

# College Foundations



# COLLEGE FOUNDATIONS

ASSINIBOINE COLLEGE

BRANDY ROBERTSON; SHERYL PROUSE; SCOUT REXE; PAM ROBERTS; LYNN CLIPLEF; LISA VOGT; JOSH SEELAND; CAITLIN MUNN; CURT SHOULTZ; DR. BRENDA STOESZ; AND DR. PAUL MACLEOD

Campus Manitoba  
Brandon, MB



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# GETTING STARTED

Welcome to College Foundations! For each module in this course, there will be a series of readings, images, videos, and activities for you to complete. This module starts off with learning objectives and a land acknowledgment and a description of what that is and why we do them. From there, you can continue on with the readings and activities in the module. We will talk more about learning objectives in the next module.

## Learning Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- acknowledge the land that Assiniboine College is on in order to situate our learning community within a context of Truth and Reconciliation;
- become familiar with the chair of your program, your instructor, and the support person in this course so that you know who to reach out to for support;
- identify the course outline as the first place to look for information about this course;
- orient yourself to online learning and health and safety at Assiniboine.



# NAVIGATING AN ONLINE COURSE

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The following image shows an example of a Moodle course. Click on the icons to learn more about aspects of online courses.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=1067#h5p-23>

# CYBER SECURITY: BEING SAFE ONLINE

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As we welcome back our staff and faculty for the new academic year, we want to remind everyone of the importance of cybersecurity. The education and research sector has been a top target for cyberattacks in the past two years, with a 114% increase in attacks. Some of the common threats include ransomware, phishing, and Zoom-bombing. To protect yourself and our institution from these cyberattacks, please follow these tips:

Use strong and unique passwords for your accounts and devices. Do not share your passwords with anyone or write them down where they can be seen.

Are you still using the default password that was set for you? Change it to a strong password as soon as possible to secure your account, more information here [Choosing a good password](#).

You can change your password using this link: <https://fs.assiniboine.net/adfs/portal/updatepassword>

Be wary of suspicious emails, links, and attachments. Do not open or click on anything that looks odd or comes from an unknown sender. Verify the identity of the sender before responding or providing any information. Emails with an urgent sounding tone should be treated with caution. More information here [How can I tell the difference between a phishing email from a real one?](#)

Setup your MFA if you haven't already, read more at <https://assiniboine.net/mfa>

Report any suspicious or unusual activity to the IT department as soon as possible. ([itservicedesk@assiniboine.net](mailto:itservicedesk@assiniboine.net))

## Password

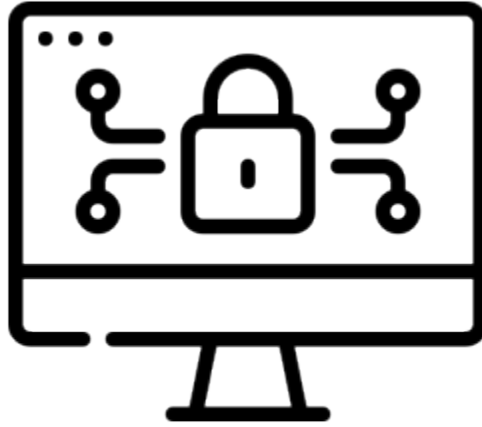
We encourage all students at Assiniboine College to reset their network login password as early as possible. Passwords are set on new accounts based on date of birth and should be changed and never be shared with anyone else.

Your network login account grants you access to college computers, email, and your personal and financial information like tax forms on MyACC. Protecting this information is something Information Technology Services (ITS) takes very seriously, but you also have a role to play by creating a strong, secure password. See the ITS article on [creating a secure password](#) for tips. Your password can be changed from the [Assiniboine College Password Reset Website](#).



## Wellness Tip for Cyber Security

Use an affirmation as your password so that every time you type your password you remind yourself about something positive (for example: Life13Great!).



**Created by Berkah Icon**

Cyber Security by Berkah Icon from [Noun Project](#)

## Phishing and Spam

Email phishing and spam are common methods to be targeted for attack. ITS will never ask you for your password by email or phone. You can learn more about phishing and how to spot phishing emails from [this LinkedIn Learning Course](#) and from the [ITS Knowledgebase Article](#).

## Increased Security

Want to increase the protection of your social media and banking accounts? [Setup multi- or two-factor authentication](#) today to better protect your important logins! Please note that Assiniboine email and computing resources should be used based on the [college acceptable use policy for computer resources](#).

# ASSINIBOINE MEDICAL CLINIC

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Beginning June 1, 2022, Assiniboine students can book or take advantage of walk-in primary health care appointments with Nurse Practitioner Berly Belsar-Lawrence. The clinic operates on an alternating weekly basis between Assiniboine and Brandon University. All students can book and attend the clinic on either campus. Virtual appointments are available upon request and will take place through Microsoft Teams or by phone. When booking an appointment, students must physically be located in Manitoba and will need to provide their name, student number, phone number, and email address.

To schedule your appointment visit [Student Supports](#) and click on Book Your Appointment. You will need to provide your name, student number, phone number, email, and type of appointment.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=916#oembed-1>*

# I.M. WELL STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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I.M. Well is a free counselling program available to all students from all campuses and their immediate family members. I.M. Well provides 24/7 counselling services for mental, emotional, physical, and financial health.

I.M. Well is a completely confidential service that provides students and their families with immediate assistance when they need it most. These services are available to individuals, couples, or families and can be provided in person, via email or video calls, or by telephone. This service will also be made available to recent graduates of Assiniboine.

## Three Ways to Access I.M. Well

### I.M. Well Website

The I.M. Well website is a great one-stop shop for resources that are useful to you, available from any browser. This also includes live chat, an online text-messaging alternative to speak with a master's-level counsellor. This service is free for all Assiniboine students, as well as recent alumni. [Click here to learn more about I.M. Well \(Student VIP Website\)](#)

### I.M. Well Mobile App

The I.M. Well app has all of the same resources as the website and also has an easy access button to call a master's-level counsellor right from your smartphone. The I.M. Well app is available on both Google Play and the iTunes store.

### Toll-Free Number

If you want to contact the Student Assistance Program (SAP) directly and speak with a master's-level counsellor right away, you can use their direct line here: 1-833-398-9040.

## Services

I.M. Well provides a wide variety of services for students. There are many reasons you might want to access the SAP, including:

- academic stress (time management, working with groups);
- relationships (couples counselling, roommate difficulties);
- personal issues (crisis situations, legal or other personal issues);
- physical and mental health (depression, fitness);
- financial concerns (budgeting, managing debt).

You can also request to speak with a counsellor in over 180 languages, so if you prefer to speak to someone in a language other than English, please let them know when you contact them.

## Contact Us

If you still have any questions or if you require further information on I.M. Well, please contact the Students' Association at [accsa@assiniboine.net](mailto:accsa@assiniboine.net).

# RESPECTFUL CONDUCT IN AN ONLINE COURSE

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## Interacting With Others

- Use the preferred names of your classmates. If someone signs their name as “Melanie,” don’t address them as “Mel” in your response.
- Use the pronouns that a person uses for themselves (such as “he,” “she,” or “they”). If you don’t know what pronouns to use, simply ask.
- Do your part to maintain a professional environment. For example, if your instructor has you use an online tool where you can make up your own username, don’t create a username that is silly or offensive.
- Be respectful of others’ opinions. Being open to new perspectives is one of the objectives of academic discussions. However, if someone writes something that you think is genuinely offensive or hateful, immediately bring it to your instructor’s attention.
- Before you write something, ask yourself: “Would I say this out loud in class?” If not, don’t write it.
- If you’re angry about something, wait a day to cool off before you communicate with the person or persons who’ve angered you. This is a good idea in the real world, too!

## Professional Writing

- Write in a clear and concise manner. Write in sentences, not fragments.
- Do your best to use correct spelling and grammar.
- Avoid using short forms such as “u” instead of “you.” Those abbreviations are fine when texting friends but not in a professional context. Likewise, avoid abbreviations such as “ROFL” and “WTF.”
- Avoid using all caps because it can be interpreted as YELLING.
- Be careful about responding with humorous or ironic statements, as they might be misinterpreted and cause offence. If you do inadvertently offend someone, apologize immediately.

## Discussion Groups

- In discussion groups (and email), make your subject line specific and descriptive: “Next Wednesday’s midterm” is a better subject line than “Question.”
- Stay on topic. If the topic of a given thread is “Napoleon’s rise to power,” don’t bring in the movie “The

Fast and the Furious” (unless you are making a genuine and thoughtful connection).

- Don’t reply to someone’s post with just “I agree.” Instead, explain why you agree, or explain why you mostly agree but have a slightly different perspective on certain aspects of the topic.
- It’s become acceptable to use common emoticons such as a smiley face or sad face. Such emoticons can help convey the tone of your statement. But avoid overusing them, and avoid using outlandish ones (like a zombie or mermaid).
- Don’t share personal information about others (and be prudent about the personal information you share about yourself).

## Email

- Don’t start an email to an instructor with “Hey” or similar informalities.
- If you need to email your instructor, send it from your Assiniboine email address (e.g. jonesc@assinboine.net) not a personal email address (e.g. funky\_poodle@gmail.com).
- It’s often a good idea provide some brief context for what you are emailing about, such as, “I’m in your Tue/Thu Stats course. Last Thursday I asked you after class about bivariate distributions. I have a follow-up question...”
- Use a standard font such as Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman. Avoid “silly” fonts like Comic Sans. As for font size, choose 12 pt. or 14 pt.

**Remember:** you’re part of a professional learning community. That community is either enhanced or undermined by each person’s behaviour. Help to enhance it!

This work, “Respectful Conduct in an Online Course,” is a derivative of “Student Guidelines for Communicating in Online, Professional Contexts” by University of Waterloo Centre for Teaching and Learning, used under CC BY 4.0. “Respectful Conduct in an Online Course” is licensed under CC BY 4.0 by Assiniboine College.

# ORIENTATION TO COLLEGE

There are learning objectives for every module in this course. Start each module by reading through those objectives so that you know what you are expected to learn by the time you are finished.

## Learning Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify the services and student supports at Assiniboine;
- recognize how understanding the hidden curriculum will help you succeed in college;
- recall how resilience, metacognition, and growth mindset are keys to success.





# WHY COLLEGE?

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## Indigenous Perspectives

### Did you know?

There are 634 First Nations who speak more than 50 languages. In Manitoba, there are 63 First Nations who speak 5 languages.

Throughout this book there are Indigenous Perspectives in orange boxes like the one above. These were developed with our Indigenous Affairs department and the purpose is to introduce you as a student of Assiniboine, to some of the Indigenous culture and history of this area.

Making more money over time is not the only benefit of completing a college education. College graduates are also more likely to experience a broad range of advantages that will enrich their lives.

- **Greater job satisfaction:** That's right! College graduates are more likely to get a job that they like or to find that their job is more enjoyable than not.
- **Better job stability:** Employees with college educations are more likely to find and keep a job, which is comforting news in times of economic uncertainty.
- **Improved health and wellness:** College graduates are more likely to maintain holistic health.
- **Better outcomes for the next generation:** One of the best benefits of a college education is that it can have a positive influence on the student's immediate family and the next generations.

There is some debate as to whether a college education is needed to land a job, and there are certainly jobs that you can get without a college education. Here are just a few reasons why a college education is valuable:

- more and more entry-level jobs will require a college education;
- a credential from a college still provides assurance that a student has mastered the material;
- college provides an opportunity to develop much-needed interpersonal or “soft” skills.

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (2019) has identified eight career-readiness competencies that college students should develop: critical thinking/problem solving; oral/written communication; teamwork/collaboration; digital technology; leadership; professionalism/work ethic; career management; and intercultural fluency. There are few occasions that will provide you the opportunity to develop all of these skills in a low-stakes environment (that is, without the fear of being fired!). You will learn all of this and more in your classes. Seems like a great opportunity, doesn't it? If you find yourself asking the question "What does this course have to do with my major?" or "Why do I have to take that?" challenge yourself to learn more about the course and the learning outcomes to create connections between the content and your larger educational, career, and life goals.

## Why This Course?

Now that you have considered why you are in college and why a college education may be valuable to you, it's time to focus on why you are taking this course. College Foundations is designed to help you learn about college and how to make the most of it. We believe that this course will help you succeed in college and beyond. If you are not convinced just yet of the value of this course and its content, consider the following questions that you will be encouraged to answer as you learn about how to succeed in college:

- What will college expect of me in terms of skills, habits, and behaviours, and how can I develop them to ensure that I am successful?
- How will these skills help to support me in making a successful transition to the workforce?
- What do I need to know about how to navigate the process of completing a college education?
- How can I ensure that I develop worthy long-term goals, and how can I meet those goals?

These questions are designed to assist you in the transition from high school or the workforce to the new world of college. And this won't be the last big transition that you will experience; for example, you will experience a new job more than once in your life, and you may experience the excitement and challenge of moving to a new house or a new city. You can be assured that transitions will require that you identify what you need to get through them and that you will experience some discomfort along the way. It wouldn't be such a great accomplishment without a little uncertainty, doubt, and self-questioning. To help you, the next section speaks specifically to transitions for the purpose of making your next steps a little smoother.

# ADJUSTMENTS TO COLLEGE

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## Questions to consider:

- How will you adjust to college?
- What are the common college experiences you will have?

## Adjustments to College Are Inevitable

Flexibility, transition, and change are all words that describe what you will experience. Laurie Hazard and Stephanie Carter (2018) use the word *adjustment*. Hazard and Carter (2018) believe there are six adjustment areas that first-year college students experience: academic, cultural, emotional, financial, intellectual, and social. Of course, you won't go through these adjustments all at once or even in just the first year. Some will take time, while others may not even feel like much of a transition. Let's look at them in brief as a way of preparing for the road ahead.

- **Academic adjustment:** No surprises here. You will most likely, depending on your own academic background, be faced with the different demands of learning in college. Often you will be asked to apply what you are learning to projects and assignments rather than just repeating information on a test. This could mean that you need to spend more time learning and using strategies to master the material.
- **Cultural adjustment:** You also will most likely experience a cultural adjustment just by being in college because college has its own language (syllabus and registrar, for example) and customs.
- **Emotional adjustment:** A range of emotions will likely be present in some form throughout your first weeks in college and at stressful times during the semester. Knowing that you may have good days and bad—and that you can bounce back from the more stressful days—will help you find healthy ways of adjusting emotionally.
- **Financial adjustment:** Most students understand the investment they are making in their future by going to college. Even if you have all your expenses covered, there is still an adjustment to a new way of thinking about what college costs and how to pay for it. You may find that you think twice about spending money on entertainment or that you have improved your skills in finding discounted textbooks.
- **Intellectual adjustment:** Experiencing an “a-ha!” moment is one of the most rewarding parts of college, right up there with moving across the graduation stage with a diploma in hand. Prepare to

be surprised when you stumble across a fascinating subject or find that a class discussion changes your life. At the very least, through your academic work, you will learn to think differently about the world around you and your place in it.

- **Social adjustment:** A new place often means new people. But in college, those new relationships can have even more meaning. Getting to know instructors can not only help you learn more in your classes, but it can also help you figure out what career pathway you want to take and how to get desired internships and jobs. Learning to reduce conflicts during group work or when living with others helps build essential workplace and life skills.

## College Culture and Expectations

### Differences Between High School and College

	High School	College	Why You Need to Know the Difference
Grades	Grades are made up of frequent tests and homework and you may be able to bring up a low initial grade by completing smaller assignments and bonuses.	Grades are often made up of fewer assignments, and initial low grades may keep you from earning high course grades at the end of the semester.	You will need to be prepared to earn high grades on all assignments because you may not have the opportunity to make up for lost ground.
Learning	Learning is often done in class with the teacher guiding the process, offering multiple ways to learn material and frequent quizzes to ensure that learning is occurring.	Learning happens mostly outside of class and on your own. Instructors are responsible for assigning material and covering the most essential ideas; you are responsible for tracking and monitoring your learning progress.	You will need to practice effective learning strategies on your own to ensure that you are mastering material at the appropriate pace. This course will provide you with some strategies that you can apply to help you learn independently.
Getting Help	Your teachers, parents, and a counselor are responsible for identifying your need for help and for creating a plan for you to get help with coursework if you need it. Extra assistance is usually reserved for students who have an official need.	As an adult learner, you will be responsible for identifying that you need help, accessing the resources, and using them. Assiniboine has resources to support you, but it is up to you to access them as you need.	Because the responsibility is on you to get the help you need, you will want to be aware of when you may be struggling to learn material. You then will need to know where the support can be accessed on campus or online.
Assessments (Tests, Exams, and Projects)	Tests cover small amounts of material and study days or study guides are common to help you focus on what you need to study. If you paid attention in class, you should be able to answer all the questions.	Tests are fewer and cover more material than in high school. Some courses do not have tests at all and instead you are asked to demonstrate your learning through projects and assignments that mimic the work you will do in the real world.	This change in how much material and the depth of which you need to know is a shock for some students. This may mean you need to change your strategies dramatically to get the same results. The change to project- or assignment-based learning may also impact your learning process; you must learn to apply rather than simply remember, which can be a change for some.

## Some of What You Will Learn Is “Hidden”

Many of the college expectations that have been outlined so far may not be considered common knowledge, which is one reason that so many colleges and universities have classes that help students learn what they need to know to succeed. The term *hidden curriculum*, which was coined by sociologists, describes unspoken, unwritten, or unacknowledged rules that students are expected to follow that can affect their learning. The expectations before, during, and after class, as well as what you should do if you miss class, are often unspoken because many instructors assume you already know and do these things or because they feel you should figure them out on your own. Nonetheless, some students struggle at first because they don't know about these habits, behaviours, and strategies. But once they learn them, they are able to meet them with ease.

## Learning Is Your Responsibility

As you may now realize by reviewing the differences between high school and college, learning in college is your responsibility. Taking responsibility for your learning will take some time if you are not used to leading your own educational process.

## Don't Do It Alone

Here is a secret about college success that not many people know: successful students seek help. They use resources. And they do that as often as necessary to get what they need. Your instructors and advisors will expect the same from you, and your college will have all kinds of offices, staff, and programs that are designed to help. You need to use those resources! These are called “help-seeking behaviours,” and along with self-advocacy, which is speaking up for your needs, they are essential to your success. As you get more comfortable adjusting to life in college, you will find that asking for help is easier. In fact, you may become really good at it by the time you graduate, just in time for you to ask for help finding a job!

## Truth and Reconciliation

“The road we travel is equal in importance to the destination we seek. There are no shortcuts. When it comes to truth and reconciliation, we are forced to go the distance.”—  
Dr. Murray Sinclair

## Common Challenges in College

If you experience any or even all of the challenges listed below, know that you are not alone and that you can overcome them by using your resources. Many college students have felt like this before, and they have survived—even thrived—despite them, because they were able to identify a strategy or resource that they could use to help themselves. At some point in your college experience, you may experience one or more of the following:

- **Feeling like an imposter:** You may have heard the phrase *imposter syndrome*. People who feel like an imposter are worried that they don’t belong, or that someone will “expose them for being a fake.” This feeling is pretty common for anyone who finds themselves in a new environment and is not sure if they have what it takes to succeed. Trust the professionals who work with first-year college students; you do have what it takes, and you will succeed. Just give yourself time to get adjusted.
- **Worrying about making a mistake:** This concern often goes hand-in-hand with imposter syndrome. Students who worry about making a mistake don’t like to answer questions in class, volunteer for a challenging assignment, and even ask for help from others. Instead of avoiding situations where you may fail, embrace the process of learning, which includes—and is even dependent on—making mistakes. The more you practice courage in these situations and focus on what you are going to learn from failing, the more confident you become about your abilities.
- **Trying to manage everything yourself:** Even superheroes need help from sidekicks and mere mortals. Trying to handle everything on your own every time an issue arises is a recipe for getting stressed out. There will be times when you are overwhelmed by all you have to do. This is when you will need to ask for and allow others to help you.

- **Ignoring your mental and physical health needs:** If you feel you are on an emotional rollercoaster and you cannot find time to take care of yourself, then you have most likely ignored some part of your mental and physical well-being. What you need to do to stay healthy should be non-negotiable. In other words, your sleep, eating habits, exercise, and stress-reducing activities should be your highest priorities.
- **Forgetting to enjoy the experience:** Whether you are 18 years old and living on campus or 48 years old starting back to college after taking a break to work and raise a family, be sure to take the time to remind yourself of the joy that learning can bring.

### Wellness Break: Standing or Sitting Body Scan

Stand with your feet flat on the ground, feeling them relax and loosen. Then, work your way up and focus on relaxing and loosening isolated parts of your body. Start with your shins and calves, move to your thighs, then to your butt, your belly, and your chest. Continue and focus on relaxing your shoulders, your arms and hands, your neck. Finally, focus on your face and relax and loosen your lips, nose, eyelids, and forehead. Take one sweeping breath throughout your entire body, and visualize the energy going from your nostrils all the way to through your body to your toes. In total, this should take you about a minute (or longer if you need more time focusing on each body part) and will instantly re-energize you.



# HOW THIS BOOK AND THIS COURSE CAN HELP

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## Use Your Resources



Created by Anthony Ledoux  
from the Noun Project

[Journey by Anthony Ledoux from Noun Project](#)

In addition to developing strategies for succeeding in your academic and future professional careers, you will find that this course will outline the resources you may need to obtain more tools or refuel your desire to continue along this pathway. No one succeeds at anything by oneself. The features related to resources will certainly help you find ways to fill up your toolkit of information.

- **Get connected:** Despite its ability to distract us from the work we need to do, technology can help you accomplish your day-to-day tasks with relative ease. This feature offers suggestions for apps and websites that can help you build skills or just keep track of due dates.
- **Move forward:** The skills and habits you are building now will not only support you in successfully completing your college program, but they can also be applied to your future roles in industry and your community. This feature is designed to help you dig deeper into the chapter content and refine your research skills. It also asks that you find ways to connect what you are learning now to your life and career.

All of these features, in addition to the content, will help you see yourself for who you are and provide opportunities to develop in ways that will make reaching your goal a little easier. Will it be challenging at times? Yes, it will. Will it take time to reflect on those challenges and find better ways to learn and reach your goals? Most definitely. But the effort you put into completing your college education will result in the confidence you will gain from knowing that anything you set your mind to — and work hard for — can be accomplished.

# WHAT IS THE NATURE OF LEARNING?

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It is important to recognize that learning is work. Sometimes it is easy and sometimes it is difficult, but there is always work involved. For many years people made the error of assuming that learning was a passive activity that involved little more than just absorbing information. Learning was thought to be a lot like copying and pasting words in a document; the student's mind was blank and ready for an instructor to teach them facts that they could quickly take in.

As it turns out, learning is much more than that. In fact, at its most rudimentary level, it is an actual process that physically changes our brains. Even something as simple as learning the meaning of a new word requires the physical alteration of neurons and the creation of new paths to receptors. These new electrochemical pathways are formed and strengthened as we utilize, practice, or remember what we have learned.

