

It may be no surprise that college is a lot different than high school. For one, college has higher expectations for students. Additionally, the pacing, schedule, time spent, and rigor of college often surprises first-year students. Regardless of the type of college you attend, though, there are key strategies for all students to keep in mind.

- You are responsible for reading and understanding all assigned material. Lectures and assignments are taught with the assumption that you are doing so
  - Tips: Read all assigned material critically and take notes as you read. While in high school, you can practice taking notes by evaluating and understanding the material—not just memorizing it

- Class sizes are often much larger, especially during your first year when most classes are large lectures, which means there will be less one-on-one time
  - Tips: Go to your professor’s office hours. Whether you like the class or not, getting to know the professor and asking questions is always a good thing. You may also have a teaching assistant who you can speak with and get to know

- You will have fewer opportunities to earn a high grade. Many classes may have only a midterm and a final exam, for instance. Because there are fewer materials given to learn the information, it is up to you to understand the information and be able to apply it, and to ask for help when/if you need it
  - Tips: Take good notes during lecture as well as on your readings. Evaluate and understand the information. While in high school, try to sharpen your writing skills and test-taking skills to prepare. Also, take rigorous classes while in high school and take the work seriously

- College is a learning environment in which you take responsibility for thinking through and applying what you have learned. Teachers expect you to be able to critically think about the information, not just know the facts and memorize
  - Tips: Start critically thinking about your class material in your harder classes. Try to find the answer yourself before going straight to your teacher for the answer

- College is full of resources and support
  - Tips: Go to office hours, seek out academic advisers, and other academic resources. At the end of the workbook, there will be a list of resources and support systems that may be available at a number universities that can help students transition

The rest of the workbook will be dedicated to other college expectations and tips to build skills for college

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1 How is College Different from High School? (2017) Kings College
2 How is College Different from High School (2017) SMU
Types of Colleges: What are the Differences?

Community College

- 113 community college campuses
- To attend a community college, there is no selection process. There is an application, payment, and then enrollment.
- Community colleges offer Associate’s Degree—or a 2-year degree.
- One of the main reasons people attend a community college is to save money for 2 years—and then transfer to a 4 year college for the last 2 years.

California State Universities (CSUs)

- 23 campuses
- You must apply and be accepted into a CSU
- 4-year university
- Can obtain a Bachelor’s of Arts/Science; additional degrees that can be earned are Master’s degrees
- *CSUs tend to be “hands on” universities and oriented towards preparing you for a career

University of California (UCs)

- 10 campuses
- You must apply and be accepted into a UC
- 4-year university
- Can obtain a Bachelor’s of Arts/Science; additional degrees that can be earned are Masters and Doctorates
- *UCs tend to emphasize research and theory—many of the professors are top researchers in their field
  - Must be prepared to read and write research papers and learn theories in-depth

Private Colleges

- Private: means they do not accept public funds, and while still accredited they often develop their own missions and objectives
- More than 75 private colleges
- May be dedicated to a certain field of study, training, or affiliated with a religion
- Some offer job training, certificates, or Bachelor’s degrees, Master’s degrees, and Doctorate degrees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarter System</th>
<th>Semester System</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Divides academic year into 3 quarters—<em>Fall, Winter, Spring</em></td>
<td>Divides academic year into two fifteen-week sessions—<em>Fall and Spring Semester</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>10 weeks per quarter</td>
<td>Take about 4-5 classes per semester</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take about 3-4 classes per quarter</td>
<td>Slower pace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quick pace</td>
<td>Less classes overall</td>
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<tr>
<td>More classes overall</td>
<td>More in-depth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often seems less in-depth</td>
<td>CSUs tend to be semester systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCs tend to be quarter systems</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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*Types of Colleges: The Basics (2017) Big Future
Semesters vs Quarters: Which System Serves Students Best? (2016) Concordia University*
PART THREE

Types of Classes: What to Expect

Lecture
- Typically large classes held in a lecture-hall
- May seat hundreds of students
- Professor talks for the entire class while students take notes
- Common in first-year courses
- Students in these classes often attend a connected discussion class

