

Twenty Suggestions for Top Grades

1. Your College Career is Big Business. Run it Like One.

- Be aggressive about your education.
- Use the tools of big business--computers, copy machines, filing systems, memory techniques & study methods.
- Never miss class. Each day you're absent from one of your "business meetings" you deduct \$1,000 from your lifetime earnings.

2. Choose Courses You Like.

- Don't let hard courses fool you. If you enjoy something, take it on.

3. Test Professors Before They Test You.

- Select instructors as carefully as you select classes.
- You're the customer here. The college is your department store; so get what you want. You paid for it.

4. The Early Bird Gets the Most Out of the Textbook.

- Get textbooks before classes begin and read at least the first fifty pages.
- Early, unpressured study is the least boring.
- To enhance comprehension, try reading aloud, in order to stimulate both sides of your brain.
- If we use both the right and left side of our brain, we will have better recall and consequently better grades.

5. Launch a Full-Scale Attack.

- Give the first two weeks everything you've got.

6. Be There.

- Never miss a class.
- Don't be late.
- Don't leave early.

7. Always Do the Extra Credit Work.

8. Pretest Yourself.

9. Become an Expert Test Taker.

- Test taking is a skill.
- Practice makes perfect.
- Use educated guessing:
 - a. Multiple-Choice: When two out of four choices are opposites, pick one of those two as the best guess.
- B, C, and D answers are best in five answer multiple-choice questions.
- Avoid pairs. If question 28 is known to be B, avoid guessing B in 27 or 29.
- Non-answers ("Zero," None of the above") are usually poor guesses.
- In questions asking for the most or the least, pick the answer next to the most or the least.
- "All of the above" is generally a good guess.
- Longest multiple-choice answers are good guesses.
- If two out of four choices are almost identical, pick the longer of the two.
- If a few questions have five possible choices instead of four, pick number five.
- If a question asks for a plural (or singular) answer, make sure you pick the plural (or singular).
- When limiting words are used (all, never, always, must, etc.) "false" is usually the best answer.
- When general terms are used (most, some, usually, could, might, etc.) "True" is usually the best answer.
- Exaggerated or complex answers are generally false.

- Answer every question, even with a best guess, AS YOU GO. Identify those you are not sure of with a mark. Review these on a second pass.
- On "fill-in-the-blank" exams, never leave a question blank. Give your best guess. You might guess correctly or get partial credit.
- In "Essay" exams, say as much as you can. Use short paragraphs. Write legibly. Volume, quality, clarity, and neatness pay off.
- Read directions before turning in an exam. Did you define terms when you were asked to compare them? Use the entire period to double-check.
- Answers quite often pop up in other questions. Keep that thought in mind.
- First impressions (initial guesses) are often best. If an answer comes to you from out of the blue, it's probably your right brain at work. Don't fight this intuition unless you're sure it's wrong.
- When a question is difficult to visualize, draw it.
- Sit in the front of the class. Ambiguous questions can be cleared up much easier when you're near the instructor.
- Stay until the very end. The instructor as an afterthought may clarify questions.
- When in doubt, follow the rules for the best educated guess.

10. The Key to Perfect Papers.

- Never turn in homework late, sloppily done, or unedited.
- Write clearly and concisely.
- Use computerized writing tools like grammar and spelling checkers, but always find someone to proofread every bit of handed-in material.
- Use a word processor and make picture perfect pages.
- Evaluating written work is a game of comparison between papers.
- Appearance of your papers makes a big difference.
- Five Steps to Better Writing:
 - Step I: Structural Outline.
 - Step II: Sentence Outline.
 - Step III: First Draft (write sentences in any order; when a new thought comes, write it down immediately. Keep writing & don't stop.
 - Step IV: Recast your Five Paragraphs.
 - Step V: Polish Your Paper.

11. Take Advantage of Registration Tricks.

- Register promptly.
- If courses you want close, plead in person with the instructor to make room for you. Never give up getting into a course.
- Memorize the college catalog for your course of study--don't put all your trust in others.

12. Develop and Learn to Use Your Memory.

- Commit things to memory only when you are well rested. Trying to memorize difficult material when you are tired is a waste of time.
- Several short study sessions are better than one long one.
- Eat well and supplement your diet with memory vitamins: Vitamins C, B-1, B-3, B-6, B-12 Lecithin, Choline, Tyrosine
- Use memory strategies:
 - Acronyms
 - Key words associated with things you want to recall.
 - The sillier the association, the easier it is to recall.
 - Practice several memory strategies to save time and energy.

13. Get Jobs, Scholarships, and Loans without Interest. There are alternatives to working at the expense of your grades.

- Post Cards and Phone Calls
- Find out your grade as soon as possible, before the official report in the mail.
- Talk to the instructor about close ones.
- Instructors sometimes make grading mistakes. Ask them to re-compute your score.

14. Schedule Study Time to Your Biological Clock. When You Must Study When Tired:

- Lift your feet up. Let the blood flow to your head.
- Begin some deep, slow, rhythmic breathing.
- Eat something sweet.

15. Once you have determined when to study, master the art:

- Actively review, by asking yourself potential questions and writing down the answers just as you would on a test.
- Passive review is simply reading and rereading material you think is important. Most passive reading is a waste of time.
- Make use of study groups.
- Study in bright light.
- Concentrate by reducing background noise, music, tv.
- Wearing a pleasant perfume or cologne while studying or taking a test can improve chances of getting a better grade.
- Smile in the mirror every morning, and smile before every study period and test. Good feelings stimulate thought and release memory.
- In short, find out when you study best, surround yourself with right study environment, and get into a positive frame of mind.

16. Be Prepared to Bail Out. Don't be afraid to drop a course that isn't working.

17. Build Your Own Personal Library of Self-Improvement Materials.

18. Use Your Imagination. Innovate. There is no single correct way to study, test, or get through college. Find what is right for you through imagination, innovation, and mental creativity.

19. Take Worthwhile Notes.

- Take notes with a purpose.
- Take short notes.
- Use key words.
- Use notes to make up test questions.
- Make notes of what you don't know in the text.
- Use the text to make up test questions.
- Remember: Don't be late. Don't leave early.
- Study in short sessions.
- Study alone AND in using group study sessions.

20. Stay Mentally, Spiritually, and Physically Fit.

- Don't smoke tobacco.
- Abstain from drinking alcohol.
- Don't use cocaine.
- Don't smoke marijuana.
- Take care of your health.
- Establish a goal, follow a plan, use resources.
- "Where There's a Will There's an "A"."

Adapted from Olney, C. (1991). Where there's a will there's an... A. Paoli, PA: Chesterbrook Educational Publishers.