If the new skill or knowledge is used in conjunction with other things we have already learned, completely different sections of the brain, nerves, or muscles may be tied in as a part of the process. A good example of this would be studying a painting or drawing that depicts a scene from a story or play you are already familiar with. Adding additional connections, memories, and mental associations to things you already know something about expands your knowledge and understanding in a way that cannot be reversed. In essence, it can be said that every time we learn something new we are no longer the same.

In addition to the physical transformation that takes place during learning, there are also a number of other factors that can influence how easy or how difficult learning something can be. While most people would assume that the ease or difficulty would really depend on what is being learned, there are actually several other factors that play a greater role. In fact, research has shown that one of the most influential factors in learning is a clear understanding about learning itself. This is not to say that you need to become a neuroscientist in order to do well in school, but instead, knowing a thing or two about learning and how you learn in general can have strong, positive results for your own learning. This is called *metacognition* (that is, thinking about thinking). Some of the benefits of how we learn can be broken down into different areas such as:

- attitude and motivation toward learning;
- types of learning;
- methods of learning; and
- your own preferences for learning.

# THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

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The *hidden curriculum* is a phrase used to cover a wide variety of circumstances at school that can influence learning and affect your experience. Sometimes called the *invisible curriculum*, it varies by institution and can be thought of as a set of unwritten rules or expectations.

**Situation:** According to your course outline, your instructor will be lecturing on the chapter that covers the stock market crash of 1929 on Tuesday of next week. This sounds pretty straightforward: your instructor lectures on a topic and you will be there to hear it. However, there are some unwritten rules, or a hidden curriculum, that are not likely to be communicated. Can you guess what they may be?

- What is an unwritten rule about what you should be doing *before attending* class?
- What is an unwritten rule about what you should be doing *in* class?
- What is an unwritten rule about what you should be doing *after* class?
- What is an unwritten rule if you are *absent from* that class?

Some of your answers could have included the following:

Before class:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• read the assigned chapter;</li><li>• take notes;</li><li>• record any questions about the reading.</li></ul>
During class:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• take detailed notes;</li><li>• ask critical thinking or clarifying questions;</li><li>• avoid distractions;</li><li>• bring the textbook and reading notes.</li></ul>
After class:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• reorganize notes in relation to class notes;</li><li>• start studying by testing yourself on the material;</li><li>• make an appointment with your instructor if you are not clear on a concept.</li></ul>
Absent from class:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• communicate with the instructor;</li><li>• get notes from a classmate;</li><li>• make sure you did not miss anything important in your notes.</li></ul>

The expectations before, during, and after class, as well as what you should do if you miss class, are often

unspoken because many instructors assume you're already aware of these expectations or should figure them out on your own. Some students struggle at first because they don't know about these habits, behaviours, and strategies. But once they learn them, they are able to meet them with ease.

## Working Within the Hidden Curriculum

The first step in dealing with the hidden curriculum is to recognize it and understand how it can influence your learning. After any specific situation has been identified, the next step is to figure out how to work around the circumstances to either take advantage of any benefits or to remove any roadblocks. To illustrate this, below are two strategies to work within the hidden curriculum.

**Prevailing opinions:** Simply put, you are going to encounter instructors and learning activities that you sometimes agree with and sometimes disagree with. The key is to learn from them regardless. In either case, take ownership of your learning and even make an effort to learn about other perspectives, even if it is only for your own education on the matter. There is no better time to open yourself to other opinions and philosophies than in college. In fact, many would say that this is a significant part of the college experience. With a growth mindset, it is easy to view everything as a learning opportunity.

**Classroom circumstances:** These kinds of circumstances often require a more structured approach to turn the situation to your advantage, but they also usually have the most obvious solutions. In the example of a large class, you might find yourself limited in the ability to participate in classroom discussions because there are so many other students. The way around that would be to speak to several classmates and create your own discussion group. You could set up a time to meet, or you could take a different route by using technology such as an online discussion board, a video call session, or even a group text. Several of the technology-based solutions might even be better than an in-class discussion since you do not all have to be present at the same time. The discussion can be something that occurs all week long, giving everyone the time to think through their ideas and responses.

Again, the main point is to first spot those things in the hidden curriculum that might put your learning at a disadvantage and devise a solution that either reduces the negative impact or even becomes a learning advantage.

# MOTIVATION AND LEARNING

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## Questions to consider:

- How do different types of motivation affect my learning?
- What is resilience and grit?
- How do I prevent negative bias from hindering my learning?

In this section, you will continue to increase your ability as an informed learner. Here you will explore how much of an influence motivation has on learning, as well as how to use motivation to purposefully take an active role in any learning activity. Rather than passively attempting to absorb new information, you will learn how to make conscious decisions about the methods of learning you will use (based on what you intend to do with the information), how you will select and use learning materials that are appropriate for your needs, and how persistent you will be in the learning activity.

There are three main motivation concepts that have been found to directly relate to learning. Each of these has been proven to mean the difference between success and failure. You will find that each of these is a strong tool that will enable you to engage with learning material in a way that not only suits your needs, but also gives you ownership over your own learning processes.



*Two students studying at home by Scpio from NounProject.com*

## Resilience and Grit

Grit can be defined as personal perseverance toward a task or goal. In learning, it can be thought of as a trait that drives a person to keep trying until they succeed. It is not tied to talent or ability but is simply a tendency to not give up until something is finished or accomplished. This personality trait was defined as “grit” by the psychologist Angela Duckworth. In a 2007 study, Duckworth and colleagues found that individuals with high grit were able to maintain motivation in learning tasks despite failures (Duckworth et al., 2007). Their study showed that grit and perseverance were better predictors of academic success and achievement than talent or IQ.

### Applying Grit

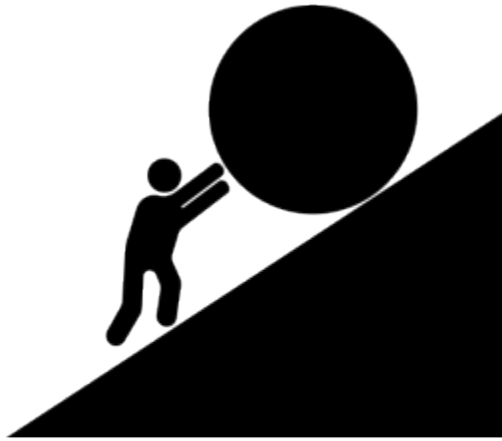
The concept of grit is an easy one to dismiss as something taken for granted. In our culture, we have a number of sayings (“If at first you do not succeed, try, try again”) or famous quotes (Edison’s “Genius is one percent inspiration, ninety-nine percent perspiration”) that capture the essence of grit. The problem is we all understand the concept, but applying it takes work.

The first step in applying grit is to adopt an attitude that looks directly to the end goal as the only acceptable outcome. With this attitude comes an acceptance that you may not succeed on the first attempt—or the nineteenth attempt. Failed attempts are viewed as merely part of the process and seen as a very useful way to gain knowledge that moves you toward success. Thinking about unsuccessful attempts as “failing forward” is a helpful way to maintain positivity.

An example of “failing forward” would be studying for an exam. In your first attempt at studying you simply re-read the chapters of your textbook covered in the exam. You find that while this reinforces some of the knowledge you have gained, it does not ensure you have all the information you will need to do well on the test. You know that if you simply read the chapters yet again, there is no guarantee you are going to be any more successful. You determine that you need to find a different approach. In other words, your first attempt was not a complete failure, but it did not achieve the end goal, so you try again with a different method.

On your second try, you copy down all of the main points onto a piece of paper using the section headlines from the chapters. After a short break you come back to your list and write down a summary of what you know about each item on your list. This accomplishes two things: first, you are able to immediately spot areas where you need to learn more; and second, you can check your summaries against the text to make certain what you know is correct and adequate. In this example, while you may not have achieved complete success, you will have learned what you need to do next. In true grit fashion, for your next try, you study those items on your list where you found you needed a bit more information, and then you go through your list again. This time you are able to write down summaries of all the important points, and you are confident you have the knowledge

you need to do well on the exam. After this, you still do not stop, but instead you change your approach to use other methods that keep what you have learned fresh in your mind.



**Created by Lucas Kazmierski  
from the Noun Project**

*Persistence by Lucas Kazmierski from [Noun Project](#)*

## Keeping Grit in Mind

The concept of grit has been taken beyond the original studies of successful learning. While the concept of grit as a personality trait was originally recognized as something positive in all areas of activity, encouraging grit became very popular in education circles to help students become more successful. In fact, many of those who were first introduced to grit through education have begun applying it to business, professional development, and their personal lives. Using a grit approach and working until the goal is achieved has been found to be very effective in not only academics but in many other areas (Neisser et al., 1996).

The *New York Times* best-selling author Paul G. Stoltz has taken grit and turned it into an acronym (GRIT) to help people remember and use the attributes of a grit mindset. His acronym stands for growth, resilience, instinct, and tenacity.

- **Growth:** Your propensity to seek and consider new ideas, additional alternatives, different approaches, and fresh perspectives.
- **Resilience:** Your capacity to respond constructively and ideally make use of all kinds of adversity.
- **Instinct:** Your gut-level capacity to pursue the right goals in the best and smartest ways.
- **Tenacity:** The education that you commit to with persistence, even in the face of challenges.

There is one other thing to keep in mind when it comes to applying grit (or GRIT) to college success. An



attitude of tenacity and “sticking with it” until you reach the desired results works just as well for graduation as it does for studying for an exam, preparing for a presentation, or completing a project.

## How Do You Get Grit?

A quick Internet search will reveal that there are many articles out there on grit and how to get it. While these sources may vary in their approach, most cover about five basic ideas that touch on concepts emphasized by Duckworth. What follows is a brief introduction to each. Note that each idea listed here begins with a verb. In other words, it is an activity you must do and keep doing in order to build grit.

- **Pursue what interests you:** Personal interest is a great motivator! People tend to have more grit when pursuing things that they have developed an interest in.
- **Practice until you can do it, and then keep practicing:** The idea of practicing has been applied to every skill in human experience. The reason everyone seems to be so fixated with practice is because it is effective and there is no “grittier” activity.
- **Find a purpose in what you do:** Purpose is truly the driver for anything we pursue. If you have a strong purpose in any activity, you have reason to persist at it. Think in terms of end goals and reflect on *why* doing something is worth doing.
- **Have hope in what you are doing:** Having hope is about focusing on how it will make things different for you or others. While this is somewhat related to purpose, it should be viewed as a separate and positive overall outlook in regard to what you are trying to achieve. Hope gives value to purpose.
- **Surround yourself with gritty people:** Persistence and tenacity tend to rub off on others, and the opposite does as well. As social creatures we often adopt the behaviours of those we spend time with. If you are surrounded by people that quit early before achieving their goals, you may find it acceptable to give up early as well. On the other hand, if your peers are all achievers with grit, you will tend to exhibit grit yourself.

## It's All in the Mindset

### Fixed vs. Growth Mindset

The research-based model of these two mindsets and their influence on learning was presented in 1988 by Carol Dweck (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). She determined that when a person sees their intelligence as something that can be developed over time, rather than something that is static, their ability to overcome challenges and succeed increases. That is, when you're focused on sticking to a goal even in the face of adversity because you know it will help you to learn and develop, your chances of success are greater. This has become known as

the fixed vs. growth mindset model. In this model, the *performance*-goal-oriented student is represented by the *fixed* mindset, while the *learning*-goal oriented student is represented by the *growth* mindset.

## The Growth Mindset and Lessons About Failing

Something you may have noticed is that a growth mindset would tend to give a learner grit and persistence. If you had learning as your major goal, you would normally keep trying to attain that goal even if it took you multiple attempts. Not only that, but if you learned a little bit more with each try, you would see each attempt as a success, even if you had not achieved complete mastery of whatever it was you were working to learn. With that in mind, it should come as no surprise that Dr. Dweck found that those people who believed their abilities could change through learning (growth vs. fixed mindset) readily accepted learning challenges and persisted despite early failures.

## Improving Your Ability to Learn

As strange as it may seem, research into fixed vs. growth mindsets has shown that if you believe you can learn something new, you greatly improve your ability to learn. At first, this may seem like the sort of feel-good advice we often encounter in social media posts or quotes that are intended to inspire or motivate us (“Just believe in yourself!”), but in looking at the differences outlined between a fixed and a growth mindset you can see how each part of the growth mindset path would increase your probability of success when it comes to learning.

## What is a Mindset?

*“Mindsets are beliefs – beliefs about yourself and your most basic qualities and abilities.” (Why Cultivating a Growth Mindset Can Boost Your Success, n.d.)*

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### What is a fixed mindset?

“In a fixed mindset, most people believe their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits. They spend their time documenting their intelligence or talent instead of developing them. They also believe that talent alone creates success – without effort. They’re wrong.”

### What is a growth mindset?

“[In a growth mindset] People believe their most basic abilities and qualities can be developed and cultivated through dedication and hard work. Brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment. Virtually all great people have had these qualities.”

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Watch the video below that illustrates the difference between a fixed and a growth mindset.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=861#oembed-1>*



**An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:**

**<https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=861#h5p-3>**

# IMPROVING YOUR ABILITY TO LEARN

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## Making Decisions about Your Own Learning

As a learner, the kinds of materials, study activities, and assignments that work best for you will derive from your own experiences and needs (needs that are both short-term as well as those that fulfill long-term goals). These decisions can include personal choices in learning materials, how and when you study, and, most importantly, taking ownership of your learning activities as an active participant and decision maker. In fact, one of the main principles emphasized in this chapter is that students not only benefit from being involved in planning their instruction but also gain by continually evaluating the actual success of that instruction. In other words: *Does this work for me? Am I learning what I need to by doing it this way?* While it may not always be possible to control every component of your learning over an entire program, you can take every opportunity to influence learning activities so they work to your best advantage. What follows are some ways you can put this into practice.

## Make Mistakes Safe

Create an environment for yourself where mistakes are safe and mistakes are expected as just another part of learning. This practice ties back to the principles you learned in the section on grit and persistence. The key is to allow yourself the opportunity to make mistakes and learn from them *before* they become a part of your grades. You can do this by creating your own learning activities designed to do just that.

An example of this might be taking practice quizzes on your own, outside of the more formal course activities. The quizzes could be something you find in your textbook, something you find online, or something that you develop with a partner. In the latter case you could arrange with a classmate for each of you to produce a quiz and then exchange them. That particular exercise would serve double learning duty, since to create a good quiz you would need to learn the main concepts of the subject, and answering the questions on your partner's quiz might help you identify areas where you need more knowledge.

The main idea with this practice is that you are creating a safe environment where you can make mistakes and learn from them before those mistakes can negatively impact your success in the course. Better to make mistakes on a practice run than on any kind of assignment or exam that can heavily influence your final grade in a course.

## Make Everything Problem-Centred

When working through a learning activity, the practical act of problem solving is a good strategy. Problem solving, as an approach, can give a learning activity more meaning and motivation for you as a learner. Whenever possible it is to your advantage to turn an assignment or learning task into a problem you are trying to solve or something you are trying to accomplish. In essence, you do this by deciding on some purpose for the assignment (other than just completing the assignment itself). An example of this would be writing a term paper in a way that solves a problem you are already interested in.

Typically, many students treat a term paper as a collection of requirements that must be fulfilled: the paper must be on a certain topic; it should include an introduction, body, conclusion, and references; it should be meet the length requirements. With this approach, the student is simply completing a checklist of attributes and components dictated by the instructor, but other than that, there is no reason for the paper to exist. Instead, writing it to solve a problem gives the paper purpose and meaning.

For example, if you were to write a paper with the purpose of informing the reader about a topic they knew little about, that purpose would influence not only how you wrote the paper but would also help you make decisions on what information to include. It would also influence how you would structure information in the paper so that the reader might best learn what you were teaching them.

Another example would be to write a paper to persuade the reader about a certain opinion or way of looking at things. In other words, your paper now has a purpose rather than just reporting facts on the subject. Obviously, you would still meet the format requirements of the paper, such as number of pages and inclusion of a reference page, but now you do that in a way that helps to solve your problem.

## Connect It to Your Career

Much like making assignments problem-centred, you will also do well when your learning activities are connected to your profession or area of study. This can take the form of simply understanding how the things you are learning are important to your occupation, or it can include the decision to do assignments in a way that can be directly applied to your career (or future career). If an exercise seems pointless and possibly unrelated to your long-term goals, you will be much less motivated by the learning activity.

For example, imagine you were a nursing student taking an algebra course. At first, algebra might seem unrelated to the field of nursing, but if you were to recognize that drug dosage calculations are critical to patient safety and that algebra can help in that area, there is a much stronger motivation to learn the subject.

In the case of making a decision to apply assignments directly to your field, you can look for ways to use learning activities to build upon other areas or emulate tasks that would be required in your profession. This might look like a marketing student giving a presentation in a speech course about how the Internet has changed corporate advertising strategies, or an accounting student doing statistics research for a human

resources course. Whenever possible, it is even better to use assignments to produce things that are similar what you will be doing (or anticipate doing) in your chosen career.

An example of this would be a media student taking the opportunity to create an infographic or other supporting visual elements as a part of an assignment for another course. In cases where this is possible, it is always best to discuss your ideas with your instructor to make certain what you intend will still meet the requirements of the assignment.



Created by WEBTECHOPS LLP  
from the Noun Project

*Occupation by WEBTECHOPS LLP from [Noun Project](#)*

## Manage Your Time

One of the most common challenges of college students is the constraint on their time. As adults, we do not always have the luxury of attending school without other demands on our time. Because of this, we must become efficient with time management and maximize our learning activities to be most effective. In fact, time management is so important that there is an entire chapter in this text dedicated to it. When you can, refer to that chapter to learn more about useful time management concepts and techniques.

## See Instructors as Learning Partners

In K-12 education the teacher often has the dual role of both teacher and authority figure for students. Children come to expect their teachers to tell them what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. College learners, on the other hand, seem to work better when they begin to think of their instructors as respected

experts who are partners in their education. The change in the relationship for you as a learner accomplishes several things: it gives you ownership and decision-making ability in your own learning; and it enables you to personalize your learning experience to best fit your own needs. This approach then gives your instructor the opportunity to help you meet your needs and expectations in an enriching manner, rather than focusing all of their time on delivering information to you.

The way to develop learning partnerships is through direct communication with your instructors. If there is something you do not understand or need to know more about, go directly to them. When you have ideas about how you can personalize assignments or explore areas of the subject that interest you or better fit your needs, ask to discuss them. Ask your instructors for guidance and recommendations, and above all, demonstrate to them that you are taking a direct interest in your own learning. Most instructors are thrilled when they encounter students who want to take ownership of their learning, and they will gladly become a resourceful guide for you.



**Created by Eucalyp**

*Partners by Eucalyp from [Noun Project](#)*

# ABOUT THE TIPIS AT ASSINIBOINE

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Assiniboine has two commemorative tipis in Brandon installed at our North Hill and Victoria Avenue East campuses. The installations are part of the Tipi Tour legacy project, a community-wide initiative led by Brandon's Walking With our Sisters committee. The tipis celebrate and honour our commitment to reconciliation. Each tipi offers different themes of reflection and understanding.

## The North Hill Tipi

The North Hill tipi shares the Indigenous worldview of lifelong learning. The First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model uses a stylized graphic of a living tree to depict learning as a cyclical process that occurs throughout the individual's lifespan. This learning tree identifies the conditions that foster cultural continuity and provide the foundation for individual learning and collective well-being.





A multi-coloured tipi on the North Hill Campus





A plaque in front of the North Hill tipi describing Indigenous Ways of Knowing, dedicated to MMIWG2S.

## Text From the North Hill Tipi Plaque

### Indigenous Knowledge and Knowing

Knowledge is not a commodity that can be possessed or controlled by educational institutions, but a living process to be absorbed and experienced to be understood. Learning is viewed as a lifelong responsibility that people assume to understand the world around them and to animate their personal abilities and gifts. Knowledge teaches people how to be responsible to their own lives, develops their sense of relationship to others, and helps model competent and respectful behaviour. Traditions, ceremonies, and daily observations are all integral parts of the learning process. They are spirit-connecting processes that enable the gifts, visions, dreams, insights, teachings, and spirits to emerge in each person.

### First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model

For First Nations peoples, the purpose of learning is to develop the skills, knowledge, values, and wisdom needed to honour and protect the natural world and ensure the long-term sustainability of life. Learning is a holistic, lifelong developmental process that contributes to individual and community well-being. This process is both organic and self-regenerative in nature, and integrates various types of relationships and knowledge within the community.

The First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model uses a stylized graphic of a living tree to depict learning as a cyclical process that occurs throughout the individual's lifespan. This learning tree identifies the conditions that foster cultural continuity and provide the foundation for individual learning and collective well-being.

The model contains four main components that depict the dynamics that enable First Nations to experience holistic lifelong learning as a purposeful developmental process. The components include:

- **Roots:** the sources and domains of knowledge;
- **Rings:** the individual's learning cycle;
- **Branches:** the individual's personal development;
- **Leaves:** the community's well-being.

(Chiefs Assembly on Education, 2012)

## The Victoria Avenue Tipi

The Victoria Avenue tipi shares Assiniboine's land acknowledgement (outdoor plaque) and the commitments we agreed to as signatories of the Indigenous Protocol for College and Institutes (indoor plaque).





A multi-coloured tipi in front of the Victoria Avenue Campus.

1. Commit to making Indigenous education a priority.
2. Ensure governance structures recognize and respect Indigenous peoples.
3. Implement intellectual and cultural traditions of Indigenous peoples through curriculum and learning approaches relevant to learners and communities.
4. Support students and employees to increase understanding and reciprocity among Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.
5. Commit to increasing the number of Indigenous employees with ongoing appointments throughout the institution, including Indigenous senior administrators.
6. Establish Indigenous-centred holistic services and learning environments for learner success.
7. Build relationships and be accountable to Indigenous communities in support of self-determination through education, training, and applied research.

## The Parkland Campus Tipi

Assiniboine Community College's Parkland Campus in Dauphin has a tipi on-site, highlighting the institution's commitment to Indigenous culture and community. The tipi serves as a cultural space for gatherings, ceremonies, and educational activities. It also supports the Indigenous Affairs and Elders & Knowledge Keeper programs at the college, offering students a chance to engage with traditional knowledge and practices. This tipi, along with other initiatives, underscores the college's efforts to create inclusive spaces for Indigenous students and promote reconciliation



# SUMMARY

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The purpose of this chapter is to help make you a motivated learner and empower you to make informed choices about your own learning. Throughout the chapter, you were introduced to ideas, research, and popular models on learning and given examples of how to use each of these as an effective part of your own learning experience. Most importantly, you were able to explore how things like motivation, grit, and mindset are the most influential aspects of successful learning.



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# DIGITAL TOOLS FOR LEARNING

## Learning Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- use Assiniboine primary digital tools include Moodle, MyACC, Webmail, Zoom, and Office 365;
- identify strategies for being successful in an online course;
- reflect on your academic identity and professional goals in order to connect to your motivation as a learner in a meeting with your instructor.



# DEBUNKING MYTHS: ONLINE VS. CLASSROOM LEARNING

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During your time at Assiniboine, some of your classes may include online work to be completed independently. This section debunks some of the myths of online learning.