Discussion/Section
- Often required as part of the lecture courses
- Smaller groups of students led by a graduate student (graduate student will most likely be grading your work)
- Students complete additional work, talk about the lecture, and have a chance to ask questions

Seminar
- Professors meet with a small group of students
- Often advanced courses that focus on special topics within the student’s major
- More personal and discussion-based class
- Some focus on career or research skills

Laboratory
- Typically part of a science lecture
- Students use what they have learned in class to complete assignments

Studio
- Students who take hands-on classes such as art, music, design, or photography will often take these classes
- Class environment in which they do what they are studying

Independent Study
- Students and professors design an individualized study program for the student that is separate from regular courses
- Often requires a research project or significant reading on a central theme, often culminating in a large paper(s)

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5 Quick Guide: Types of College Courses (2017) Big Future
The Art of Choosing Classes: Requirements, Tips, & Strategies

What it takes to graduate: Requirements

General Education Requirements: University Level

Some General Education (GE) requirements may be satisfied with equivalent courses completed at another accredited institution, or by means of Advanced Placement exam credits. University of California and California State Universities require A-G GE requirements. Much like High School, these courses are required to graduate and earn a degree at the university. These are in addition to any major requirements. Some may overlap with major or prerequisite courses and requirements. Although they may vary slightly from school to school, they generally cover:

- English Reading and Composition
- Foreign Language
- Science, Mathematics, and Technology—with an emphasis on quantitative relationships
- Social Science
- Culture and Thought
- Arts
- Literature

Other Requirements

GPA requirement: California Universities (UC and CSUs) require a minimum of a 2.0 GPA to graduate and to abstain from academic probation.

Unit requirement: Total unit accumulation required differs from university to university. Typically, unit requirement is a minimum of 120-180 units. These are an accumulation of general education, prerequisites, and major courses. As you earn more units, your class standing (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, and Senior) will increase and you will be able to transition from lower to upper-division courses.

Degree requirements:

1. Entry Level Writing Requirements: May be met by—score of 680+ on the writing section of the SAT test, score of 30+ on the ACT combined English Composition and Literature or English Language and Composition, passing the statewide analytical writing placement exam while in High School, or earning a C or higher in a course accepted as equivalent
   a. Those who do not meet entry level requirements will need to take additional writing courses

2. American History and Institutions Requirement: May be met by—score of 3+ on AP exam in American History or American Government and Politics, passing non-credit exam in American history or American institutions, score of 650+ on SAT subject test in American history, or completing one four-unit course from approved university course
   a. Courses used to fulfill this requirement may also be applied to General Education or major requirements, or both

Major requirements: To be eligible for graduation, all undergraduates must complete the requirements for a departments or interdepartmental major in their college with required grade-point average and required units.

- Prerequisites: Courses necessary to demonstrate readiness for enrollment in a major or program. Students often must meet prerequisite requirements before being accepted into a major and take desired upper-division major courses. Additionally, prerequisites may overlap with other GE requirements.
PART FOUR: B

Tips and Strategies to Choose Classes

Check out your options?
Unlike high school, you have a significant amount of freedom to choose your classes and create your own schedule. There are hundreds of options, which can be a bit overwhelming. Within your first year or two, you will be restricted to lower-division courses. The more units you accumulate, though, your class standing will increase, and you will be able to take upper-division courses—often for your major. Lower-division courses will often be courses that can take care of GE requirements and prerequisites.

Some tips:
- If you know your major: choose courses that will fulfill prerequisite or major requirements
- If you are still undecided/undeclared major: pick classes that interest you
- Know your class standing: this will help determine if you are able to take lower or upper-division courses

Get requirements out of the way
Get GE requirements and prerequisites out of the way—this way you can concentrate on major classes the last two years. Keep in mind what is required for your major and general education, some may overlap. For your first year you may be restricted from upper-division major courses, so this is the time to get general requirements complete—these will often be large lecture classes, sometimes with discussion/section classes. Remember, just because you have general requirements does not mean you cannot pick classes that seem interesting! Also, see what college credits you have already earned with AP exams and SAT/ACT scores.

