



College Survival Tips 101: Surviving Your Freshman Year of College

1. **Tip Number One.** Lay off the fatty foods and sweets. I tried to eat as much as I could, to stay awake and to be able to concentrate better. I thought if I ate a chocolate bar right before my afternoon class I could fight drifting off to sleep and potentially snoring in front of people I didn't even know. I also thought that the best foods to eat were comfort foods, and I would order a hamburger, fries and a shake for lunch every day. Big mistakes. Did I say big mistakes? Let me say it again-don't do it. The biggest thing I learned in my first year of college was that all this will do for you is help you gain the "freshman 15," or fifteen extra pounds of weight that freshmen tend to gain their first year of college. Then, you have to take it back off. It's easier just to eat right in the first place.

Eating right also helps provide more energy. If you just have a chicken sandwich and salad, instead of the fries, you'll still get enough to eat, and your energy level won't decrease so much in the afternoon. Also, if you eat a healthy snack, you won't have a huge rise in blood sugar that then is followed by a fall, which will end up making you groggy after the initial sugar buzz.

2. **Tip Number Two.** If you are going to have a part-time job, try and work on the weekends. If you work during the week in the evenings, you will probably get home late and not have time to get enough sleep before starting classes the next day. I learned this the hard way. I kept getting colds and even got pneumonia trying to work and not get any sleep while also taking lots of classes.

3. **Tip Number Three.** Have one day to yourself to catch up on sleep and take care of you. Designate a day that you will keep to yourself. Don't hang out with friends, family, or the books. Just use this day to relax, maybe by jogging or walking by yourself, or watching some cool movies. You could treat yourself to an inexpensive massage each week, or read a book. If you have this day to yourself, chances are, you will better be able to deal with the demands of the rest of the week. If you can't get a whole day each week, try a half a day or one day every other week.

4. **Take a class load you can handle.** I tried to take 19 credits my first semester of college. Not only that, but I tried to take calculus-based physics even though I had never had calculus. I thought I could learn calculus while taking the class. Yeah, right! No matter how studious I was, there was no way this was going to happen. I only did it because the regular physics class was too early in the morning. I just should have gotten up with the birds instead of trying to run with the monkeys. Needless to say, halfway through the semester I had to drop the class.

5. **Take enough classes to set a pace to graduate on time.** If you only take 6 credits your first semester, thinking that you can take a bunch later and take summer school, forget about it! You're going to get behind and spend an extra year or two at college. If you determine how many credits you need, and divide it by eight, this is how many credits you should take per semester.

Let me tell you from experience that it's hard to take summer school. First of all, you're going to want to be working and making some money, which will be next to impossible with classes. Summer classes are more difficult because everything is packed into one month instead of four or five. You'll have a whole week's worth of lessons in one day! It is possible to catch up on a missed class during the summer, but be prepared to do a lot of hard core studying and give up the summer beach fun! (Unless you do what I did. I took a summer physics class, and studied every day at the pool. Yes, it worked, and I got an A.)

6. **Set standards for yourself from day one.** Maintaining your standards is easier than playing catch up. For instance, you'll want to keep your gpa steady throughout your college career. If you want to have a 4.0 gpa, you

have to do it from the beginning. If you get those grades the first semester, this lets you know what you need to do each semester to keep up this pace and get these good marks again. You can form habits that are easy to maintain.

7. **Don't be too hard on yourself.** If you flunk an exam or get someone really mad at you, just learn from the experience. You can't expect to be perfect your first year. It's quite possible that you'll even end up flunking a whole course! You may have things happen to you that you said you would never let happen. It's okay-just bounce back and get a life lesson out of the experience. You can't continually beat yourself up. Taking some risks and failing is much better than never taking risks. Otherwise, you'll never know what you are capable of!

8. **Attend social functions to get to know people and be able to relate to college demands.** One thing that seems to happen during freshman year of college is that you feel isolated and out of place. All your high school friends are gone away, and it's like you don't connect with anybody. If you're like any normal teen entering college, you won't want to be best friends with your folks, so that doesn't leave too many options.

I recommend going to events that you enjoy, to get to know people. If you like chess, join a chess club. If you like tennis, find a group that gets together to play tennis. Most colleges have a board that lists these types of events, usually located in the student center. Otherwise, talk to your college counselor to find out where to get more information.

9. **Set reasonable goals for yourself, and check each week to see that you are meeting them.** Don't think that you can wait until the end of the semester to complete all your projects, If you do things as you go along, you just have to maintain the pace, which is easier than doing everything at once. I am a firm believer in procrastination, but it always seems to get you in trouble.

10. **Try and have some fun-you are a freshman, you know!** Times don't get any better than this. If you screw up, or make a mistake, you've got at least three and a half years to improve and fix it. This isn't to say that you should disregard everything you every learned, but loosen up and don't worry once in awhile. Sometimes, you have to enjoy yourself and miss a deadline. Just don't make a habit of it.

Christi Bowers, *College Essentials*, Associated Content, 2008.