## Myth #1: It's Easier



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"I've heard that the online course is way easier than taking the same course on campus. You don't have to go to class, you just have to hand in assignments and you're done."

## The Facts

The workload for any particular course is the same regardless of the way it's delivered. And if you really think about it, there is more reading in online classes because you have to read all of your teacher's instructions rather than hearing them in class. In an online environment, you need to be more self-disciplined and motivated because you won't be facing the instructor every session. The good news is that online classes will give you the flexibility to learn when you are ready to learn and at times that work with your schedule. This can be an advantage for students with busy lives. In an online class you are not limited by set class times, so you don't have to worry about conflicts with other classes you want to take, your work schedule, or other time constraints. Whether you decide to take your classes in a traditional or an online setting is up to you; one option really isn't easier than the other. It's all about finding the best fit for your life, your time, and your habits.

## Myth #2: It's Self-Paced



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"If I'm taking an online class, I can turn in assignments whenever I want, right? I'll just get all of the assignments from the instructor and blast through it in two weeks rather than wasting a whole semester."

## The Facts

Regardless of what you think you may be able to accomplish at your own speed, most online courses are *not* self-paced. Some instructors reveal all assignments ahead of time and others may roll out course topics and assignments incrementally. The most successful students will concentrate on their work at the pace that the teacher has laid out. Students are more successful when they give themselves time to focus on the course material and put their best effort into assignments rather than trying to rush through the course just to 'get it done'. The online learning world is not much different from traditional campus courses: the more you put into it, the more you will get out of it. The good news is that students who successfully complete online courses have found that the organizational skills they learned and used to complete their online courses made them better students in traditional courses they took later on.

## Myth #3: It's Cheaper



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“Online courses are always cheaper than taking classes on campus. Unless you’re taking classes online, you’re really just wasting your time and money.”

## The Facts

Tuition fees for online courses are typically the same as your traditional on campus classes. But there some ‘hidden’ costs in taking a class on campus that you may have not considered such as the transportation cost of going to campus. Use an online cost-saving calculator to estimate if you will be able to save money by taking classes online.

## Myth #4: Participation is Unnecessary

“Instructors randomly call on students for answers in a lecture, but in an online class I can fly under the radar.”

## The Facts

Don’t be fooled by the illusion of anonymity in your virtual classroom. Even though you and your instructor may not be able to see one another, they can access reports on the quantity and quality of your course participation and they will because they want to know how you’re doing. Participation will definitely be a key component of any of your classes. In fact, sometimes faculty know more about their online students than their on-campus students. The good news is that online learning can provide you with the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with your professors and with other students taking the same course. Conversing online can seem strange or artificial at first, but once they get used to it, most people really enjoy online discussions. In an online course everyone has a chance to provide their input, and you have time to craft your thoughts before share them. You’re not bounded by the end of a class period or a limited discussion time. But you’ll also need to commit to participating effectively and you’ll need strategies to make this happen.

## Myth #5: You Need Extensive Tech Skills

“I can’t do online courses because I am not really tech savvy.”



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=684#oembed-4>*

## The Facts

Online learning generally does not require extensive technical knowledge, but you have to understand the basics about your computer, the Internet, and how to use your school’s learning management system (LMS). You’ll learn more about Take the time to really understand your online environment before you get too far into the semester: you won’t want to wait until minutes before an assignment is due to learn which buttons you need to click in order to submit it.

## Myth #6: My Instructors will be Available 24/7

“Email is basically instant, and I know my teacher checks her email all of the time. So, if I don’t understand something or have a last-minute question about an assignment, I can email her and she should respond right away. She’s definitely up at 10:00 p.m., and it would only take her two minutes to write back with the answer.”



## The Facts

This is a misconception that we're sure all instructors would like to be cleared up from the outset. Most of your instructors provide a maximum email turnaround time, typically between 24-48 hours. As a student, you need to plan ahead as much as possible, and be sure to have an alternate solution if you don't hear back from your instructor before an assignment is due (remember, your assignments are your responsibility, not theirs). Some instructors include a "Questions About the Course" discussion thread where they encourage students to answer one another's questions. This could be immensely helpful for you, and might be a way for you to help other students in turn. (Remember what we said about building classroom relationships?)

Another approach would be to reach out to another member of the class and exchange private emails to support each other throughout the semester. Because you're not meeting with each other one or more times every week, it's easy to feel isolated in an online course. Try some of these tactics so you can connect with others — you will get a lot more out of your classes if you do. Building supportive online relationships and friendships requires skill and practice. The good news is that students who develop good communication skills, learn to be assertive, and are able to cooperate and collaborate well in a virtual environment will find these skills highly transferrable (and valued) in their personal and professional lives long after their course is over.

## Myth #7: Excuses Are Built In



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=684#oembed-5>*

"If I didn't finish an assignment on time, I used to tell my instructor that I accidentally brought the wrong notebook to class or that my printer ran out of ink. Now I can just say that my computer crashed, that I accidentally deleted my finished assignment, or that I just sent in the wrong attachment."

## The Facts

It's likely that none of these excuses will work. Remember, your instructors have not only heard every excuse

in the book (probably more than once), but they are also pretty tech savvy themselves — they are, after all, teaching a college-level online course. Make sure you understand your instructor's expectations and that you comply with them in a timely manner, and keep an open channel of communication with them if you need help or have questions. Detailed information about your instructor's policies and expectations should be included on their course syllabus. Some instructors also provide checklists for all deadlines. If your instructor does not, it might be helpful to create your own assignment checklist. The organizational and study skills you develop for your first online course will put you on the road to success for all your future learning experiences, whether they are online or in a traditional classroom environment.

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# COMMUNICATING IN ONLINE FORUMS

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Many online courses, including this one, have forums, either as a required assignment or to support your learning process. How can you use forums to support your learning in the best way possible?

Forums are a tool for creating collaborative learning relationships. They can also be a low-stakes way to express your developing ideas, and to get feedback on the ways in which you are learning the course material as you work toward larger assignments.

To better understand your instructor's expectations for discussion forums, look to the instructions and rubric that has been shared with you. The list below contains some general tips for participating in forums.

## Tips for Participating in Forums

- Develop a clear understanding of the expectations and ground rules for the forum. Review your course outline and talk to your instructor for guidance on how often to post, the type of content to include in each post, and the best way to respond to others' posts. If you have any questions, ask your instructor.
- Make connections between your posts and the content you are learning in the course. A forum post is often an excellent place to engage in critical reflection. Make connections between the course content and the ways that your growing understanding are shaping your present and future practice.
- Set a regular schedule for posting and commenting on forums and use your course outline for guidance so you don't miss due dates. This prevents the amount of content from becoming overwhelming, and allows you to develop stronger relationships in the course by regularly engaging with classmates.
- Include resources in your posts that might be useful to other classmates or your instructor.
- Use language that is appropriate for an academic environment. Avoid writing in a way that is too informal (such as writing that resembles a text message).
- Make sure that each post is clearly written and well structured. Take time to clarify the message you want to communicate in your post, and organize your content into clear and

concise paragraphs. This is easier for your reader than a long or disorganized post.

- Respond to others' posts in a supportive and challenging way. In writing, messages may be unintentionally misinterpreted. Be sure that your responses to others are respectful and have a positive tone, even when you disagree or have an alternative viewpoint.
- Participate in the community discussion. Read others' comments before posting, and connect your ideas with what you are hearing from your classmates (*10 Netiquette Tips For Online Discussions*, 2015).

[Online Posting Rubric](#) © Christina Page is licensed under a [CC BY-SA \(Attribution ShareAlike\)](#) license

*10 Netiquette Tips For Online Discussions*. (2015, June 6). ELearning Industry. <https://elearningindustry.com/10-netiquette-tips-online-discussions>

Fenwick, T. J. & Parsons James. (2009). *The art of evaluation: A resource for educators and trainers*. Thompson Educational Pub.

This work, “Communicating Online Using Forums,” is a derivative of “Communicate in Online Forums” by by Marti Alger, Christina Page, and Adam Vincent used under CC BY 4.0. “Use Email in the Online Learning Environment” is licensed under CC BY 4.0 by Assiniboine College.

# NAVIGATING TECHNOLOGY

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## Navigating Technology

This video from Algonquin College outlines the importance of knowing how to use technical tools for you online learning. If you need help with technology you can access their [Navigating Technology Module](#) (an extra resource not part of this course) or look at [LinkedIn Learning](#) (sign in with your Assiniboine username and password).



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# LEARNING AND COMMUNICATING ONLINE: Q & A

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## Truth and Reconciliation

“The road we travel is equal in importance to the destination we seek. There are no shortcuts. When it comes to truth and reconciliation, we are forced to go the distance.”

— Dr. Murray Sinclair

Below are some of the frequently asked student questions about online learning.



Created by Shocho  
from Noun Project

Communication by Shocho from [Noun Project](#)  
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<https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=689#h5p-9>





# RESPECTFUL COLLEGE

## Learning Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify how college policies (M10, M14, G49, A02) apply to you as a student at ACC in order to understand your rights and responsibilities in the learning community;
- discuss how respect, equity, diversity, and inclusion are essential to your success in college and the workplace;
- recognize the difference between civility and incivility in order to know what is appropriate in professional settings;
- identify the resources and processes available if you are unable to address disrespectful conduct or interpersonal conflict independently.



# WHY DIVERSITY MATTERS

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## Manitoba

The name *Manitoba* is believed to have originated from the Cree “Man-into-wahpaow,” meaning “the narrows of the Great Spirit,” which describes Lake Manitoba and how it narrows significantly at the centre. The province entered confederation in 1870 following the *Manitoba Act*. Sir John A. Macdonald announced that the province’s name, suggested by Métis leader Louis Riel, was selected for its pleasant sound and its associations with the original inhabitants of the area.

Historically, not all contributions and voices have been acknowledged equally or adequately. Some groups have had to struggle to have their contributions acknowledged, be treated fairly, and be allowed full participation and equality of opportunity. Entire populations of people have been oppressed as a part of Canada’s history, something important for Canadians and people living in Canada to confront and acknowledge. *Diversity* refers to differences in the human experience. As different groups have gained in number and influence, our definition of diversity has evolved to embrace many variables that reflect a multitude of different backgrounds, experiences, and points of view, not just race and gender. Diversity includes age, socioeconomic factors, ability (such as sight, hearing, and mobility), race, ethnicity, country of origin, language, sexual orientation, religion, sex, and other factors.

*The Manitoba Human Rights Code* recognizes 13 specific “protected characteristics.” This list recognizes groups that have been marginalized, negatively impacted, and/or persecuted based on their belonging to one of these groups:

1. Ancestry, including colour and perceived race.
2. Nationality or national origin.
3. Ethnic background or origin.
4. Religion or creed, religious belief, religious association, or activity.
5. Age.
6. Sex, including sex-determined characteristics such as pregnancy.

7. Gender identity.
8. Sexual orientation.
9. Marital or family status.
10. Source of income.
11. Political belief.
12. Disability (physical, mental, or related circumstances).
13. Social disadvantage.

Everyone “fits” into each of the above characteristics in some way, but not everyone experiences negative consequences or barriers because they belong to a particular group. For example, women, because of their sex, had to fight for the right to vote, own property, and receive equal wages. Men did not have to do so in order to have these rights and privileges. Indigenous peoples (both men and women) had to fight for their right to vote and were only allowed to vote and keep their treaty status starting in 1960.

At one time or another, people who were marginalized based on their identities have had to make petitions to the government for equal treatment under the law and appeals to society for respect. Safeguarding these groups’ hard-won rights and public regard maintains diversity and its two closely related factors, *equity* and *inclusion*.

### Activity: Protected Characteristics

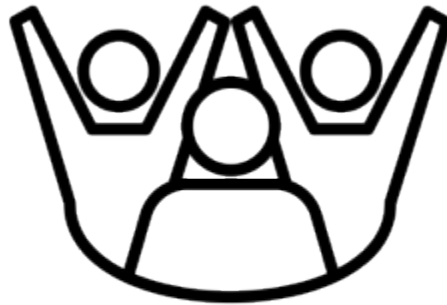
Our rights and protections are often acquired through awareness, effort, and advocacy.

Choose one of the above groups identified in *The Manitoba Human Rights Code* and do a quick search on advocacy or efforts members of the group have taken to secure their rights. To expand your knowledge, choose a group that you’re not already familiar with.

## The Role of Equity and Inclusion

Equity plays a major part in achieving fairness in a diverse landscape. *Equity* gives everyone equal access to opportunity and success. For example, you may have seen interpreters for Deaf or hearing-impaired people in situations where a public official is making an announcement about a weather emergency. Providing immediate translation into sign language means that there is no gap between what the public official is saying

and all people receiving the information they need. Simultaneous sign language provides equity. Similarly, many students have learning differences that require accommodations in the classroom. For example, a student with special needs relating to a learning or cognitive disability might be given more time to complete tests or writing assignments. The extra time granted takes into account that students have these needs because they may process information differently because of their disability. If a student with a learning difference is given more time than other students to complete a test, that is a form of reasonable accommodation that reduces barriers and creates equity. The student is not being given an advantage. The extra time gives them an equal chance at success.



**Created by Lars Meier toberens  
from the Noun Project**

*Inclusion by Lars Meier toberens from Noun  
Project*

When equity is properly considered, there is also inclusion. *Inclusion* means that there are a multiplicity of voices, skills, and interests represented in any given situation. Inclusion has played a major role in education, especially in terms of creating inclusive classrooms and inclusive curricula. In an inclusive classroom, students of different skill levels, backgrounds, and perspectives study together. For example, students with and without disabilities study in the same classroom. Students benefit from seeing how others learn. In an inclusive curriculum, a course includes content and perspectives from underrepresented groups. For example, a college course in psychology might include consideration of different contexts such as immigration, incarceration, or unemployment. Inclusion means that these voices of varied background and experience are integrated into discussions, research, and assignments.

Educational institutions like colleges and school divisions are critically important spaces for equity and inclusion, and debates around them remain challenging. LGBTQI2S (lesbian, gay, trans, queer, inquiring, two-spirited) students report feeling unsafe at school (Egale, 2019). Many of these students miss school or experience significant stress, which usually has a negative impact on their grades, participation, and overall

success (GLSEN, 2019). This creates inequality. How can the circumstances improve for LGBTQI2S students? In other societal changes throughout our nation's history, court decisions, new legislation, protests, and general public opinion combined to right past wrongs and provide justice and protection for people who have been subjected to systemic discrimination (discrimination that is built into societal systems, such as same sex couples not being able to legally marry) and personally harassed. Proponents of gay marriage faced fervent arguments against their position based on religion and culture; like other minority groups, they were confronted with name-calling, job insecurity, family division, religious isolation, and physical confrontation. Legalizing same-sex marriage in Canada was achieved through successful human rights complaints and advocacy and legal action (CBC, 2012).

## Debates: Civility vs. Incivility

Healthy debate is a desirable part of a community. In a healthy debate, people are given room to explain their point of view. In a healthy airing of differences, people on opposing sides of an argument can reach common ground and compromise or even agree to disagree and move on. However, incivility occurs when people are not *culturally competent*. An individual who is not culturally competent might make negative assumptions about others' values, lack an open mindset, or be inflexible in thinking. Instead of being tolerant of different points of view, they may try to shut down communication by not listening or by keeping someone with a different point of view from being heard at all. Out of frustration, a person who is uncivil may resort to name-calling or discrediting another person only with the intention of causing confusion and division within a community. Incivility can also propagate violence. Such uncivil reaction to difficult issues is what makes many people avoid certain topics at all costs. Instead of seeking out diverse communities, people retreat to safe spaces where they will not be challenged to hear opposing opinions or have their beliefs contested.

Debates on difficult or divisive topics surrounding diversity, especially those promoting orchestrated change, are often passionate. People on each side may base their positions on deeply held beliefs, family traditions, personal experience, academic expertise, and a desire to orchestrate change. With such a strong foundation, emotions can be intense, and debates can become uncivil. Even when the disagreement is based on information rather than personal feelings, discussions can quickly turn to arguments. For example, in academic environments, it's common to find extremely well-informed arguments in direct opposition to one another. Two well-known economics faculty members from your college could debate for hours on financial policies, with each professor's position backed by data, research, and publications. Each person could feel very strongly that they are right and the other person is wrong. They may even feel that the approach proposed by their opponent would actually do damage to the country or to certain groups of people. But for this debate — whether it occurs over lunch or on an auditorium stage — to remain civil, the participants need to maintain certain standards of behaviour.

Civility is a valued practice that takes advantage of cultural and political systems we have in place to work through disagreements while maintaining respect for others' points of view. Civil behaviour allows for

a respectful airing of grievances. The benefit of civil discussion is that members of a community can hear different sides of an argument, weigh evidence, and decide for themselves which side to support. You have probably witnessed or taken part in debates in your courses, at social events, or even at family gatherings. What makes people so passionate about certain issues? First, some may have a personal stake in an issue, such as abortion rights. Convincing other people to share their beliefs may be intended to create a community that will protect their rights. Second, others may have beliefs based on faith or cultural practices. They argue based on deeply held moral and ethical beliefs. Third, others may be limited in their background knowledge about an issue but are able to speak from a “script” of conventional points of view. They may not want to stray from the script because they do not have enough information to extend an argument.

While discussing differing perspectives and ideas is encouraged, ideology that spreads hate or encourages harm to others is not civil and may be considered hate speech.

### Activity: Digital Civility

The Internet is the watershed innovation of our time. It provides incredible access to information and resources, helping us to connect in ways inconceivable just a few decades ago. But it also presents risks, and these risks seem to be changing and increasing at the same rate as technology itself. Because of our regular access to the Internet, it's important to create a safe, healthy, and enjoyable online space. Digital civility is the practice of leading with empathy and kindness in all online interactions and treating each other with respect and dignity. This type of civility requires users to fully understand and appreciate potential harms and to follow the new rules of the digital road.

- **Live the Golden Rule** and treat other people with respect and dignity both online and in person. The Golden Rule is when you treat other people how you want to be treated.
- **Kick it up a notch and live the Platinum Rule** by treating people the way they want to be treated.
- **Respect differences** of culture, geography, and opinion, and when disagreements surface, engage thoughtfully.
- **Pause before replying** to comments or posts you disagree with and make sure your responses are considerate and free of name-calling and abuse.
- **Stand up for yourself and others** if it's safe and prudent to do so.
- **Remember that anything posted online is not private.** If you would not show or say

something to your parent, grandparent, employer, or child, you might want to think about sharing it online.



# CATEGORIES OF DIVERSITY

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The multiple roles we play in life — student, sibling, employee, roommate, for example — are only a partial glimpse into our true identity. Right now you may think, “I really don’t know what I want to be,” meaning you don’t know what you want to do for a living, but have you ever tried to define yourself in terms of the sum of your parts?



Created by Adrien Coquet  
from the Noun Project

*Diversity by Adrien Coquet from Noun Project*

Social roles are the identities we assume in relationship to others. Our social roles tend to shift based on where we are and who we are with. When you think about your social roles as well as your nationality, ethnicity, race, friends, gender, sexuality, beliefs, abilities, or geography, how do you identify? To better understand identity, consider how social psychologists describe it. Social psychologists, those who study how social interactions take place, often categorize identity into four types: personal identity, role identity, social identity, and collective identity.

- **Personal identity** captures what distinguishes one person from another based on their life experiences. No two people, even identical twins, live the same life.
- **Role identity** defines how we interact in certain situations. Our roles change from setting to setting, and so do our identities. At work you may be a supervisor; in the classroom you may be a peer working collaboratively; at home, you may be a parent. In each setting, your personality may be the same, but how your coworkers, classmates, and family see you is different.

- **Social identity** shapes our public lives by our awareness of how we relate to certain groups. For example, an individual might relate to or identify with Korean Canadians, Winnipeggers, Methodists, and Leafs fans. These identities influence our interactions with others. Upon meeting someone, for example, we look for connections as to how we are the same or different. Our awareness of who we are makes us behave a certain way in relation to others. If you identify as a hockey fan, you may feel an affinity for someone else who also loves the game.
- **Collective identity** refers to how groups form around a common cause or belief. For example, individuals may bond over similar political ideologies, social movements, sports fandoms, occupational groupings, or ethnic groups. For example, many football fans in Saskatchewan consider themselves part of “Rider Nation”. Others may identify as fans of a specific type of entertainment such as Swifties, fans of Taylor Swift. Finally, individuals who work in the trades often view themselves as part of a community of ‘tradespeople’.

In his epic poem *Song of Myself*, Walt Whitman (1892) writes, “Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself (I am large. I contain multitudes.)” Whitman was asserting and defending his shifting sense of self and identity. Those lines importantly point out that our identities may evolve over time. What we do and believe today may not be the same tomorrow. Further, at any one moment, the identities we claim may seem at odds with each other. Shifting identities are a part of personal growth. While we are figuring out who we truly are and what we believe, our sense of self and the image that others have of us may be unclear or ambiguous. Many people are uncomfortable with identities that do not fit squarely into one category. How do you respond when someone’s identity or social role is unclear? Such ambiguity may challenge your sense of certainty about the roles that we all play in relationship to one another. Racial, ethnic, and gender ambiguity, in particular, can challenge some people’s sense of social order and social identity.

The actor Keanu Reeves has a complex background. He was born in Beirut, Lebanon, to a white English mother and a father with Chinese-Hawaiian ancestry. His childhood was spent in Hawaii, Australia, New York, and Toronto. Reeves considers himself Canadian and has publicly acknowledged influences from all aspects of his heritage. Would you feel comfortable telling Keanu Reeves how he must identify racially and ethnically? There is a question many people ask when they meet someone whom they cannot clearly identify by checking a specific identity box. Inappropriate or not, you have probably heard people ask, “What are you?” Would it surprise you if someone like Keanu Reeves shrugged and answered, “I’m just me”?

Malcom Gladwell is an author of five *New York Times* best-selling books and is hailed as one of Foreign Policy’s Top Global Thinkers. He has spoken on his experience with identity as well. Gladwell has a Black Jamaican mother and a white Irish father. He often tells the story of how the perception of his hair has allowed him to straddle racial groups. As long as he kept his hair cut very short, his fair skin obscured his black ancestry, and he was most often perceived as white. However, once he let his hair grow long into a curly Afro style, Gladwell says he began being pulled over for speeding tickets and stopped at airport check-ins. His racial expression carried serious consequences.

It is important to consider that while we all have the ability to reconsider and change what we think, enjoy, or do, there is much about our identity that is outside of our control. For example, nobody chooses where they are born, the gender they are assigned at birth, or the colour of their skin. These are all integral to people's lived experiences and to not recognize that diversity means not recognizing a person's lived experience.

### Wellness: Five Senses

Take a moment to ground yourself by planting your feet comfortably on the floor. You may be sitting or standing. Close your eyes and find the natural rhythm of your breath. Once you are focused on the rhythm, open your eyes and identify five things that you can see. This may be a favourite pen, sunlight reflecting on a surface, a spec of dirt on the floor. For the rest of the senses you may close your eyes if you prefer. Listen for four sounds in your surroundings. Maybe you can hear a wall clock ticking or a bird singing outside. Now pay attention and notice three things that you can feel. This may be the cuff of your sweater tight on your wrist or a warm draft from a heating duct. Now shift focus to two things that you can smell. This may be the strong aroma of coffee or a scented candle. Finally identify one thing that you can taste. Take a few final conscious breaths and return to your previous focus.