Create a schedule that works
How many classes you have may depend if you are attending a quarter or semester system school. For your first semester/quarter it is wise not to overwhelm yourself with too many courses. Along with lectures, you may be required to attend discussion/section classes which adds an additional class to your schedule. Some things to keep in mind:
- Spread the courses out so you have time to study and do other activities
- Look at what the course requires—will there be a lot of assignments, a math focus class, papers, multiple exams?
- Make sure classes and final exams do not overlap
- Are you more of a morning, afternoon, or night person?—pick classes you know you will be motivated to attend

Visit your adviser
Try to meet with your academic adviser before registration. Come with questions to ask. Write down what classes you are interested in, what classes you have already taken, what requirements you have fulfilled, and what still needs to be fulfilled. Advisers can help with these concerns, as well as track your units and requirements fulfilled and what is still needed.

Check your registration
Make sure you know when your registration is. Registration is your designated date and time to select courses for the quarter/semester. Make sure to register classes on time. The more units you complete, the earlier your registration is due to your class standing. Prior to registration get a list of courses you want/need to take. Be sure to have plenty of backups in case you do not get your first choice. Be sure to check time and day the classes meet to not overlap, as well as the final exam.

7 8 Tips for Choosing College Classes (2017) Big Future
PART FIVE

Time Management

Here are some tips to learn better time management skills for projects, papers, and assignments:

1. Plan before going to bed: this will reduce stress and help you refrain from distractions
2. Write down daily plans: this will help you complete tasks and be in control
3. Effectively plan by jotting down activities that must be completed and other tasks you would like to complete if time permits: this can help you clear up your schedule by the end of the week to relax
4. Once you start planning effectively, you can identify how much time is necessary to complete certain tasks—and you can plan better accordingly
5. Identify priorities in daily plans: do the more important and large project first, then worry about the little tasks
6. Stay focused on long-term goals: carefully read your syllabus and write down the due dates for bigger projects, papers, and exams throughout the semester/quarter. Your professor will expect you to understand the goals and assignments on the syllabus and to reference to that for assignments, papers, and exams
   a. Be prepared for more assignments and the separation of exams in semester systems
   b. Be prepared for the fast pace in a quarter system—stay on top of readings and assignments, as there is little time to procrastinate in a quarter system
7. Make sure to schedule everything: keep syllabi handy and write down all important dates
8. Break large projects down into smaller-simpler projects
9. Develop a flexible schedule: make sure to give yourself recreational and relaxation time. Do not panic if the schedule does not go as planned, and prepare yourself for distractions and delays
10. If your plan isn’t working out right today, there is always tomorrow: most schedules never go as planned, and that is okay!
11. Time management is a trial and error process: find out what works best and experiment with new strategies.

You can start applying these skills in high school to better prepare yourself!

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8 Time Management Tips for College and University Students. (2017)
9 Study Skills Downloads. Learning and Academic Resources [2017] LBCC
PART SIX

Study Skills: Tips, Reading, & Note-Taking

Here are some tips and strategies to help sharpen study skills and tackle assignments and exams:

Study Environment

- Find a quiet place where you can spread out all of your study materials
- Organize your notes, assigned readings, and other study materials, so they can be easily retrieved while studying
- Stay away from places where you are tempted to slack off and may get easily distracted
- Have everything you need easily accessible
- Be comfortable—but not too comfortable. Don’t go somewhere where you are fidgeting but also don’t sit somewhere where you might fall asleep
- Determine how long you will study—breaks are important!