Throughout the course you will see wellness breaks. These remind you to take a pause and reset your mind. Participate in these activities throughout the course and come back to the ones that work for you as you do other course work or even in your career.

## Race, Including Colour

Racial inequities exist in Canada and around the globe. BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of colour) have historically been subjected to unfair and unequal treatment. In 2020, the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent protests around the globe created awareness of the racial inequities that continue to exist today. Discussions about inequities and discrimination can be challenging; however, these are conversations that should not be avoided. They are necessary in order to raise awareness, educate, and actively work to dismantle oppressive systems. Cultural competency increases people's capacity for these conversations to be engaged effectively. Cultural competency can help those who do not have the lived experience of being BIPOC to develop skills so that they can listen to and begin to understand the lived truth of other people's experiences,

which may be uncomfortable. It's okay to be uncomfortable, especially if this understanding helps people learn how they can help remove barriers and to create environments that are inclusive and diverse.

## Gender and Gender Identity

Some people identify themselves as gender fluid or nonbinary. *Binary* refers to the idea that gender is only one of two possibilities, male or female. *Fluidity* suggests that there is a range or continuum of expression. *Gender fluidity* acknowledges that a person may flow between stereotypical male and female identity. Merriam-Webster's dictionary includes a definition of "they" that denotes a nonbinary identity. Transgender men and women were assigned a gender identity at birth that does not fit their true identity. Even though our culture is increasingly giving space to queer and trans people to speak out and live openly, they do so at a risk. Violence against gay, nonbinary, and transgender people occurs at more frequent rates than for other groups. At Assiniboine, sexual violence is defined in policy M14. Sexual violence includes any act, sexual or otherwise, targeting a person's sexuality, gender identity, or gender expression, whether the act is physical or psychological in nature. This means that any homophobic or transphobic language is a form of sexual violence. Cultural competency includes respectfully addressing individuals as they ask to be addressed, which includes both their names and pronouns.

## Intersectionality

The many layers of our multiple identities do not fit together like puzzle pieces with clear boundaries between one piece and another. Our identities overlap, creating a combined identity in which one aspect is inseparable from the next. The term *intersectionality* was coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to describe how the experience of Black women was a unique combination of gender and race that could not be divided into two separate identities. In other words, this group could not be seen solely as women or solely as Black; where their identities overlapped is considered the "intersection," or crossroads, where identities combine in specific and inseparable ways.

Intersectionality and awareness of intersectionality can drive societal change, both in how people see themselves and how they interact with others. That experience can be very inward-facing, or can be more external. It can also lead to debate and challenges. For example, the term "Latinx" is growing in use because it is seen as more inclusive than "Latino/Latina," but some people — including scholars and advocates — lay out arguments against its use. While the debate continues, it serves as an important reminder of a key element of intersectionality: Never assume that all people in a certain group or population feel the same way. Why not? Because people are more than any one element of their identity; they are defined by more than their race, colour, geographic origin, gender, or socioeconomic status.

# REES: CREATING SAFER CAMPUSES

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Assiniboine College, along with other post-secondary institutions in Manitoba, has partnered with [REES](#) in support of those who have experienced sexual violence.

REES offers a simple and secure online reporting platform that gives survivors options to share their story and be heard in whatever way they choose, as well as provides access to resources and support.

Please watch the video to learn a little more about REES.

[REES Creating Safer Campuses Video](#)



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=953#oembed-1>*

# NAVIGATING THE DIVERSITY LANDSCAPE

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## Avoid Making Assumptions

By now you should be aware of the many ways diversity can be both observable and less apparent. Based on surface clues, we may be able to approximate someone's age and perhaps their geographical origin, but even with those observable characteristics, we cannot be sure about how people define themselves. If we rely too heavily on assumptions, we may be buying into stereotypes, or generalizations. Stereotyping robs people of their individual identities. If we buy into stereotypes, we project a profile onto someone that is probably not true. Prejudging people without knowing them, better known as prejudice or bias, has consequences for both the person who is biased and the individual or group that is prejudged. In such a scenario, the intimacy of real human connection is lost. Individuals are objectified, meaning that they only serve as symbolic examples of who we assume they are instead of the complex, intersectional individuals we know each person to be.

Stereotyping may be our way of avoiding others' complexities. When we stereotype, we do not have to remember distinguishing details about a person. We simply write their stories for ourselves and let those stories fulfill who we expect those individuals to be. Individuals of other backgrounds, with similar abilities, may have been overlooked because they do not fit the stereotype of who others suspect them to be.

Being inclusive does not require a deep-seated knowledge of the backgrounds and perspectives of everyone you meet. That would be impossible. But avoiding assumptions and being considerate will build better relationships and provide a more effective learning experience. It takes openness and self-awareness and sometimes requires help or advice, but learning to be sensitive — practicing assumption avoidance — is like a muscle you can strengthen.

## Be Mindful of Microaggressions

Whether we mean to or not, we sometimes offend people by not thinking about what we say and the manner in which we say it. One danger of limiting our social interactions to people who are from our own social group is in being insensitive to people who are not like us. The term *microaggression* refers to acts of insensitivity that reveal our biases against someone outside of our community. Those biases can be toward race, gender, nationality, or any other diversity variable. The individual on the receiving end of a microaggression is reminded of the barriers to complete acceptance and understanding in the relationship.

Let's consider an example. Amaia (pronounced Ama-ee-a) is new to her office job. One of her colleagues told Amaia that the pronunciation of her name was too difficult to remember so she was just going to call her Amy.

How would you feel if such a comment were directed at you? How would you feel if people you worked with didn't care to learn how to say your name?

One reaction to this interaction might be to say, "So what? Lots of people have nicknames" or "Lots of people with difficult-to-pronounce names adopt names that are easier to say." Many people are happy to have nicknames or choose their own preferred name, but that is quite different than being told what someone is going to call you. It may ignore the pain and invalidation of the experience. Even if you could simply not be bothered by it, there is a compounding effect of being frequently, if not constantly, barraged by such experiences.

### Analysis Question: Your Future and Cultural Competency

Where will you be in five years? Will you own your own business? Will you be a stay-at-home parent? Will you be making your way up the corporate ladder? Will you be pursuing a university degree? Maybe you will have settled into a position with good benefits and stay in this position because it provides a great work-life balance.

Wherever life leads you in the future, you will need to be culturally competent. Your competency will be a valuable skill not only because of the increasing diversity and awareness in Canada, but also because we live in a world with increasing global connections. If you do not speak a second language, why not try to learn one? Why not try to experience the diversity in your own province, city, or town? Why not see how others live in order to understand their experience and yours? Understanding diversity and being culturally competent will create a better future for everyone.

# SUMMARY

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Understanding diversity, especially in the context of our country's history, is an important part of being an engaged citizen who can adapt to a changing world. Diversity goes hand-in-hand with the concepts of equity and inclusion, which increase the chances of equal opportunity and representation. Sometimes creating inclusive communities upsets the social order with which people are familiar. Change can be difficult, and people are passionate. These passions can disrupt communities and communication with uncivil behaviour, or people can “fight fair” and use strategies that allow for the smooth exchange of ideas.

Everyone has a personal identity made up of various aspects and experiences — their intersectionality. Some elements of identity place people in a diversity category. Some categories are expansive and well understood; others are new and may face scrutiny. Policies, such as Assiniboine's Respectful College Policy and laws (the Manitoba *Human Rights Code* and the *Canadian Human Rights Act*) have been put in place to protect people who have been historically disadvantaged from discrimination and harassment.

Human rights legislation is given paramount status in Canada — meaning they are the top laws of the country. These standards are constantly being challenged to make sure that they allow for the shifting demographics of Canada and to ensure that people are treated equitably and are not unreasonably subjected to unfair treatment. Cultural competency, which includes our ability to adapt to diversity, is an essential skill.

Interacting respectfully with diverse people is an expectation under the Assiniboine Respectful College and Sexual Violence policies, but beyond that, it will serve people well in their personal lives, communities, and workplaces. The more culturally competent we are, the more we can help safeguard diversity and make equitable and inclusive connections on a global scale.

This chapter touched on many elements of civility and diversity, and mentioned a wide array of groups, identities, and populations. But the chapter certainly did not explore every concept or reflect every group you may encounter. In a similar way, you can't know everything about everyone, but you can build cultural competency and understanding to make people feel included and deepen your abilities and relationships. Sometimes learning about one group or making one person feel comfortable can be as important as addressing a larger population.



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# ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

## Learning Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify the values of academic integrity and how they relate to you and your future career;
- recognize different forms of academic misconduct and how to avoid them by using the Academic Integrity for Students Library Guide;
- recall the academic integrity supports available at Assiniboine.



# ACADEMIC INTEGRITY VALUES

Curt Shoultz; Lisa Vogt; Josh Seeland; Dr. Brenda Stoesz; and Dr. Paul MacLeod

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**Honesty:** Honest students respect college policies, follow their instructors' instructions, and do their work on their own without any unauthorized help. For a graduate of the business program, that honesty might look like making large bank deposits at the end of the night.

## Scenario

Your friend asks you if you want to meet up and do an online quiz together. Somehow you feel uneasy about this. What should you do?

Click on the responses to see the answers to each.



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<https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=707#h5p-16>

**Trust:** If you are always honest, you will be able to build a relationship of trust both with your peers and your instructors. Trust is established over time and is based mostly on your actions. In your classroom, an example might be knowing that other people in a group assignment will do their part to help meet the deadline your instructor has given. For a graduate of the early childhood education program, it means the high level of trust placed in you by the parents of the children you care for in a daycare or preschool setting.

## Scenario

Charlotte has a difficult time writing her essay. She asks you if she can just have a quick look at yours to see how you went about it. As she is your friend, you want to be helpful, and give it to her before you leave for your job. Charlotte is tired and thinks to herself: “I just want to be done with this. I’m going to change a few things. That should be enough to submit it.” Why do you think Charlotte made this choice?

Click on the responses to see the answers to each.



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**Courage:** To uphold academic integrity standards requires courage to resist temptations for the “easy way out” and to speak up against wrongdoing. In a class this might be a shy student participating in mock interviews or a difficult scenario, which can both be stressful to do in a workplace. This might be graduates of the nursing comprehensive healthcare aid or police studies programs working in dangerous situations.

## Scenario

Your course has policy of no cell phones during tests or quizzes but you have noticed that often the other students bring their phones into the tests in their pockets. You have a family member in the hospital and would like to be reachable but you have a quiz. What should you do?

Click on the responses to see the answers to each.



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**Fairness:** A person of integrity is fair. You are fair to your peers when you do your own work, to authors when you acknowledge their work by citing it, to the college when you respect and follow academic integrity standards, and to alumni when your behaviour helps to support the value of their degree. In a classroom, this might be your instructor giving you lots of time to practice and develop a skill before you are tested. And just as you have supports at Assiniboine to help you be the best student you can be, a lot of your future workplaces will have staff and policies in place to help you to do your best.

## Scenario

You are a new student and juggling to keep up with your courses while also working a part-time job. You are a bit stressed about your upcoming exam. A student who is a year ahead of you offers you a copy of the exam questions for one of your courses. What action would be acceptable?

Click on the responses to see the answers to each.



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**Respect:** You show respect when you adhere to your assignment instructions, when you actively participate in learning and show interest in gaining new knowledge, when you contribute your thoughts to the academic

discourse while accepting that others may disagree with you, when you credit others for their ideas, and when you show that you are putting your best efforts forward. Respect for self and others is a universal value across many family, community, religious, and cultural spectrums. For graduates of programs like land and water management or sustainable foods, you might be working with an external stakeholder group whose cultural values are part of a partnership or collaboration.

## Scenario

At the end of your class your instructor says: “Don’t forget your assignment is due next class. Remember, this is an individual assignment. You are meant to work on this alone!” You think, “Oh no, I already completed half of the assignment with Jason and Harpreet!” What should you do? Click on the responses to see the answers to each.



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**Responsibility:** You show responsible behaviour when you lead by example, when you resist negative peer pressure, and when you discourage others from violating academic integrity principles. Being responsible means being accountable to yourself and others and to do your work to the best of your abilities. As a student, you and your instructors have a responsibility to be on time and ready to work upon graduation. Whether you’re working in a restaurant, a government agency, or a construction company, your responsibilities will be very similar, so you’ll see academic continuity in many aspects of your student life. Here at ACC, this could be in classroom environments, whether they’re in person or online, in your assignments, tests, and exams, and in the Assiniboine Student Honest and Integrity policy.



## Scenario

You have difficulties with your studies, especially in one of your courses. You have been stuck on your essay for a whole week already. You are afraid that you may fail the course if you can't turn this situation around. What should you do?

Click on the responses to see the answers to each.



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# ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

Curt Shoultz; Lisa Vogt; Dr. Paul MacLeod; Dr. Brenda Stoesz; Josh Seeland;  
and Lynn Cliplef

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## Respect

Respect the work of others, value diverse opinions, and acknowledge ideas that are not your own. Our world is stronger when more voices are heard. When building upon the work or words of others, be sure to use citations or other attributions in order to respect their contribution to this body of knowledge.

## Love

Love comes from the heart: express your own ideas (Maracle, 2020). As a college student, express your own ideas based on your passion for truth and mutual responsibility.

## Courage

Standing up for what is right takes determination, commitment, and conviction. Have the courage to speak up and speak out, even if you're afraid or unsure. Sometimes it's hard to do the right thing. If you need an extension to do your best work, talk to your instructor. If you are unsure about an instructor's expectations, it's better to ask than to make an assumption.

## Honesty

Your quest for honesty should always be apparent. Be authentic in everything you do, not just in your

schoolwork. Be sure to follow the guidelines that your instructor sets out for all assessments. For example, use a calculator on a test only if it is permitted by the instructor.

## Trust

Reach your fullest potential. Trust grows and is built by what you do, not just what you say. Trust yourself to do your own work. Do not submit work that has been completed by anyone else. It is within a reciprocal relationship of trust that academic and personal growth can happen.

## Wisdom

Wisdom does not come from age, but from knowledge and experience: speak well and use logic. When using others' knowledge and experience, evaluate and think critically about this information to ensure your sources reliable and appropriate for the task.

## Responsibility

Be reliable, lead by example, and hold yourself and others accountable. How different would the world be if we all took responsibility for our own actions?

## Humility

Have humility in your work by taking responsibility for what you have done. Do not ask other people to do your work. Do not share your work with others who need to complete their own work.

## Fairness

Be transparent, have reasonable expectations, and do your own work. Fairness is for everyone, not just some.

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# ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Dr. Brenda Stoesz; Curt Shoultz; Dr. Paul MacLeod; Josh Seeland; and Lisa Vogt

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As an Assiniboine student, you have many responsibilities. Completing assignments on time, attending classes, balancing work, home, and student life — the list could go on and on! Fulfilling your student responsibilities with academic integrity allows you to take full advantage of learning opportunities, and helps establish good habits, which transfer into employable ethics.

Specifically, learning with academic integrity will ensure that your credentials — be they a certificate, diploma, or other type — represent your actual skills and abilities.

In each field, there are risks. The profitability or reputation of a business may be at stake. Your duties on the job may put your life, the lives of others, or society in peril. Colleges and universities that are accredited must display standards in order to have their credentials valued and thus sought after by students seeking future employment.

With all of this in mind, complete the following activity by choosing the risk that is most relevant to each scenario. The cases are based on actual events.



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# POLICY A25: STUDENT HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

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At Assiniboine, policy is used to provide guidelines around how to work together. Policy A25 is our Student Honesty and Integrity Policy and it serves to describe how the college, your instructors, the administration in your school, and you as a student work together with respect to academic integrity. A25 also outlines the Assiniboine's values and expectations related to academic integrity, as well as an explanation of what will happen when those expectations are not met.

As you read the policy, note the different levels of both the severity of student misconduct and the resulting procedures and sanctions.

[Policy A25](#)

# WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

Curt Shoultz; Dr. Brenda Stoesz; Dr. Paul MacLeod; Josh Seeland; and Lisa Vogt

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You have now been introduced to Assiniboine's [Policy A25: Student Honesty and Integrity](#). Some examples of academic misconduct are:

- allowing another student to look at your test or exam;
- students working together on assignments that were to be completed individually;
- having another person complete an assignment and submitting it as one's own for marks;
- having or being a substitute for an exam;
- accessing the accounts of another Assiniboine student or staff members in platforms such as Moodle or Microsoft Office;
- altering, sharing, uploading, or distributing tests or exams;
- using another's words, ideas, theories, or images without crediting the source.

When reviewing Policy A25, you would have seen that academic misconduct can have serious consequences for a student. These could include a zero or reduced grade for the course, or a suspension, which would appear on your college transcript. Most importantly, you also risk not learning the skills and gaining the knowledge your program requires for you to work successfully in the future.

We know there are many reasons why students engage in academic misconduct. Sometimes it is because help is needed with test taking, time management, or study skills. If you have any questions or concerns about academic integrity, you can reach out to many supports at Assiniboine.

Although [Policy A25](#) guides issues of academic integrity at Assiniboine, students are encouraged to discuss any questions or concerns with many staff and faculty at Assiniboine. This includes:

- your instructor;
- library staff;
- Learning Curve staff;
- your Student Success advisor;
- a peer tutor;
- your chair or coordinator;
- your dean.

# WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

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You have now been introduced to Assiniboine College's [Policy A25: Student Honesty and Integrity](#). Some examples of academic misconduct include:

- allowing another student to look at your test or exam;
- copy from another student during a test or exam;
- using prohibited materials or assistance during a test or exam;
- acquiring a copy of or information about a test or exam before taking it;
- altering, sharing, uploading, or distributing tests or exams;
- working with other students on a test or exam when unauthorized.

When reviewing Policy A25, you would have seen that cheating during a test or exam has serious consequences. Consequences could include a zero or reduced grade for the course, or suspension. Additionally, you also risk not learning the skills and gaining the knowledge your program requires for you to work successfully in the future.

We know there are many reasons why students cheat on tests and exams. Some students claim it is because they did not have the test-taking, time management, or study skills they needed to be successful. If you have any questions or concerns about academic integrity, there are many supports at Assiniboine who you can reach out to.

While [Policy A25](#) guides issues of academic integrity at Assiniboine, students are able and encouraged to discuss any questions or concerns with many staff and faculty at Assiniboine College. This includes:

- your instructor;
- library staff;
- Learning Curve staff;
- your Student Success advisor;
- a peer tutor;
- your department chair;
- your dean.

# TYPES OF ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT AT ASSINIBOINE AND THE WORKPLACE

Curt Shoultz; Josh Seeland; Lisa Vogt; Dr. Brenda Stoesz; and Dr. Paul MacLeod

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## Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct may take place when the six fundamental values of academic integrity aren't being adhered to. At Assiniboine, all of our stakeholders receive education about academic integrity. This could be a module like what we have here in class sessions for students or professional development sessions for staff, instructors, or administrators. We also do a lot of work to prevent and reduce the possibility of academic misconduct before it occurs. This could mean using different software and technologies, or even the way your assignments, tests, or exams are designed.

More information on academic integrity, the different types of academic misconduct, and how to prevent them can be found in the Academic Integrity for Students guide. You will have seen the link in this module, and we'll see it again later on. On the left-hand side of this guide you will see several different types of academic misconduct.

## Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a very common type of misconduct. In policy A25, it is defined as using another's words, ideas, theories, or images without crediting the source. An example could be a student writing a research paper without citing the sources found in their research. Another example might be a student working with media using Creative Commons licenses without attribution. Attribution and citing are academic skills that can be built over time, and there are many supports in place for Assiniboine students. Once a student graduates, using the work of other people could lead to a legal issue involving copyright violation or even potential job loss.

## Contract Cheating

Contract cheating is when the student outsources their work to a third party, whether that's a commercial website or a person that they know. This can range from an agreement with a formal contract and payment to a simple verbal discussion. While the commercial side of the contract cheating industry is predatory and illicit, and also illegal in many places in the world, they market themselves to students as homework help or



study resources. To help protect our students, Assiniboine blocks access to sites like these on its institutional networks. Many students have been blackmailed and extorted by contract cheating companies who have reported activities to schools after a student graduates, causing students to lose their credentials and their jobs.

## Collusion

Collusion is defined as when students work together in a situation where they are not allowed or supposed to. An example is two students working together on an assignment that was assigned individually. A good way to prevent collusion is to take responsibility for your learning and ask your instructor for clarification on if and how you can work with a classmate.

## Facilitating Academic Misconduct

Facilitating academic misconduct could involve one student lending another student part of their assignment or uploading their assignment to a file-sharing site where other students might find it.

## Test Cheating and Math Cheating

Test cheating and math cheating are defined as the use or attempted use of unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. This could be when a student brings notes, a phone, or a calculator to an exam when they aren't allowed to do so. For math cheating specifically, this could mean using a math app to do your work for you.

Working with the value of honesty will help prevent cheating and ensure that you learn the skills necessary to work in your field, where you may not have had the time or opportunity to rely on additional information or apps.

# ACADEMIC INTEGRITY FOR STUDENTS LIBRARY GUIDE

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Assiniboine's Library Guides contain supports for students on a variety of topics, including academic integrity, types of academic misconduct, and how to prevent them through learning with integrity.

Click [here](#) to review this resource.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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Here is a list of resources used in this module:

[Library Guide – What is The Learning Curve](#)

[Library Guide – Citation Manager](#)

[Copy of the Policy A25](#)

[Academic Integrity Values](#)



# MANAGING YOUR TIME AND PRIORITIES

## Learning Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- create a one-week plan for your time;
- assess your use of time in order to plan for the rest of your time at college;
- identify strategies to manage your time, avoid procrastination, and set goals.



# ASSESSING YOUR TIME-MANAGEMENT SKILLS

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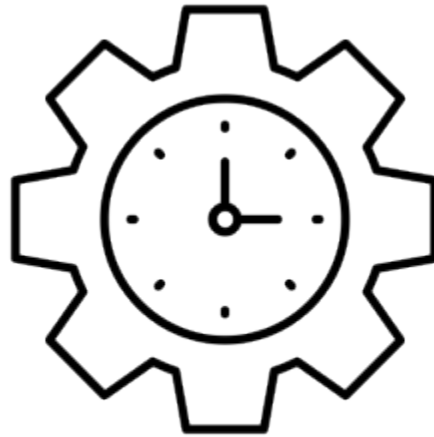
How do you feel about your time management abilities? Complete the following – rank each of the statements below on a scale of 1 to 4, 1 meaning “least like me” and 4 meaning “most like me.” These questions will help you determine how the chapter concepts relate to you right now. As you are introduced to new concepts and practices, it can be informative to reflect on how your understanding changes over time. Revisit these prompts at the end of the chapter to see whether your feelings have changed.

- I regularly procrastinate completing tasks that don’t interest me or seem challenging.
- I use specific time-management strategies to complete tasks.
- I find it difficult to prioritize tasks because I am not sure what is really important.
- I am pleased with my ability to manage my time.

# THE BENEFITS OF TIME MANAGEMENT

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A very unfortunate but all-too-common situation in higher education is the danger students face from poor time management. Many college administrators who work directly with students are aware that a single mishap or a case of poor time management can set into motion a series of events that can jeopardize a student's success.



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from the Noun Project

*Management hour by Soremba from [Noun Project](#)*

To better understand how one instance of poor time management can trigger a cascading situation with disastrous results, imagine that a student has an assignment due in a business course. They know that they should be working on it, but they aren't quite in the mood. Instead, they convince themselves that they should think a little more about what they need in order to complete the assignment and decide to do so while looking at social media or maybe playing a couple more rounds of a game on their phone. In a little while, they suddenly realize that they have become distracted and the evening has slipped away. They have little time left to work on the assignment. They stay up later than usual trying to complete the assignment but cannot finish it. Exhausted, they decide that they will work on it in the morning during the hour they had planned to study for their math quiz. They know there will not be enough time in the morning to do a good job on the assignment, so they decide that they will put together what they have and hope they will at least receive a passing grade.

At this point in our story, an evening of procrastination has not only resulted in a poorly done business assignment, but now they are going to take a math quiz that they have not studied for while tired from staying up too late the night before. Their lack of time management has now raised potential issues in two



courses. Imagine that each of these issues also causes additional problems, such as earning low scores on *both* the assignment and the quiz. They will now have to work harder in both courses to bring their grades up. Any other problems they have with future assignments in either course could cause a domino effect of circumstances that begins to overwhelm them.

In our imagined situation, you can see how events set into motion by a little procrastination can quickly spiral out of control. You can probably think of similar experiences in your own life, when one instance of poor time management set off a chain of events that threatened to cause big problems.

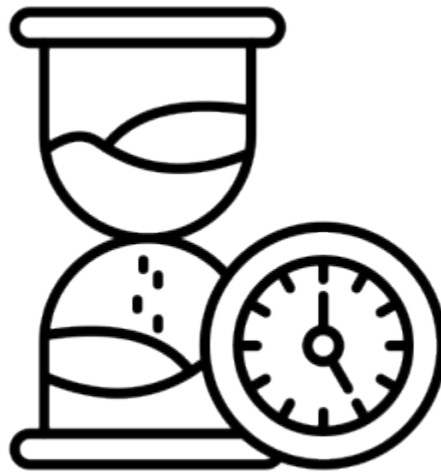
# PROCRASTINATION: THE ENEMY WITHIN

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## Procrastination

Simply put, procrastination is the act of delaying a task that needs to be completed. It is something we all do to greater and lesser degrees. For most people, a little minor procrastination is not a cause for great concern. Because we all procrastinate from time to time, we usually do not give it much thought, let alone think about its causes or effects. Ironically, many of the psychological reasons for why we avoid a given task also keep us from using critical thinking to understand why procrastination can be extremely detrimental, and in some cases difficult to overcome.

To succeed at time management, you must understand some of the hurdles that may stand in your way. Procrastination is often one of the biggest. What follows is an overview of procrastination with a few suggestions on how to avoid it.



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## The Reasons Behind Procrastination

There are several reasons we procrastinate, and a few of them may be surprising. On the surface we often tell ourselves it is because the task is something we do not want to do, or we make excuses that there are

other things more important to do first. In some cases this may be true, but there can be other contributors to procrastination that have their roots in our physical well-being or our own psychological motivations.

## Lack of Energy

Sometimes we just do not feel up to a certain task. It might be due to discomfort, an illness, or just a lack of energy. If this is the case, it is important to identify the cause and remedy the situation. It could be something as simple as a lack of sleep or improper diet. Regardless, if a lack of energy is continually causing you to procrastinate to the point where you are beginning to feel stress over not getting things done, you should definitely assess the situation and address it.

## Lack of Focus

Much like having low physical energy, a lack of mental focus can be a cause of procrastination. This can be due to mental fatigue, being disorganized, or allowing yourself to be distracted by other things. Again, like low physical energy, this is something that may have further-reaching effects in your life that go beyond the act of simply avoiding a task. If it is something that is recurring, you should properly assess the situation.

## Fear of Failure

This cause of procrastination is not one that many people are aware of, especially if they are the person avoiding tasks because of it. To put it simply, it is a bit of trickery we play on ourselves by avoiding a situation that makes us psychologically uncomfortable. Even though they may not be consciously aware of it, the person facing the task is afraid that they cannot do it or will not be able to do it well. If they fail at the task, it will make them appear incompetent to others or even to themselves. Where the self-trickery comes in is by avoiding the task. In the person's mind, they can rationalize that the reason they failed at the task was because they ran out of time to complete it, not that they were incapable of doing it in the first place.

It is important to note that a fear of failure may not have anything to do with the actual ability of the person suffering from it. They could be quite capable of doing the task and performing well, but it is the fear that holds them back.

## The Effects of Procrastination

In addition to the causes of procrastination, you must also consider what effects it can have. Again, many

of these effects are obvious and commonly understood, but some may not be so obvious and may cause other issues.

## Loss of Time

The loss of time as an effect of procrastination is the easiest to identify since the act of avoiding a task comes down to not using time wisely. Procrastination can be thought of as using the time you have to complete a task in ways that do not accomplish what needs to be done.

## Stress

Procrastination causes stress and anxiety, which may seem odd since the act of procrastination is often about avoiding a task we think will be stressful in itself! Anyone who has noticed that nagging feeling when they know there is something else they should be doing is familiar with this. On the other hand, some students see that kind of stress as a boost of mental urgency. They put off a task until they feel that surge of motivation. While this may have worked in the past, they quickly learn that procrastinating when it comes to college work almost always includes an underestimation of the tasks to be completed — sometimes with disastrous results.

### Reflection on Procrastination

We know that time management is an essential skill for college students and professionals. One of the biggest barriers to effective time management is procrastination: delaying or postponing doing something, like a reading for school or a project that needs completing.

In order to overcome procrastination, it's useful to understand why and when we put things off.

Can you think of a time that you procrastinated? Why did you? What were you avoiding doing? How did it feel to procrastinate? What was the end result?

If you could go back and approach the task differently, what would you do? How do you imagine it would feel? Would the end result be different?

It could be helpful to write your reflection down.

## Strategies for Managing Procrastination

Now that you understand a few of the major problems procrastination can produce, let's look at methods to manage procrastination and get you on to completing the tasks, no matter how unpleasant you think they might be.

### Get Organized

Much of this chapter is dedicated to defining and explaining the nature of time management. The most effective way to combat procrastination is to use time- and project-management strategies such as scheduling, goal-setting, and other techniques to get tasks accomplished in a timely manner.

### Put Aside Distractions

Several of the methods discussed in this chapter deal specifically with distractions. Distractions are time killers and are the primary way people procrastinate. It is too easy to play a video game just a little while longer, check social media, or finish watching a movie when we are avoiding a task. Putting aside distractions is one of the primary functions of setting priorities.

### Reward Yourself

Rewarding yourself for the completion of tasks or meeting goals is a good way to avoid procrastination. An example of this would be rewarding yourself with the time to watch a movie you would enjoy *after* you have finished the things you need to do, rather than using the movie to keep yourself from getting things done.

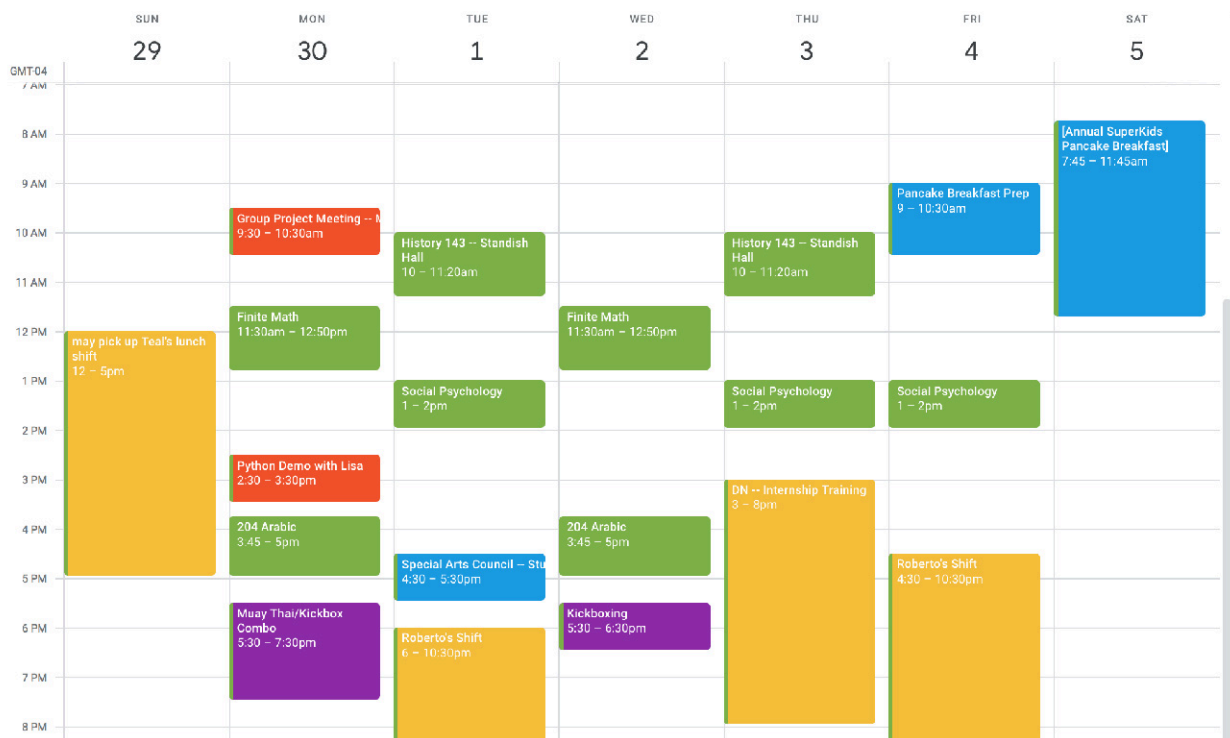
## Be Accountable

A strong motivational tool is to hold ourselves accountable by telling someone else we are going to do something and when we are going to do it. This may not seem like it would be very effective, but on a psychological level we feel more compelled to do something if we tell someone else. It may be related to our need for approval from others, or it might just serve to set a level of commitment. Either way, it can help us stay on task and avoid procrastination — especially if we take our accountability to another person seriously enough to warrant contacting that person and apologizing for not doing what we said we were going to do.

# HOW TO MANAGE TIME

## Managing Your Time

In this next section you will learn about managing time and prioritizing tasks. This is not only a valuable skill for pursuing an education, but it can become an ability that follows you through the rest of your life, especially if your career takes you into a leadership role.



*An online calendar is a very useful tool for keeping track of classes, meetings, and other events.*

## How to Manage Time

The simplest way to manage your time is to accurately plan for how much time it will take to do each task, and then set aside that amount of time. How you divide the time is up to you. If it is going to take you five hours to study for a final exam, you can plan to spread it over five days, with an hour each night, or you can plan on two hours one night and three hours the next. What you would not want to do is plan on studying only a few hours the night before the exam and find that you fell very short on the time you estimated you would need. If that

were to happen, you would have run out of time before finishing, with no way to go back and revise your plan. In this kind of situation, you might even be tempted to pull an all-nighter (a phrase that has been used among college students for decades). In essence this means going without sleep for the entire night and using that time to finish studying or completing an assignment. While this method of trying to make up for poor planning is common enough to have a name, it rarely produces the best work.

Of all the parts of time management, accurately predicting how long a task will take is usually the most difficult — and the most elusive. Part of the problem comes from the fact that most of us are not very accurate timekeepers, especially when we are busy applying ourselves to a task. The other issue that makes it so difficult to accurately estimate time spent on tasks is that our estimations must also account for things like interruptions or unforeseen problems that cause delays.

When it comes to academic activities, many tasks can be dependent upon the completion of other things first, or the time a task takes can vary from one instance to another, both of which add to the complexity and difficulty of estimating how much time and effort are required.

## Knowing Yourself

While you can find all sorts of estimates online as to how long a certain task may take, it is important to know these are only averages. People read at different speeds, people write at different speeds, and those numbers even change for each individual depending on the environment. If you are trying to read in surroundings that have distractions (like conversations or phone calls), reading 10 pages can take you a lot longer than if you are reading in a quiet area. By the same token, you may be reading in a quiet environment (such as in bed after everyone in the house has gone to sleep), but if you are tired, your attention and retention may not be what it would be if you were refreshed.

In essence, the only way you are going to be able to manage your time accurately is to know yourself and to know how long it takes you to do each task. But where to begin?

Below, you will find a table of common college academic activities. This list has been compiled from a number of different sources, including colleges, publishers, and professional educators, to help students estimate their own time on tasks. The purpose of this table is to both give you a place to begin in your estimates and illustrate how different factors can impact the actual time spent.

You will notice that beside each task there is a column for the unit, followed by the average time on task, and a column for notes. The unit is whatever is being measured (pages read, pages written, and so on), and the time on task is the average time it takes students to do these tasks. It is important to pay attention to the notes column, because there you will find factors that influence the time on task. These factors can dramatically change the amount of time the activity takes.

### Time Spent on Common College Activities



Activity	Unit	Time on task	Notes
General academic reading (textbook, professional journals)	1 page	5–7 minutes	Be aware that your personal reading speed may differ and may change over time.
Technical reading (math, charts, and data)	1 page	10–15 minutes	Be aware that your personal reading speed may differ and may change over time.
Simple quiz or homework question (short answer, oriented toward recall or identification)	1 question	1–2 minutes	The complexity of the questions will greatly influence the time required.
Complex quiz or homework question (short answer oriented toward application, evaluation, or synthesis of knowledge)	1 question	2–3 minutes	The complexity of the questions will greatly influence the time required.
Math problem sets (complex)	1 question	15 minutes	For example, algebra, complex equations, or financial calculations.
Writing (short, no research)	1 page	60 minutes	For example, short essays, single-topic writing assignments, summaries, freewriting assignments, journaling (includes drafting, writing, proofing, and finalizing).
Writing (research paper)	1 page	105 minutes	Includes research time, drafting, editing, proofing, and finalizing (built into per-page calculation).
Study for quiz	1 chapter	60 minutes	45–90 minutes per chapter, depending on the complexity of the material.
Study for exam	1 exam	90 minutes	1–2 hours, depending on the complexity of the material.

Again, these are averages, and it does not mean anything if your times are a little slower or a little faster. There is no “right amount of time,” only the time that it takes you to do something so you can accurately plan and manage your time.

There is also another element to look for in the table. These are differentiations in the similar activities that will also affect the time you spend. A good example of this can be found in the first four rows. Each of these activities involves reading, but you can see that depending on the material being read and its complexity, the time spent can vary greatly. Not only do these differences in time account for the different types of materials you might read but they also take into consideration the time needed to think about what you are reading to truly understand and comprehend what it is saying.

# USING TECHNOLOGY TO HELP YOU

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## Time Management Tools and Apps

There are many different tools and methods out there to help support time management. For some people, paper planners help them to see their obligations and to do lists laid out for them. For others, a digital tool makes more sense.

Some digital tools and apps that help maximize your focus and manage your time.

- [Outlook](#): a great desktop calendar option with reminders
- [Google Calendar](#): web-based calendar
- [ToDoist](#): a to-do list with excellent voice notes options
- [Remember the Milk](#): a simple, easy-to-use to-do list with reminders
- [Habitica](#): allows you to gamify your time management with a fantasy video game theme (available on web, Android, and iOS)
- [Bullet Journal](#): a comprehensive pen-and-paper system to help you be more productive

### Micro Wellness: Breath Focus

Place one hand on your chest and feel your breath moving in and out of your body. Pay attention to the sensation of your chest rising and falling with each breath and if your mind starts to wander, refocus on the feeling of your breath. Continue as long as you like.

# GOAL-SETTING AND MOTIVATION

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## Setting Goals

Goals can be big or small. A goal can range from *I'm going to write one extra page tonight*, to *I'm going to work to get an A in this course*, all the way to *I'm going to graduate in the top of my class so I can start my career with a really good job*. The great thing about goals is that they can include and influence a number of other things that all work toward a much bigger picture; for example, if your goal is to get an A in a certain course, all the reading, studying, and assignments you do for that course contribute to the larger goal. You have motivation to do each of those things and to do them well.

Setting goals is something that is frequently talked about, but it is often treated as something abstract. Like time management, goal-setting is best done with careful thought and planning. This next section will explain how you can apply tested techniques to goal-setting and what the benefits of each can be.



Goal setting by Vectors Market from [Noun Project](#)

## Set Goals That Motivate You

The first thing to know about goal-setting is that a goal is a specific end result you desire. If the goal is not

something you are really interested in, there is little motivational drive to achieve it. To get the most from the goals you set, make sure they are things that you are interested in achieving.

That is not to say you shouldn't set goals that are supported by other motivations (such as, *If I finish studying by Friday, I can go out on Saturday*), but the idea is to be intellectually honest with your goals.

## Set SMART Goals

Goals should also be SMART. In this case, the word *smart* is not only a clever description of the type of goal, but it is also an acronym that stands for specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound. The reason these are all desirable traits for your goals is because they not only help you plan how to meet the goal, but they can also contribute to your decision-making processes during the planning stage.

### The Meaning of SMART Goals

- **Specific:** For a goal to be specific, it must be defined enough to actually determine the goal. A goal of *get a good job when I graduate* is too general. It doesn't define what a good job is. In fact, it doesn't even necessarily include a job in your chosen profession. A more specific goal would be something like *be hired as a nurse in a place of employment where it is enjoyable to work and that has room for promotion*.
- **Measurable:** The concept of a measurable goal is one that is often overlooked. What this means is that the goal should have clearly defined outcomes that are detailed enough to measure and can be used for planning how you will achieve the goal. For example, setting a goal of *doing well in school* is undefined, but making a goal of *graduating with a GPA above 3.0* is measurable and something you can work with. If your goal is measurable, you can know ahead of time how many points you will have to earn on a specific assignment to stay in that range or how many points you will need to make up in the next assignment if you do not do as well as you planned.
- **Attainable:** Attainable or achievable goals are those that are reasonable and within your ability to accomplish. While a goal of *make one million dollars by the end of the week* is something that would be nice to achieve, the odds that you could make that happen in a single week are not very realistic.
- **Relevant:** For goal-setting, relevant means it applies to the situation. In relation to college, a goal of *getting a horse to ride to school* is not very relevant, but *getting dependable transportation* is something that would contribute to your success in school.
- **Time-bound:** Time-bound means you set a specific time frame to achieve the goal. *I will get my paper written by Wednesday* is time-bound. You know when you have to meet the goal. *I will get my paper written sometime soon* does not help you plan how and when you will accomplish the goal.

In the following table you can see some examples of goals that do and do not follow the SMART system. As you read each one, think about what elements make them SMART or how you might change those that are not.

Goal	Is it SMART?	Notes
I am going to be rich someday.	No	There is nothing really specific, measurable, or time-bound in this goal.
I am going to save enough money to buy a newer car by June.	Yes	All SMART attributes are covered in this goal.
I would like to do well in all my courses next semester.	No	While this is clearly time-bound and meets most of the SMART goal attributes, it is not specific or measurable without defining what “do well” means.
I am going to start being more organized.	No	While most of the SMART attributes are implied, there is nothing really measurable in this goal.

## Make an Action Plan

Like anything else, making a step-by-step action plan of how you will attain your goals is the best way to make certain you achieve them.

The planning techniques you use for time management and achieving goals can be similar. In fact, accurate goal-setting is very much a part of time management if you treat the completion of each task as a goal.

What follows is an example of a simple action plan that lists the steps for writing a short paper. You can use something like this or modify it in a way that would better suit your own preferences.

Action Plan		
Task	Objective	When
Choose a topic.	Select something interesting.	Needs to be done by Monday!
Write an outline and look for references.	Create the structure of the paper and outline each part.	Monday, 6:00 p.m.
Research references to support the outline and look for good quotes.	Strengthen the paper and resources.	Tuesday, 6:00 p.m.
Write the introduction and first page draft.	Get the main ideas and thesis statement down.	Wednesday, 7:00 p.m.
Write the second page and closing draft.	Finish the main content and tie it all together.	Thursday, 6:00 p.m.
Rewrite and polish the final draft.	Clean up the writing for grammar, writing style, and effective communication.	Friday, 5:00 p.m.

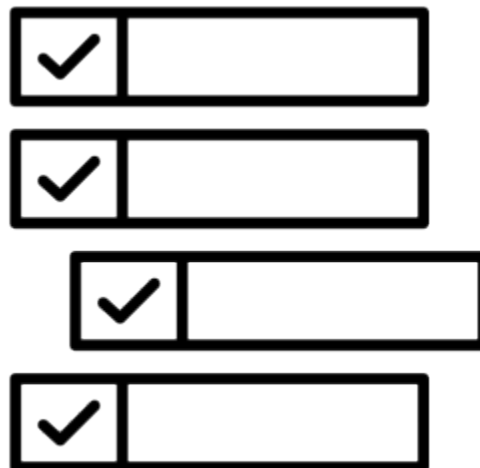
# ENHANCED STRATEGIES FOR TIME AND TASK MANAGEMENT

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## Managing Time and Tasks

Over the years, people have developed a number of different strategies to manage time and tasks. Some of the strategies have proven to be effective and helpful, while others have been deemed not as useful.

The good news is that the approaches that do not work very well or do not really help in managing time do not get passed along very often, but those that people find valuable do. What follows here are three unique strategies that have become staples of time management. While not everyone will find that all three work for them in every situation, enough people have found them beneficial to pass them along with high recommendations.



*Tasks by SAM Designs from [Noun Project](#)*

## Daily Top Three

The idea behind the daily top three approach is that you determine which three things are the most important to finish that day, and these become the tasks that you complete. It is a very simple technique that is effective because each day you are finishing tasks and removing them from your list. Even if you took one day off a week



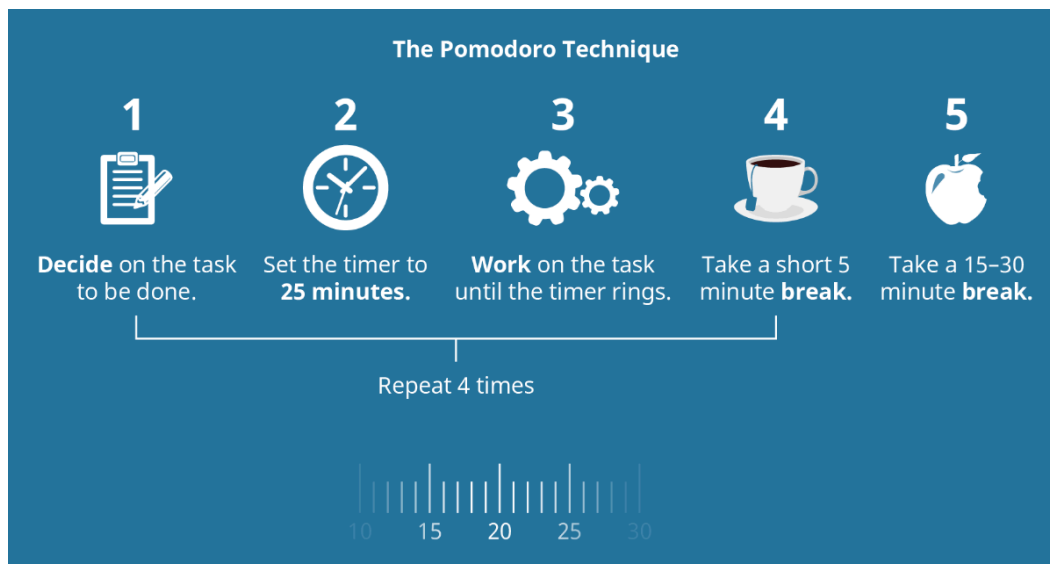
and completed no tasks on that particular day, a daily top three strategy would have you finishing 18 tasks in the course of a single week. That is a good number of tasks crossed off your list.