Study Tips

- Study little by little each week rather than cramming all the information in one night—use your time management skills to set aside time to study
- Make associations: remember key ideas or facts and form connections. Information has a pattern—find these and create relationships
- Explain the ideas out loud in your own words: put the information in a way that makes sense to you and sounds familiar
- Make sure you understand the main idea: understand the large concepts before the small details
- Quiz yourself: this way you can test what information you know well and what you need to work on. This also teaches you to recall the information

Reading Effectively

- Be an Active Reader: read with determination to understand and evaluate it for its relevance. Simply reading and re-reading the material is not an effective way to understand and learn. Try to actively and critically engage with the content—this can save time in the end
- Understand the audience of the texts you read—this will help determine the purpose
- Use titles and headings as references for the main point of the passage
- Connect concepts
- Compare readings to lectures—what information is the same, what is different, what gaps does your reading or lecture notes provide?
- Take notes on your reading

Note Taking

- Tune in: be an active listener during lecture
- Know your learning style: develop strategies to overcome learning differences when the instructor uses different teaching methods. Write the notes in a way that makes sense to you
- Get organized: put your notes together so you can reference book and lecture notes
- Date your notes: this helps know when they were and what chapter or lecture the notes reference to
- Don’t skip class: having your own notes is always better than someone else’s. But if you do miss something, ask a classmate, because something is always better than nothing
- Don’t focus on details during lecture: understand the main concepts and examples. Focus on the details with your required readings
- If the instructor repeats or emphasizes something—it is important!

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10 Study Tips for College Students (2017)
11 Study Skills Downloads. Learning and Academic Resources (2017) LBCC
PART 7

Writing Skills: What to Know for College

Always plan to devote a week to the preparation and writing of each paper—not just the night before. College papers often require outside research and a thorough understanding of class concepts.

Here are key things to remember when writing a college paper:

- Write to the level of your intended audience: What are the needs, goals, or concerns of the audience you’re writing for? Academic writing is generally intended for educated and well-informed individuals on the subject. Focus and on the main concepts and show you have an understanding of the main points without including too many unnecessary details.
- Focus on the topic: Don’t get lost trying to explain everything you have learned. Focus on the topic and the argument.
- Research is fundamental: Academic writing typically requires research. Elaborate on the findings of the research and expand the research with your own thoughts, understandings, and critiques. Be prepared to use library database to find peer-reviewed articles.
- Get to the point: The purpose of college papers should be clear and concise. The first paragraph should outline the main points and argument of your paper.
- THESIS: Your thesis takes a stand on the topic and explains your argument. What do you want your reader to think, do, or understand after reading your paper? The reader should be able to identify the main points your paper will cover and what you are arguing. Use strong topic sentences for each paragraph, which point back to your thesis and main argument.
- Myth of the five paragraph essay: You do not have to stick with the five paragraph essay formula. Use paragraphs strategically to connect ideas, not to follow a template.
- Provide supporting evidence: Use your research effectively to back-up your arguments. Make sure to cite your sources and complete a list of sources.
- Avoid literary clichés: Academic writing is designed to inform, educate, and show your understanding. Flowery language and fluff is distracting and does not help your argument. Choose language that fits with the subject, and remember to be clear and concise.
- Show style: Follow the appropriate writing style and format required for the subject. And of course, display professionalism by dedicating adequate time and attention in your writing.
- Edit and proofread: Proofread to catch grammatical and spelling errors, as well to make sure organization is clear, ideas are concise, and that your paper follows your thesis. Have a friend read your paper or get professional help at your school’s writing center. If a teacher or teaching assistant will read rough drafts, take advantage!

Research and Citation Resources

Start to familiarize yourself with different writing styles and research citations. Often you will use a particular writing style for a particular class, major, or general subject. Each requires different writing styles and information required for citation. Here is a list of some of the popular citation resources provided by Purdue Owl. Connect with your school’s writing center to get additional assistance and guidance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MLA</th>
<th>APA</th>
<th>CHICAGO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most commonly used to write paper and cite sources within the liberal arts and humanities.</td>
<td>Most commonly used to cite sources within the social sciences.</td>
<td>Includes two systems for citation. Footnotes and endnotes used to reference text within your paper. History papers often use this style.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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12 10 Ways to Improve your Academic Writing (2017)
13 Citation Style Chart (2017) Purdue Owl
PART EIGHT

Resources: Where to Find Support
Each university and college has a variety of resources that can help students from tutoring in a special subject, to mental health. Here is a list of resources and support centers to keep in mind when transitioning to college.