## Pomodoro Technique

The Pomodoro Technique was developed by Francesco Cirillo. The basic concept is to use a timer to set work intervals that are followed by a short break. The intervals are usually 25 minutes long and are called *pomodoros*, which comes from the Italian word for tomato, because Cirillo used a tomato-shaped kitchen timer to keep track of the intervals.

In the original technique there are six steps:

1. Decide on the task to be done.
2. Set the timer to the desired interval.
3. Work on the task.
4. When the timer goes off, put a check mark on a piece of paper.
5. If you have fewer than four check marks, take a short break (3–5 minutes), then go to Step 1 or 2 (whichever is appropriate).
6. After four pomodoros, take a longer break (15–30 minutes), reset your check mark count to zero, and then go to Step 1 or 2.



*The Pomodoro Technique contains five defined steps.*

There are several reasons this technique is deemed effective for many people. One is the benefit that is derived from quick cycles of work and short breaks. This helps reduce mental fatigue and the lack of productivity caused by it. Another is that it tends to encourage people to break tasks down to things that can be completed

in about 25 minutes, which is something that is usually manageable from the perspective of time available. It is much easier to squeeze in three 25-minute sessions of work time during the day than it is to set aside a 75-minute block of time.

## Eat the Frog

Of our three quick strategies, eat the frog probably has the strangest name and may not sound the most inviting. The name comes from a famous quote, attributed to Mark Twain: “Eat a live frog first thing in the morning and nothing worse will happen to you the rest of the day.” *Eat the Frog* is also the title of a best-selling book by Brian Tracy that deals with time management and avoiding procrastination.

How this applies to time and task management is based on the concept that if a person takes care of the biggest or most unpleasant task first, everything else will be easier after that.

Although stated in a humorous way, there is a good deal of truth in this. First, we greatly underestimate how much worry can impact our performance. If you are continually distracted by anxiety over a task you are dreading, it can affect the task you are working on at the time. Second, not only will you have a sense of accomplishment and relief when the task you are concerned with is finished and out of the way, but other tasks will seem lighter and not as difficult.

## Breaking Down the Steps and Spreading Them Over Shorter Work Periods

Above, you read about several different tried-and-tested strategies for effective time management—approaches that have become staples in the professional world. In this section you will read about two more creative techniques that combine elements from these other methods to handle tasks when time is scarce and long periods of time are a luxury you just do not have.

The concept behind this strategy is to break tasks into smaller, more manageable units that do not require as much time to complete. As an illustration of how this might work, imagine that you are assigned a two-page paper that is to include references. You estimate that to complete the paper — start to finish — would take you between four-and-a-half and five hours. You look at your calendar over the next week and see that there simply are no open five-hour blocks (unless you decided to only get three hours of sleep one night). Rightly so, you decide that going without sleep is not a good option. While looking at your calendar, you do see that you can squeeze in an hour or so every night. Instead of trying to write the entire paper in one sitting, you break it up into much smaller components as shown in the table below:

### **Break Down Projects into Manageable Tasks**

Day/Time	Task	Time
Monday, 6:00 p.m.	Write the outline and look for references.	60 minutes
Tuesday, 6:00 p.m.	Research references to support the outline and look for good quotes.	60 minutes
Wednesday, 7:00 p.m.	Write the introduction and first page draft.	60 minutes
Thursday, 6:00 p.m.	Write the second page and closing draft.	60 minutes
Friday, 5:00 p.m.	Rewrite and polish the final draft.	60 minutes
Saturday, 10:00 a.m.	<i>Only if needed—finish or polish final draft.</i>	60 minutes?

**Insert Tasks into a Weekly Schedule**

Take the tasks that must be completed and fit them into your available time in a way that would make completing the paper possible. If you have rigid time constraints, it is possible to break tasks down even further. You could use a variation of the Pomodoro technique and write for three 20-minute segments each day at different times. The key is to look for ways to break down the entire task into smaller steps and spread them out to fit your schedule.

# IDENTIFY YOUR TIME MANAGEMENT STYLE

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# PERSONALITY TYPES



## THE EARLY BIRD



You like to make checklists and feel great satisfaction when you can cross something off of your to-do list. When it comes to assignments, you want to get started as soon as possible (and maybe start brainstorming before that), because it lets you stay in control.

### STRENGTHS

You know what you want and are driven to figure out how to achieve it. Motivation is never really a problem for you.

### CHALLENGES

Sometimes you can get more caught up in getting things done as quickly as possible and don't give yourself enough time to really mull over issues in all of their complexity.

### TIPS FOR SUCCESS

You're extremely organized and on top of your schoolwork, so make sure you take time to really enjoy learning in your classes. Remember, school isn't all deadlines and checkboxes – you also

## The Early Bird

- **Traits:** You like to make checklists and feel great satisfaction when you can cross something off of your to-do list. When it comes to assignments, you want to get started as soon as possible (and maybe start brainstorming before that), because it lets you stay in control.
- **Strengths:** You know what you want and are driven to figure out how to achieve it. Motivation is never really a problem for you.
- **Challenges:** Sometimes you can get more caught up in getting things done as quickly as possible and don't give yourself enough time to really mull over issues in all of their complexity.
- **Tips for Success:** You're extremely organized and on top of your schoolwork, so make sure you take time to really enjoy learning in your classes. Remember, school isn't all deadlines and checkboxes — you also have the opportunity to think about big picture intellectual problems that don't necessarily have clear answers.

## The Balancing Act

- **Traits:** You really know what you're capable of, and are ready to do what it takes to get the most out of your classes. Maybe you're naturally gifted in this way or maybe it is a skill that you have developed over time; in any case, you should have the basic organizational skills to succeed in any online class, as long as you keep your balance.
- **Strengths:** Your strength really lies in your ability to be well-rounded. You may not always complete assignments perfectly every time, but you are remarkably consistent and usually manage to do very well in classes.
- **Challenges:** Because you're so consistent, sometimes you can get in a bit of a rut where you begin to coast in class, rather than really challenging yourself.
- **Tips for Success:** Instead of simply doing what works, use each class as an opportunity for growth by engaging thoughtfully with the material and constantly pushing the boundaries of your own expectations for yourself.

## The Pressure Cooker

- **Traits:** You always get things done, and almost always at the last minute. Hey, it takes time to really come up with good ideas!
- **Strengths:** You work well under pressure and when you finally do sit down to accomplish a task, you can sit and work for hours. In these times, you can be extremely focused and shut out the rest of the world in order to get done what needs to be done.
- **Challenges:** You sometimes use your ability to work under pressure as an excuse to procrastinate. Sure, you can really focus when the deadline is tomorrow, but is it really the best work you could produce if

you had a couple of days of cushion?

- **Tips for Success:** Give yourself small, achievable deadlines, and stick to them. Make sure they're goals that you really could (and would) achieve in a day. Then don't allow yourself to make excuses. You'll find that it's actually a lot more enjoyable to not be stressed out when completing schoolwork. Who would have known?

## The Improviser

- **Traits:** You frequently wait until the last minute to do assignments, but it's because you've been able to get away with this habit in many classes. Sometimes you miss an assignment or two, or have to pretend to have done reading that you haven't, but everyone does that sometimes, right?
- **Strengths:** You think quickly on your feet, and while this is a true strength, it also can be a crutch that prevents you from being really successful in a class.
- **Challenges:** As the saying goes, old habits die hard. If you find that you lack a foundation of discipline and personal accountability, it can be difficult to change, especially when the course material becomes difficult or you find yourself struggling to keep up with the pace of the class.
- **Tips for Success:** The good news is, you can turn this around! Make a plan to organize your time and materials in a reasonable way, and really stick with it. Also, don't be afraid to ask your instructor for help, but be sure to do it before, rather than after, you might fall behind.



# CREATE A SCHEDULE

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Now that you've evaluated how you have done things in the past, you'll want to think about how you might create a schedule for managing your time to improve on that! The best schedules have some flexibility built into them, as you will undoubtedly have unexpected situations and circumstances arise during your time as a student.

Your schedule will be unique to you, depending on the level of detail you find helpful. There are some things — due dates, exam dates, and discussion times, for example — that should be included in your schedule no matter what. But you also might find it helpful to break down assignments into steps (or milestones) that you can schedule as well. Again, this is all about what works best for you — do you want to keep a record of only the major deadlines you need to keep in mind? Or does it help you to plan out every day so you stay on track? Your answers to these questions will vary depending on the course, the complexity of your schedule, and your own personal preferences.

Your schedule will also vary depending on the course you're taking. So, pull out your course outline and try to determine the rhythm of the class by looking at the following factors:

- How often does your instructor expect discussion board contributions? When are initial discussion board contributions due?
- Will you have tests or exams in this course? When are those scheduled?
- Are there assignments and papers? When are those due?
- Are there any group or collaborative assignments? You'll want to pay particular attention to the timing of any assignment that requires you to work with others — they take a longer time to complete when you are learning online because it can be more complicated to schedule times to get together.

You can find many useful resources online that will help you keep track of your schedule. Some are basic, cloud-based calendars (like Google calendar, iCal, Outlook), and some (like iHomework) are specialized for students.

We all have exactly 168 hours per week. How do you spend yours? And now that you're a student, how much time will you be willing to devote to your studies?



**“ REALISTICALLY, HOW MUCH TIME SHOULD I SPEND STUDYING FOR THIS CLASS?**



This is a good question, and a tough one to answer. Each hour of class (per week) is equal to one unit of credit, which means that you can think of each credit as an hour.

A good rule of thumb for studying is to study two hours for every hour of class. So, if you are enrolled in twelve units, your schedule should give you twenty-four hours of study time every week.

OK!

THIS DEPENDS ON HOW

**Question: Do I really need to create a study schedule when I'm taking an online course? I can honestly keep track of all of this in my head.**

**Answer:** Yes, you really should. When you take a face-to-face course, you are expected to attend class on a regular basis. There an instructor will give you reminders about assignment due dates, exam times. In an online class, you don't have this built-in structure. You're going to have to take responsibility for tracking class requirements yourself.

**Question: Realistically, how much time should I spend studying for this class?**

**Answer:** This is a good question, and a tough one to answer. Each hour of class (per week) is equal to one unit of credit, which means that you can think of each credit as an hour. A good practice for studying is to study two hours for every hour of class. So, if you are enrolled in twelve units, your schedule should give you twenty-four hours of study time every week.

**Question: Ok, so aside from class time requirements, should I account for anything else as I draw up my schedule?**

**Answer:** This depends on how detailed you want your schedule to be. Is it a calendar of important dates, or do you need a clear picture of how to organize your entire day? We think the latter is more successful, as long as you stick with it. This is also where it will be helpful to determine when you are most productive and efficient. When are you the most focused and ready to learn new things, in the morning, afternoon, or evening? Check the [Quest for Online Success](#) course site for online tools that can help you plan your time.

**Question: My life and school requirements change on a week-to-week basis. How can I possibly account for this when making a schedule?**

**Answer:** Try creating a variable schedule in case an event comes up or you need to take a day or two off.

**Question: The way you've talked about scheduling and time management makes it sound like a good idea, but it's also totally unrealistic. What's wrong with cramming? It's what I'll probably end up doing anyway...**

**Answer:** Cramming, or studying immediately before an exam without much preparation beforehand, has many disadvantages. Trying to learn any subject or memorize facts in a brief but intense period of time is basically fruitless. You simply forget what you have learned much faster when you cram. Instead, study in smaller increments on a regular basis: your brain will absorb complex course material in a lasting and more profound way because it's how our brain functions.

# PRIORITIZING TIME

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## Get Better at Prioritizing

Due dates are important. Set your short and long-term goals accordingly. Ask yourself:

- What needs to get done today?
- What needs to get done this week?
- What needs to get done by the end of the first month of the semester?
- What needs to get done by the end of the second month of the semester?
- What needs to get done by the end of the semester?

Your time is valuable. Treat it accordingly by getting the most you can out of it.

***Above all, avoid procrastination.***

Procrastination is the kiss of death to the online learner because it's incredibly difficult to catch up once you've fallen behind. Do you have a problem procrastinating? We're going to ask you a few questions in this final segment and if you find yourself saying, "Sounds like me," more often than you say, "No way," you'll really want to be on your guard so that procrastination doesn't become an issue for you.

## Procrastination Checklist

Consider the following issues:

- My paper is due in two days and I haven't really started writing it yet.
- I've had to pull an all-nighter to get an assignment done on time.
- I've turned in an assignment late or asked for an extension when I really didn't have a good excuse not to get it done on time.
- I've worked right up to the minute an assignment was due.
- I've underestimated how long a reading assignment would take and didn't finish it in time for class.
- I've relied on the Internet for information (like a summary of a concept or a book) because I didn't finish the reading on time.

If these sound like issues you've struggled with in the past, you might want to think seriously about whether

you have the tendency to procrastinate, and how you want to deal with it in your future classes. You're already spending a lot of time, energy, and money on the online classes you're taking — don't let all of that go to waste!

## Procrastination Pie



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# WELLNESS

## Key Takeaways

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define mental health and associated stigma in order to contribute to a community of wellness at Assiniboine College;
- describe how coping skills and resilience can help students succeed in a post-secondary environment;
- develop a strategy for a healthy lifestyle that contributes to your personal and academic goals.





# MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM

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## Balancing the Medicine Wheel

“Health is a balance of the spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual aspects of a child, youth, adult, or Elder who live as individuals, families, communities and nations within various cultural, social, economic and political environments.”

— Dr. Judith Bartlett

## Holistic Wellness and Mental Health

Wellness is being healthy in body, mind, emotion, and spirit. The benefits to a holistically well lifestyle include more energy, resilience, restful sleep; less stress, less lost time due to illness; and better mental health.

Mental health is a component of wellness allowing an individual to be cognizant of their own strengths, deal with life stress adequately, live, study, and work well, and contribute to their community. Every one of us has mental health.

Mental health and mental illness can co-exist and people with mental illness can still live very fulfilling lives and excel in post-secondary studies and the workforce.

Mental health continuums provide recognizable behaviours, emotions, thoughts, learning, and social relationships to help us pay more attention to our own common patterns and determine how mentally healthy or ill we are. We can also use the continuum as a reference when we feel that people close to us — family members, friends, classmates, colleagues — may be struggling.



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<https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=593#h5p-5>

## Stigmatize the Stigma



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# FOUR QUADRANTS OF HOLISTIC WELLNESS

Brandy Robertson and Sheryl Prouse

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Holistic wellness is often modelled using four quadrants representative of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. In order to achieve balance, we need to constantly be paying attention to our own needs, goals, health, and accomplishments. We need to make the time to care for and develop all of who we are.

Click on the quadrants to learn more.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=599#h5p-6>

## Holistic Wellness and Mental Health

Wellness is being healthy in body, mind, emotion, and spirit. The benefits to a holistically well lifestyle include more energy, resilience, restful sleep; less stress, less lost time due to illness; and better mental health.

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Mental health and mental illness can co-exist and people with mental illness can still live very fulfilling lives and excel in post-secondary studies and the work force.

# COMMUNITY OF WELLNESS ACTIVITY

Brandy Robertson and Sheryl Prouse

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College, for many people in this course, is a new experience. As you advance through your program, you will begin to see yourself as a college student. Your learning community will grow into a professional community. The people you are spending time with in college will become your co-workers as you transition into a professional role. This is the time to decide what role you will play in your new community.

As you work toward your new career you have the opportunity to contribute to a community of wellness. You are an important part of this community. People thrive in places that are supportive, creative, and physically and psychologically safe for everyone. What you say, do, and contribute impacts everyone around you.

Think about the ways you impact other people:

- What role will you play in your new professional community?
- Do you find ways to include everyone? How?
- How will you support a community that is supportive, creative, and physically and psychologically safe for everyone?

Take note of your answers and commit to being a professional that supports wellness for everyone.

## Micro Wellness: Monkey Stretch

Stand and place your feet comfortably but solidly on the floor. Extend your arms out in front of you and slowly bring them down and to your sides. Extend your arms up in front of you again, bring your arms (still extended) to your sides and then down. Bring your arms all the way up past your head and then swoop down with your head dangling between your knees. Hang out there for the count of ten. You should feel some release of tension.

# COPING AND RESILIENCE

Brandy Robertson and Sheryl Prouse

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Consider that as a post-secondary student you are going to experience three major transition periods: moving into the post-secondary environment (from high school or the workforce); moving through the post-secondary environment (the time spent studying in your program); and moving on, or preparing to leave the educational environment (completing your program and entering the workforce). As you move through these transition phases the demands on your time are going to change, the role you play in your life and others' lives will change, and the way you think and feel about yourself is going to change in order to cope with all of these changes! Each transition is going to require unique coping skills to deal with the changing experiences.

## Coping Strategies

There are three main coping dimensions that contain both positive, effective coping strategies and negative, ineffective coping strategies:



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<https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=751#h5p-19>

Let's apply these strategies to an example. As you're reading through, try to think of a stressful situation that you have already encountered in the post-secondary environment or one that you anticipate is likely to occur at some point on your journey through college.

## Example Scenario

It is December 8 and in the next week all of the major assignments for all of your classes are due and the week after that exams begin. You've enjoyed your classes for the most part and have kept up with the demands of a full course load while also working part time. You've already requested time off to prepare for and write your exams but as you go through your exam schedule again in detail you realize that you mixed up two of the dates and requested the wrong day off; you are scheduled to work the day of one of your exams. You immediately

communicate with your employer but are told that two other employees already have that particular day off so your request is denied.

## Problem-Focused Coping

- **Active coping:** Call the instructor for the course that the exam is in and explain your situation.
- **Planning:** Sit down and make a list of the tasks you need to complete to address the issue.
- **Suppression of competing activities:** Stay awake all night pining over your predicament and don't get any sleep.
- **Restraint coping:** Decide not to contact your instructor until the following morning so that you can calm down and rationalize your communication.
- **Seeking instrumental social support:** Contact your Student Success advisor for assistance.

## Emotion-Focused Coping

- **Seeking emotional social support:** Contact your friends and express your panic.
- **Positive reinterpretation:** Recognize this experience has taught you some valuable problem-solving skills.
- **Acceptance:** Recognize that mistakes happen and that if you are not able to write the exam on a different date that you may need to retake the class.
- **Denial:** Tell yourself that there is no way you could have made a mistake with your scheduling; the error must be on the part of your employer or your instructor and they'll fix it.

## Coping by Disengagement

- **Focusing on and venting emotions:** Call your parent in a panic and spend half an hour telling them how angry, upset, and frustrated you are.
- **Behavioural disengagement:** Assume that there is nothing you can do about the scheduling conflict and just go on with your daily tasks.
- **Mental disengagement:** Play video games to distract you from thinking about the issue.

# POST-SECONDARY SUCCESS

Sheryl Prouse and Brandy Robertson

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<https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=754#h5p-8>

## Personal and Academic Success

Everyone is unique. We all have different needs, wants, strengths, and weaknesses. Personal and academic success is achievable when we identify strategies that work for our unique needs.

# FAILURE CULTURE

Brandy Robertson and Sheryl Prouse

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Students often face difficulties during their studies such as having to withdraw from a course. Students live complex lives and experience significant pressure from their academic, personal, and, in some cases, professional lives. In stressful situations, when life doesn't work out as planned, we often feel like a failure.

We know that failure is universal; everyone experiences failure in some form. What is more important than the actual failure itself is our reaction to failure. Failure makes us resilient and when we address failure from a growth mindset we appreciate and even enjoy challenges because we know by leaving our comfort zones and working through these challenges that we will become better students, better professionals, and better human beings. People who approach failure from a growth mindset see failure as a learning opportunity: we learn new skills and build on the skills we already have. We can be inspired by the success of others and view feedback as constructive rather than as criticism.

Can you think of a time when you felt like a failure? Consider whether you dealt with that situation using a growth mindset.



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# STINKING THINKING

Brandy Robertson and Sheryl Prouse

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People can also plan to avoid pitfalls of stinking thinking. *Stinking thinking* happens when we only focus on what we can't do. That thinking stops us from moving on to what we can do. Instead of stinking thinking, try out *linking thinking*.

- Think of something you completed in school that you were proud of:
  - What was it?
  - Why was it better than other things you did?
- Hold that image and imagine yourself walking through the scene in your mind:
  - What strategies worked for you?
  - Did you use different time management, note-taking, or reading strategies?
  - Did you feel healthier? What does that look like?

Noticing what works for you and make a plan to consistently use those strategies. Linking thinking will help you to achieve your personal and academic goals.

## Micro Wellness: Appreciate Yourself

Take a moment to reflect on your day so far with a focus on the small tasks you have already accomplished. You accomplished getting out of bed, right? Tell yourself, "Good job!" Think about all of the small (or large) tasks you've already completed today (like this module!). Perhaps you would benefit from writing those tasks down. In some way, acknowledge your ability to do those things.



# PREPARING FOR ASSESSMENTS

## Learning Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- reflect on the assessments that you have completed in your term so far;
- demonstrate how to effectively prepare for different kinds of assessments;
- assess your end-of-term tests, projects, and/or assignments and create a preparation plan;
- practice overcoming test-taking stress and anxiety.



# DEVELOPING YOUR SKILLS

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Kerri didn't need to study in high school. She made good grades, and her friends considered her lucky because Kerri never seemed to sweat exams or cram. In reality, Kerri did her studying during school hours, took excellent notes in class, asked great questions, and read the material before class — all of these are excellent strategies. Kerri just seemed to do them without much fuss.

Then when they got to college, those same skills weren't always working as well. Sound familiar? Kerri discovered that, for many classes, she needed to read paragraphs and textbook passages more than once just to understand the content. Her notes from class sessions were longer and more involved — the subject material was more complicated and the problems more complex than she was used to.

It makes sense that the better you are at studying and preparing, the better results you'll see in the form of grades and long-term learning and knowledge acquisition. And the more experience you have using your study and memorization skills and employing success strategies during exams, the better you'll get at it. But you have to keep it up — maintaining these skills and learning better strategies as the content you study becomes increasingly complex is crucial to your success.

Once you transition into a work environment, you will be able to use these same skills that helped you be successful in college as you face the problem-solving demands and expectations of your job.

# ASSESSMENT ANXIETY

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Assessment anxiety (or test anxiety) is very real. You may know this firsthand. Almost everyone gets a little nervous before a major assessment, in the same way most people get slightly anxious meeting a new potential date or undertaking an unfamiliar activity. We second-guess whether we're ready for this leap, if we prepared adequately, or if we should postpone this potentially awkward situation. And in most situations, that reasonable level of nervous anticipation can be a good thing — enhancing your focus and providing you with a bit of bravado to get you through a difficult time.

Assessment anxiety, however, can cause us to doubt ourselves so severely that we underperform or overcompensate to the point that we do not do well on the exam. Don't despair; you can still succeed if you suffer from assessment anxiety. The first step is to understand what it is and what it is not, and then to practice some simple strategies to cope with your anxious feelings. You are bigger than any anxiety.

## Understanding Assessment Anxiety

If someone tries to tell you that assessment anxiety is *all in your head*, they're sort of right. Our thinking is a key element of anxiety of any sort. On the other hand, assessment anxiety can manifest itself in other parts of our body as well. You may feel queasy or light-headed if you are experiencing anxiety. Your palms may sweat, or you may become suddenly very hot or very cold for no apparent reason. At its worst, anxiety can cause its sufferers to experience several unpleasant conditions including nausea, diarrhea, and shortness of breath. Some people may feel as though they may throw up, faint, or have a heart attack, none of which would make going into an assessment situation a pleasant idea.

We think constantly, and if we have important events coming up, such as exams, as well as other significant events, we tend to think about them seemingly all the time. Almost as if we have a movie reel looping in our heads, we can anticipate everything that may happen during these events — both sensational results and catastrophic endings. What if you oversleep on the test day? What if you're hit by a bus on the way to campus? What if you get stung by a mysterious insect and have to save the world on the very day of your exam?

How about the best-case scenario? You win the lottery! Your book is accepted by a major publisher! You get a multimillion-dollar record deal! It could happen. Typically, though, life falls somewhere in between those two extremes. Our minds, however, (perhaps influenced by movies and books we've seen and read) often gravitate to those black-and-white, all-or-nothing results. Hence, we can become very nervous when we think about taking an exam because if we do really poorly, we think, we may have to face consequences as dire as dropping out of school or never graduating. Usually, this isn't going to happen, but we can literally make ourselves sick with anxiety if we dwell on those slight possibilities.

Don't let the most extreme and severe result take over your thoughts. Prepare well and do your best, see where you land, and then go from there.

## Using Strategies to Manage Assessment Anxiety

One of the best ways to control assessment anxiety is to be prepared. You can control that part. You can also learn effective relaxation techniques including controlled breathing, visualization, and meditation. Some of these practices work well even in the moment: take a deep breath, close your eyes, and smile — just bringing positive thoughts into your mind can help you meet the challenges of completing an assessment without anxiety taking over.

The tests in the corporate world or in other career fields may not look exactly like the ones you encounter in college, but professionals of all sorts take tests routinely. Again, being prepared helps reduce or eliminate this anxiety in all these situations. Think of a presentation or an explanation you have provided well numerous times — you likely are not going to feel anxious about this same presentation if asked to provide it again. That's because you are prepared and know what to expect. Try to replicate this feeling of preparation and confidence in your test-taking situations.

### Wellness: Recall a De-Stress Success

Take a moment to recall a difficult situation that you handled and acknowledge the resilience you gained from that experience.

# ASSESSMENTS IN COLLEGE

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The rest of the sections in this module offer ways to prepare and complete various types of assessments that you may see at college (for example, multiple-choice tests, reflective writing, or essay-style tests or exams). You do not need to read all of these sections, instead choose four types of assessments that you will see in your program and perhaps have been a challenge for you in the past to learn strategies for being successful on these types of assessments. While these sections are guidelines, it is important to always follow the instructions provided by your instructor.



# ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR GROUP WORK

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In some courses your instructor may assign you to complete an assignment with other students as a group project. You may already have done group projects in face to face courses you have participated in. Working online presents some particular challenges since you will be communicating with the other members of your team mostly in text.

Obviously, you will need to plan and organize the tasks that have been assigned to you and meet the deadlines for doing your part of the project, but there are some other things you need to consider.

- **Be accountable:** If you have agreed to take on a task and complete it by a specific date, respect that the other members of your team are counting on you.
- **Offer and request feedback:** It is expected that you will ask questions to clarify what you will be doing and help other members of your team. Be respectful of the viewpoints of others and ask questions when you are uncertain.
- **Explain your ideas:** You may find that you need to be a little more persuasive when collaborating in writing than if you were face-to-face. Again, be respectful of the opinions of the other members of your team, and make an effort to explain your point of view.
- **Give it time:** group projects usually take more time to complete than assignments you work on alone. There is more planning and negotiating required. So, plan to spend some time communicating with your team members in addition to completing your part of the assignment.



*“GroupWork” (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0) by euroscoutinfo*

When working in groups, it is common for issues to come up. The activity below gives you an opportunity to problem solve some common issues that arise in group work. This is relevant to being in college as well as the workplace.



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<https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=527#h5p-22>

# MULTIPLE-CHOICE TESTS

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Multiple-choice tests are scored without instructor judgement. Be aware that multiple-choice tests do not just test basic knowledge, but may also test your understanding and ability to apply that knowledge.

## Preparing for Multiple-Choice Tests

- Make sure you are studying the correct material: check your course outline or talk to your instructor.
- Use active study methods to learn and review information.
- Study often and in short chunks rather than in long sessions.
- Test yourself while you study.

## Find practice questions

- Course textbooks often have practice multiple-choice questions: these are a great place to start when preparing.
- Some textbooks have websites; check these out for possible review questions.
- Some instructors post practice questions or reviews on Moodle.
- Different textbooks on the same subject can also be good sources of practice questions. Check the library for these.

## Create your own practice questions

Creating test questions helps you to see the information from your lecture and text notes translated into the multiple-choice format before the test. Try these three strategies when creating questions:

- turn the headings and subheadings in the textbook into questions;
- turn key concepts from lecture notes into questions;
- prepare questions on a section of a chapter, and then trade questions with a study partner.

Another strategy that could be helpful in studying for a multiple-choice test is to create your own flash cards. See this explaining flash cards and their advantages.

[Using Flash Cards](#)

Participating in a study group is a great way to collaborate with your classmates in order to prepare for multiple-choice tests. You can create questions for each other, share flash cards, or quiz each other.

## Writing Multiple-Choice Tests

- Do not take time to read all the questions before beginning. You will waste less time if you just answer questions as you come to them.
- Read the question carefully:
  - note key words;
  - try to restate the question in your own words;
  - make note of terms that the instructor has bolded or underlined.
- Before looking at the choices, think of the correct answer.
- Read all the alternatives carefully, even if the first one seems right, and highlight key words. Choose the best answer from the choices available — more than one may seem right.
- If you still don't know the answer, guess if you are not penalized for doing so.

## How do I budget my time in a multiple-choice test?

- Calculate the amount of time you can spend on each section or question according to the number of marks it's worth.
- Leave time at the end of the test to return to unfinished questions.
- Work quickly and skip questions that you can't answer right away.

## How do I deal with difficult questions?

- Pay close attention to negatives and absolute terms like “always” or “never.”
- Watch out for distractors — extraneous bits of information that might distract you from the real purpose of the question. Cross out the distractors and underline the key points to help you maintain focus.
- Treat each alternative as a true-false statement, and search for the one true statement amid the alternatives.
- If you're debating between two similar answers, try identifying which is the worse answer, rather than which is the better one.
- Keep in mind that these techniques will not work for all questions, and that they can be time-consuming. Try them out in a practice test first.

# CASE-STYLE OR SCENARIO ASSESSMENTS

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In a case-style or scenario assessment, questions ask you to analyze and respond to a case study (sometimes called scenarios). The purpose of case-style assessments is to test your ability to apply the theory and concepts that you learn in class to real-world and industry-related situations.

## Preparing for Case-Style Assessments

- Start by identifying the theories and concepts covered in your course. Organize and review the information you have on these theories/concepts so you understand them.
- Practice reading case studies and identifying relevant information. It's probably useful to practice doing this with a time limit as you will have one in your exam.
- Practice relating concepts and theories to real-world situations — check textbooks and course notes for practice examples. It is also worth checking past exams for your course to see if there are examples of case-study questions.

To be successful in a case-style assessment it is important to study to understand instead of study to know. The [following video from the Learning Curve](#) may be helpful for preparing for case studies, where you will need to study to understand.

## During Case-Style Assessments

- Have a clear idea of how much time you have to answer the question, then plan to spend some time reading the exam question, the case study, and developing your answer.
- Make sure you understand the case study and know what the question is asking you to do:
  - read the question(s);
  - skim the case study to get the general idea and highlight or underline key points;
  - reread the question to make sure you understand it and to focus your attention;
  - reread the case study carefully and make a note of any ideas that you can think of.
- Answer the question linking relevant theories and concepts to specific information from the case study. Usually you will need to write your answers in clearly formed paragraphs that have a clear topic that is well-supported with evidence and examples.
- Instead of simply describing or restating information from the case itself, use specific details or examples

to support the points you are trying to make. This is where you link theory to the facts from the case study.

# OPEN-BOOK TESTS

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An open-book test is one in which you have access to your notes, textbook, and other sources of information during the test. Many students assume that these tests will be much easier than other test formats and, as a result, prepare inadequately.

Talk to your instructor about what materials are allowed during the open-book test. You want to prepare with the tools that you will be using during the test.

## Preparing for Open-Book Tests

In general, there are two types of studying: studying to understand, and studying to remember. Understanding is an important activity that must take place before remembering.

### Understanding in open-book tests

Studying to understand is the most important component of preparing for an open-book test. In order to ensure you understand the material, try some of these activities:

- explain concepts to others;
- discuss concepts in a study group;
- come up with examples;
- apply concepts to sample cases;
- simplify information;
- paraphrase definitions into your own words.

### Remembering in open-book tests

- Remembering activities are less important for open-book tests. If you have a strong memory, then you can try to memorize some information in order to save yourself time during the test, but it is even more important to be organized.
- Use labelled tabs to help you find important information quickly and easily during the test.
- Create condensed study notes or a reference sheet with relevant page numbers listed in case you need more detail.
- When reading during a test you might feel a lot of pressure, which can make reading more difficult.

Highlight keywords and important information to help you read during the test.

[This](#) Learning Curve video includes recommendations on how to be prepared for an open-book test.

## Writing Open Book Tests

- Budget your time — do not spend too much time looking up a single answer.
- Take deep breaths when feeling anxious.
- Make a plan or outline for long-answer questions before you start to look up information.



# SHORT-ANSWER TESTS

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The key to doing well in short-answer tests is demonstrating your understanding, not just your memory. Short-answer questions test your ability to remember and apply knowledge. They usually ask you to write one or more paragraphs, although you might be allowed to use bullet points and diagrams.

Doing well in short-answer tests relies on your ability to:

- answer the question directly (rather than write about the topic);
- write clearly, precisely and succinctly.

## Preparing for Short-Answer Tests

- Make sure you are studying the correct material — check your course outline or talk to your instructor.
- Study actively — explain concepts out loud, teach them to a friend, or use concept mapping to organize your thoughts and show how concepts are related or differentiated.
- Review your lecture and text notes, looking for themes, ideas, concepts, and trends that recur throughout the course. Organize your study notes around these major ideas. Integrate content from lectures with notes from the text or readings as you create your study notes.
- Arrange a study group to discuss possible questions and key issues or concepts from the course.
- Use old midterms, your course outline, study partners, and your lecture and text notes to help you predict and create possible questions.

Memory is an important component of preparing for short-answer tests. [This video](#) from the Learning Curve describes the Visualization Memory Strategy.

Participating in a study group is a great way to collaborate with your classmates in order to prepare for short-answer test. You can create practice questions for each other.

## Writing Short-Answer Tests

- Read the instructions carefully, noting how many questions you need to answer in each section.
- Read all the questions on the exam before you begin writing. Consider the mark distribution and divide your time accordingly.
- Pay close attention to the wording of the question. Ask yourself *what* you are being asked to do and *how*

you are required to do it. Verbs like *describe*, *contrast*, or *explain* tell you what your instructor wants you to do.

- Try to leave enough time to read over your answers at the end of the exam to make sure each response includes the required components.
- Plan your answer: what is your main point, what terms do you need to define or explain, and what supporting ideas or examples do you need?
- Use the language of the course to demonstrate your knowledge in that area.

# ESSAY-STYLE TESTS

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Essay-style tests have a significant written component, such as detailed short-answer questions and/or formal essays. These exams may ask you to:

- show what you know about the course content and communicate this knowledge effectively;
- be analytical and critical about the themes of the course;
- demonstrate an understanding of the relationships between course content, course objectives, and the practical and theoretical perspectives used within the course;
- integrate and apply what you have learned in lectures, readings, and discussions;
- articulate connections between the course material in complete sentences and paragraphs.

## What is the difference between a short-answer question and an essay question?

- Both short-answer and essay questions ask you to demonstrate your knowledge of course material by relating your answer back to concepts covered in the course.
- Essay questions require a longer response (usually at least a paragraph).
- Essay questions necessitate creating a thesis statement. See this [Learning Curve video on creating a thesis statement](#) for more information.

## How do I prepare for an essay-style test?

- Review the course outline.
- Go beyond the topics that are covered and try to figure out the broader themes that the course explores.
- Use this information to prepare sample questions.
- Review your notes regularly.
- Keep the content fresh in your mind.
- Look for recurring themes, ideas, concepts, and trends.
- Organize your study notes around these major ideas.
- Be active in your learning strategies – take notes while you are reading, make connections between different topics in your notes and readings.
- Describe concepts aloud, explain them to a friend, or use a strategy such as concept mapping to organize your thoughts and show how concepts are related or different.

- Identify the areas that you understand well and the areas where you can strengthen your knowledge and understanding.

## How do I use practice questions?

- Review your notes from lectures, seminars, textbook, online notes, and other course materials to create summary or study notes.
- Formulate practice questions based on the different categories of questions described above. Use old midterms, course outlines, study partners, and lecture and text notes to help you predict and create possible short-answer or essay questions.
- Create outlines to answer your possible questions. Choose a definite argument and organize the supporting evidence logically.
- Try mnemonics such as rhymes or acronyms to help you remember your outline.
- Use a timer to practise answering your questions within a limited time frame.
- Arrange a [study group](#) to discuss possible questions and key issues or concepts from the course.

## How can I prepare if I get the questions in advance?

- Research the questions from your text, lecture notes, and other supplemental resources, and write down outlines for your answers ahead of time.
- Memorize an outline or key points.

## How can I prepare for a take-home exam?

- Prepare as if you were going to write the exam on campus.
- Study before you receive the take-home exam or you may spend too much time researching the material and not enough time writing the exam.

The following tips for [Writing Exam Essays](#) may be helpful to you (this is not required reading).

# ESSAYS, RESEARCH PAPERS, OR REPORTS

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## Choose a topic

Your instructor may have given you a topic for your assignment, or you may be able to select your own. If you can select your own topic, choose one that will make the research and writing process easier. You can do this by conducting preliminary research. Review your course materials for information on your proposed topic. Search what is available from the Assiniboine library. Preliminary research like this helps ensure that the topic you choose is one you can find resources for.

[This video](#) from Valencia College Library will explain how research is part of choosing your topic.

## Create your thesis

Now that you've selected a topic, you need to write a thesis statement based on that topic. A thesis statement is one or two sentences that clearly state the purpose and argument of your paper.

[This Learning Curve video](#) will explain how to create a thesis statement.

## Create an outline

This [essay sample template](#) will be helpful to you in creating your outline. Also see this [video from the Learning Curve](#) describing how free software (Mind42) can be used to create an outline for your paper.

Your assignment may require you to incorporate sources. You can do this by paraphrasing. [This Learning Curve video](#) shows two strategies that you can use to paraphrase.

There may be information that you want quote directly, rather than paraphrasing. Quoting is when you use the words directly from a source and cite that source. [This video on using quotations](#) will help you quote and cite your sources correctly.

## Write the first draft

The first draft does not need to be perfect. Follow your outline and get your ideas on paper. You have time for revising and editing later. This [Learning Curve Video on writing good paragraphs](#) may be helpful as you draft your essay.

## Revise and polish

After you have a complete draft of your assignment, go back to your assignment instructions, rubric, or marking guide that the instructor has provided to ensure you have included all of the assignment requirements.

For more information on using a rubric to assess your own assignment see [this resource from the Learning Curve](#).

This is also the point at which you should go back to your paper for self-editing. See this [Learning Curve video for more information on self-editing your work](#).

# STUDY GROUPS

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Study groups can be helpful for preparing for many types of assessments including but not limited to multiple-choice and short-answer tests, open-book tests, and practical assessments. The following information from the Learning Curve may be helpful for how to create a study group.

## Creating a great study group

Study groups are great tools for learning. Perhaps you will understand a classmate's way of explaining it better than the instructor's, or perhaps teaching a subject to a friend gives you a new understanding of the material. It is a ready-made pool of people you can borrow notes from if you missed a lecture, and a great way to get quizzed on all the facts you were sure you knew five minutes ago.

Below are some tips for creating a study group.

1. **Keep it small:** The fewer people whose schedules you have to juggle, the easier it will be to meet together. Recommended size is three to five people.
2. **Talk with each other:** How often will you meet and when? What do you want to achieve with the group's help? Communicating what you want out of the study group is important and should be discussed at the first meeting.
3. **Make sure everyone has a say:** It is a study group for a reason, so make sure everyone agrees on how things will be run right from the beginning.
4. **Be committed:** This is part of your education, and should be treated as such. Agree on what to do if someone isn't pulling their weight in the group. If it's agreed on in advance, there's less excuse for grumbling later.
5. **Meet regularly:** Marathon cramming sessions are not as productive as regular, shorter ones. It is also easier to find one hour in your day than three.
6. **Stay focused:** Appoint a leader in advance to be in charge of keeping the group on track and on time. Rotate the person each time so no one has to do it for too long.
7. **Plan ahead:** Having a set topic or task for each session helps break up your workload. Have group members prepare for that topic, bringing pertinent questions and material to your study session.
8. **Build in breaks:** Everyone can focus better if they know that they have break coming in a little while. It's a great time to go to the bathroom or get a drink.
9. **Remember your surroundings:** If you're meeting online or in person, try to do it somewhere that does not have a lot of background noise (like traffic, construction, or television). When you're meeting

online, a headset cuts down considerably on noise level.

10. **Keep things enjoyable:** You are setting aside this time to interact with other people — remember to enjoy it! Use your breaks to talk about non-school topics, or crown someone MVP of each session. Have some fun!

## References

<https://www.bethel.edu/undergrad/academics/support/study-skills/files/online-study-groups.pdf>

<https://science.ubc.ca/students/blog/study-groups>

<http://blogs.einstein.yu.edu/8-tips-for-getting-the-most-out-of-study-groups/>

<https://thenounproject.com/term/group-study/>

For more information on [Study Groups see : Study @ Home: How to Set Up and Maintain a Virtual Study group](#)



# LAB OR FIELD REPORTS

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Whether your research takes place in a college lab or on some remote work site, you will often have to write up the results of your work in a lab or field report. Most basically, this report will describe the original hypothesis your work attempts to test, the methodology you used to test it, your observations and results of your testing, your analysis and discussion of what this data means, and your conclusions.

For labs at Assiniboine, you are often asked to replicate the results of others rather than conduct your own original research. This is usually meant to teach students the proper use of instruments, techniques, processes, data analysis, and documentation. For scientists, reports and papers are the way new knowledge is passed on to the field and to society at large.

Students often assume that science is just “facts” and objective information, and are sometimes surprised to learn that report writing makes and defends claims just like writing in other academic sub-genres. For scientists and engineers to make valuable contributions to the sum of human knowledge, they must be able to convince readers that their findings are valid (can be replicated) and valuable (will have an impact). Thus, the way that you write these reports can impact the credibility and authority of your work; people will judge your work partly on how you present it. Yes, even reports have a persuasive edge and must make careful use of rhetorical strategies. Careless writing, poor organization, ineffective document design, and lack of attention to convention may cast doubt on your authority and expertise, and thus on the value of your work.

## Writing a Lab Report

Your report will be based on the work you have done in the lab or in the field. Therefore, you must have a plan for keeping careful notes on what you have done, how you have done it, and what you observed. Researchers often keep a notebook with them in the lab, sometimes with pre-designed tables or charts for recording the data they know they will be observing (you might be given a lab manual to use while completing a particular experiment to record your observations and data in an organized format). Try to plan ahead so that you can capture as much information as possible during your research; don't try to rely only on memory to record these important details.

How you choose the content and format for your report will depend on your audience and purpose. Students must make sure to read lab manuals and instructions carefully to determine what is required.

## Typical Elements of a Lab Report

These are ‘typical’ elements of a lab report — make sure to clarify expectations with your instructors.

**Title:** Craft a descriptive and informative title that will enable readers to decide if this interests them, and will allow key words to be abstracted in indexing services. Ask your instructor about specific formatting requirements.

**Abstract:** Write a summary of your report that mirrors your report structure (hypothesis, methods, results, discussion, conclusion) in condensed form — roughly one sentence per section. Ideally, sum up your important findings.

**Introduction:** Establish the context and significance of your work, its relevance in the field, and the hypothesis or question your study addresses. Give a brief overview of your methodology. Your instructor may request that you describe some deeper background for the lab or field activity.

**Materials and Methods:** The purpose of this section is to allow any reader to perfectly replicate your method; therefore, you must provide a clear and thorough description of what you used and how you conducted your experiment. This section will generally include: 1) a list of all materials needed (which may include sub-lists, diagrams, and other graphics); and 2) a detailed description of your procedure, presented chronologically.

**Results:** This section presents the raw data that you generated in your experiment. You can organize this section based on chronology (following your methodology) or on the importance of data — be sure to follow the instructions of your instructor. Present data visually whenever possible (in tables, graphs, flowcharts), and help readers understand the context of your data with written analysis and explanation. Make sure you present the data honestly and ethically; do not distort or obscure data to make it better fit your hypothesis. If data is inconclusive or contradictory, be honest about that. In this section you should avoid interpreting or explaining your data, as this belongs in your discussion section.

**Discussion:** This section includes your analysis and interpretation of the data you presented in the results section in terms of how well it supports your original hypothesis. Start with the most important findings. It is perfectly fine to acknowledge that the data you have generated is problematic or fails to support the hypothesis. This points the way for further research. If your findings are inconsistent, try to suggest possible reasons for this.

**Conclusion:** In one or two short paragraphs, review the overall purpose of your study and the hypothesis you tested; then summarize your key findings and the important implications. This is your opportunity to persuade the audience of the significance of your work.

**References:** List all references you have cited in your report (such as those you may have included in a “literature review” in your introduction, or sources that help justify your methodology). Check with your instructor for which citation style to use.

How you write up the results of a scientific experiment will generally follow the formulaic pattern described above, but may vary depending on audience and purpose. As a student, you are often writing to demonstrate to your instructor that you have mastered the knowledge and skills required in a particular course.

## Additional Resources

For a fun example of a process report that is similar in many ways to a lab report, see the attached: [Drafting Behind Big Rigs – Mythbusters Report \(.pdf\)](#)

When evaluating scientific literature that you read, you might find the the following TED-Ed video by David H. Schwartz helpful: [Not all Scientific Studies are Created Equal](#).