- **EOP**: The Educational Opportunity Program is a program that helps first-generation, low-income students. EOP provides assistance, mentoring, academic programs, financial assistance, counseling and advising, and other campus support services.
- **Academic Advising**: Visit an academic advisor. There are department/major advisors, as well as peer advisors, and general college advisors.
- **Writing Center**: Go to writing centers and utilize tutors to help sharpen your writing skills and get a professional opinions on papers.
- **Other tutoring**: Find campus tutoring for other subjects such as math, chemistry, economics, etc. to help with assignments and understand problems.
- **Disabled Students Program**: If you have any disabilities, joining this program will assist you with accommodations and further aid.
- **Cultural Resource Centers**: This may vary from school to school. But if you identify as part of a culture or community, many schools have resource centers where you can connect with others and find a community and support system. Some include:
  - LGBTQ Resource Center
  - Asian Student Center
  - American Indian Student Center
  - African Student Association Center
  - Chicano/Latino Resource Center
  - Middle Eastern Resource Center
- **Office Hours**: Going to office hours is a simple resource. Getting to know your professor can help you understand the material better and receive extra advice on an exam, assignment, or paper. Building relationships with a teacher or teaching assistant can also be beneficial for references and letters or recommendations in the future.
- **Living Learning Communities**: Provide unique community experiences through themed living options. You are able to connect with alike students with similar interests or backgrounds. You can opt for an LLC when applying to your college. Examples of LLC are:
  - Global living experience
  - Asian and Pacific Islander Scholars
  - Black/African-American Scholars
  - Chicano/Latino Scholars
  - Multicultural Experience
  - Rainbow House
  - First Generation Scholars
  - And many more!
Advice from First-Generation College Students

“Be prepared to accept and conquer every obstacle that comes your way. Don’t give up and keep striving forward towards your goals.”- Tony Hernandez

Susana Soto: “Don’t be hesitant to visit your financial aid office!”

“Regardless of whether high school was easy or difficult for you, college is definitely a challenge. Be prepared to work harder than you ever have before. You’ll be juggling school, jobs, extracurricular activities, etc.”- Andrew Santore

“Go to a counselor whether you think you need help or not. Find one you like and stick with them.”- Sierra Scott

“Make sure college is your choice, not your parents. This is the beginning of your life and being independent and successful on your own. Do not choose a college that your friends have chosen, choose one that meets your likes and what you love to do. If you are working towards a goal, dream, or lifelong career, make sure it is something that YOU love to do, and then it will never seem like work. Know that you can accomplish anything that you set your mind to. Hard work and effort, you will make it happen.”- Candy Carrington

“There is help everywhere! Even when you don’t think you need it, someone might suggest a resource/program/class that you’ve never even heard of. Networking is scary, but you have to just go for it and talk to you counselors, academic advisors, TA’s, and even professors. They’re all there to help, and these relationships will pay off in the long run!”- Leiya Factoran

“College will be a challenge! It will be challenging academically and emotionally, so learn to practice self-care! Don’t be ashamed to get help.”- Patricia Rodriguez

“Grow out your comfort zone and try new things and meet new people so you learn more about yourself. Be prepared to adopt more self-responsibility since your parents won’t be able to save you. Take your L’s gracefully and keep it pushing. And figure out what study strategies would out for you ASAP”- Marquel Carnell

“Find out what classes you need to take! Use all you resources and plan wisely! Don’t be stuck with all hard classes last semester/quarter. Go to advisor meetings. Make upperclassman friends.”- Daisy Khensovan

“College has been the most rewarding thing of my life. I created this workbook because I am also a first-generation and low-income student. My high school was great with the application process and what to do in high school to get accepted to college, but I felt that once I got to college I didn’t know what to expect. I think having the right expectations along with the right drive and dedication will take you a long way. Although college is the time to be independent, it is also the time to build relationships, network, and learn life-long skills and lessons with the people around you.”- Sydney Carrington Scott
References


(2017) How is College Different from High School. New to SMU. Retrieved from https://www.smu.edu/Provost/ALEC/NeatStuffForNewStudents/HowIsCollegeDifferentFromHighSchool


(2017). Citation Style Chart. Purdue Online Writing Lab. Retrieved from https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/949/01/