[Technical Writing Essentials](#) by Suzan Last is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#),

# REFLECTIVE WRITING

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## How to Begin

Some writing assignments ask you to reflect on or critique something (such as a clinical experience, an article, an active learning experience, a theatre performance, or a case study). Note that a reflection assignment may differ from one course to the other, so look to your instructor's guidelines around writing reflections. The following is a simple description that you can use to get you started in writing reflections.

### What?

- What happened?
- Who was involved?
- Any relevant details.

### So What?

- What is the most important/interesting/relevant/useful aspect of the event/idea/ situation?
- How can it be explained?
- How is it similar to/different from others?

### Now What?

- What have I learned?
- How I am going to apply this in the future?

This [Reflective Journal Writing Tips video](#) from the Learning Curve might help you get started. This video of a [sample reflection](#) may also be helpful.

# PROJECTS

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[In this Learning Curve video](#), learn how to plan for an assignment or project.

As you are completing your project, refer to the rubric or project instructions to ensure that you are on the right path. [In this video](#), Craig from the Learning Curve describes how you can use a rubric to self-assess your own work.

Planning out your tasks and the time that may be needed to complete them can be helpful for a longer project. This [template](#) may be helpful in organizing yourself and your time.

# WORKING IN GROUPS

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[This resource from the University of Saskatchewan](#) outlines some strategies for successful group work.

When working with a group, it is especially important to plan our your assignment and make a plan. [This video from the Learning Curve will guide you through that process.](#)

## Tips and Tricks for Working in Groups




- Decide in advance if you're going to make decisions by majority, consensus, or group leader:
  - majority decisions are decided by voting, with the most people making the decision;
  - consensus decisions mean that everyone has to agree on the decision;
  - a group leader making the call means one person will make the decision.
- Elect each group member to take on a specific role within the group. This is a great opportunity to play to each member's skills and strengths.
- Take notes during your group meetings:
  - include the date, names of group members in attendance, and what is discussed in the meeting;
  - end the meeting with action items, and record who will do what and by when.
- Decide together what your group's idea of success looks like, such as getting the best mark you can, getting it in on time, or being original. Having a shared goal and clear expectations can help you come together as a team.

# PRESENTATIONS

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## Creating and Preparing for a Presentation

There is a lot of hard work that goes into creating and preparing a presentation before you even deliver it. By preparing your content and creating clear visual aids you are helping to ensure a smooth presentation (even if you are nervous).

<b>Give yourself enough time to prepare</b>		Before you begin, use an assignment tracker form or assignment calculator website to determine how much prep time you need. Guideline: plan to spend two hours on every 5% of your presentation.
<b>Know your tech</b>		Make sure that you are comfortable using any technology that is part of your presentation.
<b>Prepare for things that could go wrong</b>		Have a backup copy of your presentation in case technology fails.

Information adapted from Algonquin College: <https://algonquincollege.libguides.com/studyskills/creating-presentations>

This video from Algonquin College may be helpful for you as you prepare your presentation:





One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=1024#oembed-1>

## Develop Your Content

1. Brainstorm ideas.
2. See where you need to fill in information and research your topic.
3. Gather all your information and then organize it. Prepare an outline of how you want to present the information.
4. Transfer the information to cue cards or a single sheet of paper. You can use these to support you during your presentation. Remember: You can't read your presentation off of a script, so don't write an essay. Instead, use bullet points to remind you of the next key point.
5. Be sure to know the expected length of time for the presentation and plan accordingly. Make sure you have enough to say.

## Create Your Visual Aids

- Visual aids can take many forms, which means you can be creative! Other than PowerPoint you can use Prezi, posters, charts, hands-on samples, or demonstrations. Keep in mind that you should be comfortable using the tools you've chosen to create your visual aid.
- If you are using slides, make them simple and uncluttered. Too much text or pictures per slide makes it hard for audience to digest all the information. This means you shouldn't copy your entire speech onto your slides.
- Have one or two slides for every 1-2 minutes you are speaking.
- Slides should be large enough to be seen from the back of a room. Use a font size of at least 32.
- Use colour and contrast (in moderation). Avoid yellow and orange because they are hard to see from a distance.

## Delivering an Effective Presentation

- **Be aware of your non-verbal communication and use body language that shows confidence:**
  - maintain good posture;
  - smile and act relaxed to make you look and feel more confident;
  - make eye contact with your audience instead of reading off your notes the entire time;



- avoid distracting behaviours, such as chewing gum or fidgeting;
- watch for nervous gestures, such as rocking or tapping;
- make sure to dress appropriately for your profession.
- **Take time to think during your presentation:** People have a tendency to speak more quickly under pressure. Make an effort to slow your pace and include pauses. Speaking slower will also help you avoid excessive verbal fillers like “ummm” or “ahhhh.”
- **Pay attention to your volume:** Think about projecting your voice to the back of the classroom so that everyone can hear what you have to say.
- **Try to speak clearly so that your audience can easily understand your words**
- **Avoid lecturing:** By incorporating more than a speech into your presentation, you’ll be better able to hold your audience’s attention. Try using visuals, asking questions, or doing activities.

## Managing Anxiety

- Take a moment before you begin to take some deep breaths. Good breathing helps calm your body.
- Remember to speak clearly and not too quickly: deliberately slowing yourself down will also help with anxiety.
- Practice giving your presentation: to yourself, group members, family members, pets, houseplants. Repetition will make you more comfortable with your presentation and less anxious.

# MATH TESTS

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Tests can be nerve-wracking, but you can help yourself succeed with a bit of preparation. On top of that, tests help you recognize areas where you're not as strong, which can be especially important for improvement. You can work on these areas before they hinder your ability to pick up future concepts. This section contains some techniques to help you prepare for tests, as well as advice about how to stay calm while completing the test.

## Preparing for a Math Test

- Do lots of practice problems. The best way to prepare for a test is to do what you will be asked to on the test. Your textbook is a good starting place to find examples of practice questions, but you could also create your own questions, or collaborate with a [study group](#) to create practice questions for one another. Your notes is also a great place to look for examples that were given in class.
- Make a reference sheet that summarizes the important concepts covered in a chapter or unit. This reference sheet will be helpful as you do your assignments, complete practice problems, or study for your test.
- Create a formula sheet by writing down new formulas you come across along with their explanations to help you remember them and when to use them.
- Fill in knowledge gaps. Math builds on itself, and so you cannot move on to the next topic without understanding what came before it.
- Get help if you need it. Talk to your instructor, Student Success advisor, or make an appointment with the Learning Curve.

## Writing Multiple Math Tests or Exams

1. **Be prepared:** Arrive early with all the materials that you need (pencils, eraser, ruler, calculator, and so on).
2. **Do a 'brain dump':** The first thing you should do as soon as the exam starts is turn to a piece of scrap paper and write down any formulas or information that you think you might forget. This will allow you to relax and worry about completing the problems rather than remembering formulas in your head.
3. **Read the instructions and begin:** Go through the test, answering all the questions that you can quickly. Do the questions you know how to do first, and go back to the more difficult ones later.

4. **Check the points:** Note point values for each question. Budget your time and allow yourself more time for questions with higher point values.
5. **Show your work:** Write neatly and show all your steps. It is important to show how you arrive at your answer.
6. **Check your work:** When possible, check that your answer is reasonable. Does it make sense?
7. **Review your test:** Review your test for any questions you may have missed and check answers if time permits.

## Creating a Formula Sheet

The number of formulas in math can sometimes be overwhelming. How do you remember when to use each formula and what the variables in each formula mean?

Whether or not you can bring them to your assessment, a useful strategy to help you remember formulas is to write them down in one place. Whenever you encounter a new formula, add it to your list. You can then use this formula sheet as a quick reference guide when solving problems or studying for a test.

[Click here to download an example formula sheet](#)

When you add a formula to your list, make sure you write down all necessary information. Use the WIN method to remember what you have to write down.

## Write Down the Formulas

- On a separate page or document, write down each new formula you encounter on the left side of the page.
- Include an image if it is applicable.

## Identify the Variables

- To the right of your formula, write down each variable and what the variable represents (for example,  $l$  = length).
- Remember that a variable is a letter or symbol that represents an unknown value.

## Use a Neat Layout

- Keep your formula sheet neat and organized so it is easy to read and use when doing assignments or studying.
- Use the lesson names or textbook chapter names as headings on your formula sheet, so you can easily

reference your notes or textbook for more information.

## Creating a Summary Sheet

When preparing for a test, make sure you are familiar with all of the key concepts covered in the applicable chapters or units. A summary sheet is a set of notes summarizing a unit or chapter. It is a good tool to help you review the important information.

To create and use a summary sheet:

1. Look at your notes for the unit/chapter and the textbook to find the important concepts. Tip: If you used the [Cornell Method](#), you can find summaries of the concepts at the bottom of each page of notes.
2. Write down the important concepts and formulas and add short explanations. Include details such as:
  - steps to solve the problems;
  - definitions of key terms;
  - meanings of variables in formulas.
3. To help organize your summary page and remember important information, use formatting tools such as:
  - headings;
  - definitions of key terms;
  - tables;
  - underlining or bolding font;
  - colour;
  - highlight.
4. Use this summary to review concepts as you prepare for tests.

See an [example of a summary](#) in *Prealgebra 2e*.

This work, “Preparing for a Math Test,” is a derivative of “Study Strategies” From [the Learning Portal](#) used under CC BY 4.0. “Exploring College” is licensed under CC BY 4.0 by Assiniboine College

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# READING TO LEARN IN COLLEGE

## Learning Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- differentiate between active and passive reading;
- identify strategies for reading different types of texts to learn in college;
- prepare to read in your field.





# READING SKILLS

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Reading and consuming information is increasingly important today because of the amount of information we encounter. Not only do we need to read critically and carefully, but we also need to read with an eye to distinguishing fact from opinion and identifying reliable sources. Reading helps us make sense of the world — from simple reminders to pick up milk to complex treatises on global concerns, we read to comprehend, and in so doing, our brains expand.

## Indigenous Inventions

- kayaks
- toboggans
- hammocks
- Red River carts
- snowshoes
- baby bottles
- cable suspension bridges

In college settings we deliberately work to become stronger readers. Research continues to assess and support the fact that one of the most significant learning skills necessary for success in any field is reading. You may have performed this skill for decades already, but learning to do it more effectively and practicing the skill consistently is critical to how well you do in all subjects. If reading isn't your thing, strive to make that your challenge. Your academic journey, your personal well-being, and your professional endeavours will all benefit from your reading. Put forth the effort and commit to it. The long-term benefits will far outweigh the sacrifices you make now.

## Questions to consider:

- What are the pros and cons of online reading?

- How can distinguishing between reading types help you academically and personally?
- How can you best prepare to read in college?

Research supports the idea that reading is good for you. Students who read at or above reading level throughout elementary and secondary school have a higher chance of starting — and more importantly, finishing — college. Educational researchers convincingly claim that reading improves everything from grades to vocabulary (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998).

If you don't particularly enjoy reading, don't despair. We read for a variety of reasons, and you may just have to step back and take a broader look at your reading habits to understand why you avoid engaging in this important skill. The distractions we now face as well as the intense information overload we often feel on a daily basis in all aspects of our lives can combine to make it difficult to slow down to read, an activity that demands our attention in a way that most television and music does not. You may need to adjust your schedule for more reading time, especially in college, because every class you take will expect you to read more pages than you probably have in the past.

# TYPES OF READING

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We may read small items purely for immediate information, such as notes, emails, or directions to an unfamiliar location. You can find all sorts of information online about how to fix a faucet or tie a secure knot. You won't have to spend too much time reading these sorts of texts because you have a specific goal in mind for them, and once you have accomplished that goal, you do not need to prolong the reading experience. These encounters with texts may not be memorable or stunning, but they don't need to be. When we consider why we read longer pieces — outside of reading for pleasure — we can usually identify two reasons: 1) reading to introduce ourselves to new content; and 2) reading to more fully comprehend familiar content.

## Reading to Introduce New Content

Logan felt uncomfortable talking with their new roommates because they realized very quickly that they didn't know anything about their program — nursing. Of course they knew that it had something to do with health, but the field was so different from their program of business that they decided they needed to find out more so they could at least engage in friendly conversation with their roommates. Since they would likely not go into the field of nursing, they didn't need to go into full research mode.

When we read to introduce new content, we can start off small and increase to better and more sophisticated sources. Much of our further study and reading depends on the sources we originally read, our purpose for finding out about this new topic, and our interest level.

Chances are you have done this sort of exploratory reading before. You may read reviews of a new restaurant or look at what people say about a movie you aren't sure you want to spend the money to see at the theatre. This reading helps you decide. In academic settings, much of what you read in your courses may be relatively new content to you. You may have heard the word *volcano* and have a general notion of what it means, but until you study geology and other sciences in depth, you may not have a full understanding of the environmental origins, ecological impacts, and societal and historic responses to volcanoes. These perspectives will come from reading and digesting various material.

When you are working with new content, you may need to schedule more time for reading and comprehending the information because you may need to look up unfamiliar terminology and you may have to stop more frequently to make sure you are truly grasping what the material means. When you have few ways to connect new material to your own prior knowledge, you have to work more diligently to comprehend it.



Created by HeadsOfBirds  
from Noun Project

Reading by HeadsOfBirds from [Noun Project](#) (CC BY 3.0)

## Application

Try an experiment with classmates, family, or friends. Without looking on the Internet, try to brainstorm a list of 10 topics about which all of you may be interested but for which you know very little or nothing at all. Try to make the topics somewhat obscure rather than ordinary — for example, the possibility of the non-planet Pluto being reclassified as a planet again, as opposed to something like why we need to drink water.

After you have this random list, think of ways you could find information to read about these weird topics. Our short answer is usually Google. But think of other ways as well. How else could you read about these topics if you don't know anything about them?

You may well be in a similar circumstance in some of your college classes, so you should listen carefully to your classmates on this one. Think beyond answers such as “I'd go to the library” and press for what that researcher would do once at the library. What types of articles or books would you try to find? One reason that you should not always ignore the idea of doing research at the physical library is because once you are there and looking for information, you have a vast number of other sources readily available to you in a highly organized location. You also can tap into the human resources represented by the research librarians who likely can redirect you if you cannot find appropriate sources.

## Reading to Comprehend Familiar Content

Reading about unfamiliar content is one thing, but what if you do know something about a topic already?

Do you really still need to keep reading about it? Probably. For example, what if during the brainstorming activity in the previous section, you secretly felt rather smug because you know about the demotion of the one-time planet Pluto and that there is currently quite the scientific debate going on about that whole de-planet-ation thing. Of course, you didn't say anything during the study session, mostly to spare your classmates any embarrassment, but you are pretty familiar with Pluto-gate. So now what? Can you learn anything new?

Again—probably. When did Pluto's qualifications to be considered a planet come into question? What are the qualifications for being considered a planet? Why? Who even gets to decide these things? Why was it called *Pluto* in the first place? On Amazon alone, you can find hundreds of books about the once-planet Pluto (not to be confused with the Disney dog also named Pluto). A Google search brings up over 34 million options for your reading pleasure. You'll have plenty to read, even if you do know something or quite a bit about a topic, but you'll approach reading about a familiar topic and an unfamiliar one differently.

With familiar content, you can do some initial skimming to determine what you already know in the book or article, and mark what may be new information or a different perspective. You may not have to give your full attention to the information you know, but you will spend more time on the new viewpoints so you can determine how this new data meshes with what you already know. Is this writer claiming a radical new definition for the topic or an entirely opposite way to consider the subject matter, connecting it to other topics or disciplines in ways you have never considered?

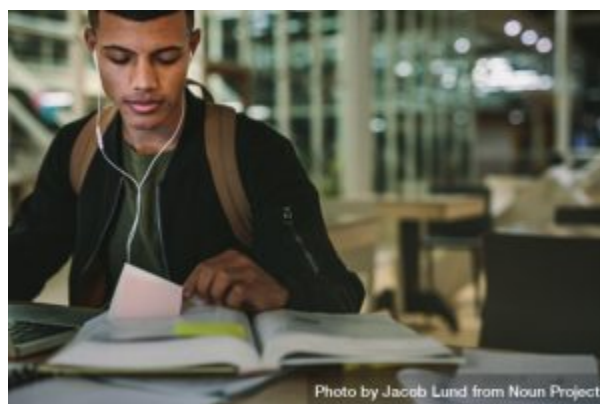
When college students encounter material in a discipline-specific context and have some familiarity with the topic, they sometimes can allow themselves to become a bit overconfident about their knowledge level. Just because a student may have read an article or two or may have seen a TV documentary on a subject such as the criminal mind, that does not make them an expert. What makes an expert is a person who thoroughly studies a subject, usually for years, and understands all the possible perspectives of a subject as well as the potential for misunderstanding due to personal biases and the availability of false information about the topic.

# PREPARING TO READ FOR SPECIFIC DISCIPLINES IN COLLEGE

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Different programs in college may have specific expectations, but you can depend on all programs asking you to read to some degree. You can succeed by learning to read actively, researching the topic and author, and recognizing how your own preconceived notions affect your reading. Reading for college isn't the same as reading for pleasure or even just reading to learn something on your own because you are casually interested.

## Strategies for Reading in College Disciplines



Male student reading sticky note on textbook by Jacob Lund Photography from [Noun Project](#) (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

No universal law exists for how much reading instructors and institutions expect college students to undertake for various disciplines. For some programs, you cannot possibly read word-for-word every single document you need to read for all your classes. You may need to learn to skim, annotate, and take notes. All of these techniques will help you comprehend more of what you read, which is why we read in the first place. We'll talk more later about annotating and note-taking, but for now consider what you know about skimming as opposed to active reading.

## Skimming

Skimming is not just glancing over the words on a page (or screen) to see if any of it sticks. Effective skimming

allows you to take in the major points of a passage without the need for a time-consuming reading session that involves your active use of notations and annotations. Often you will need to engage in that level of active reading, but skimming is the first step — not an alternative to deep reading. The fact remains that neither do you need to read everything nor could you possibly accomplish that given your limited time. So learn this valuable skill of skimming as an accompaniment to your overall study tool kit, and with practice and experience you will fully understand how valuable it is.

When you skim, look for guides to your understanding: headings, definitions, pull quotes, tables, and context clues. Textbooks are often helpful for skimming — they may already have made some of these skimming guides in bold or a different colour, and chapters often follow a predictable outline. Some even provide an overview and summary for sections or chapters. Use whatever you can get, but don't stop there. In textbooks that have some reading guides, or especially in text that does not, look for introductory words such as *First* or *The purpose of this article*, or summary words such as *In conclusion* or *Finally*. These guides will help you read only those sentences or paragraphs that will give you the overall meaning or gist of a passage or book.

Now move to the bulk of the passage. You want to take in the reading as a whole. For a book, look at the titles of each chapter if available. Read each chapter's introductory paragraph and determine why the writer chose this particular order. Depending on what you're reading, the chapters may be only informational, but often you're looking for a specific argument. What position is the writer claiming? What support, counterarguments, and conclusions is the writer presenting?

Don't think of skimming as a way to buzz through a boring reading assignment. It is a skill you should master so you can engage, at various levels, with all the reading you need to accomplish in college. End your skimming session with a few notes — terms to look up, questions you still have, and an overall summary. And recognize that you likely will return to that book or article for a more thorough reading if the material is useful.

# ACTIVE READING STRATEGIES

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Active reading differs significantly from skimming or reading for pleasure. You can think of active reading as a sort of conversation between you and the text. When you sit down to determine what your different classes expect you to read and you create a reading schedule to ensure you complete all the reading, think about when you should read the material strategically, not just how to *get it all done*. You should read textbook chapters and other reading assignments *before* you go into a class about that information. Don't wait to see how the class goes before you read the material, or you may not understand the information in the lecture. Reading before class helps you put ideas together between your reading and the information you hear and discuss in class.



Two young students reading a book in library by Jacob Lund Photography from [Noun Project](#) (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

The active reading process has three phases: before, during, and after reading. Select the headings below to learn about each phase, why it matters, and techniques to use. When using these techniques, your goal is to be an active reader who:

- sets a purpose for reading;
- asks questions;
- makes connections between what you are reading and what you know and have experienced;
- monitors understanding (thinking about thinking).

Keep in mind that using these techniques does add minutes to your overall reading time. Some students can find that frustrating and wonder why they should bother with using these techniques. Using these techniques



will increase how much you remember, understand, and apply later. In many cases, applying these techniques is so effective that you won't have to reread the text to understand.

Depending on how you learned to read and your current reading habits, active reading may look very different than how you've read before. That's okay! A trait of successful college students is identifying and practicing new techniques for the new and different types of texts they find in college.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=295#h5p-4>

## The SQ3R Reading Strategy

You may have heard of the SQ3R method for active reading in your early education. This valuable technique is perfect for college reading. The acronym stands for survey, question, read, recite, review, and you can use the steps on virtually any assigned passage. Designed by Francis Pleasant Robinson in his 1961 book *Effective Study*, the active reading strategy gives readers a systematic way to work through any reading material.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=295#h5p-21>

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR OWN PRECONCEIVED IDEAS OF A TOPIC

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Kelly really enjoys learning about environmental issues. They have read many books and watched numerous documentaries on this topic and actively seek out additional information on the environment. While Kelly's interest can help them understand a new reading encounter about the environment, Kelly also has to be aware that with this interest comes preset ideas and biases about the topic. Sometimes these prejudices against other ideas relate to religion or nationality or even just tradition.

Without evidence, thinking the way we always have is not a good enough reason; evidence can change, and at the very least it needs honest review and assessment to determine its validity. Ironically, we may not want to learn new ideas because that may mean we would have to give up old ideas we have already mastered, which can be a daunting prospect.



*A student working on homework by Jacob Lund  
Photography from NounProject.com*

With every reading situation about the environment, Kelly needs to remain open-minded about what they are about to read and pay careful attention if they begin to ignore certain parts of the text because of their preconceived notions. Learning new information can be very difficult if you balk at ideas that are different from what you've always thought. You may have to force yourself to listen to a different viewpoint multiple times to make sure you are not closing your mind to a viable solution your mindset does not currently allow.

## Wellness

Take a moment to reflect on your day so far with a focus on the small tasks you have already accomplished. You accomplished getting out of bed, right? Tell yourself, “Good Job!” Think about all of the small (or large) tasks you’ve already completed today. Perhaps you would benefit from writing those tasks down. In some way, acknowledge your ability to do those things.

# TALKING TO THE TEXT

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Please watch the video below for an example of a reading strategy called “talking to the text.” As you watch, you might want to think about where you could apply this strategy in college and your future career. Do you receive assignment sheets in your courses? Project briefs on the job? When might there be times that this approach could help you?



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=764#oembed-1>*

# GUIDED READING ACTIVITY

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So far in this module, you have learned about techniques for active reading and observed them being applied. Now, it's time to try them out. We will do this in a guided practice manner, meaning that below you will find directions to guide your active reading practice session. At the end of this activity, self-assess how it went and if needed, connect with the Learning Curve. The Learning Curve can support you in applying what you've learned in this module to your courses and assigned readings.

For this activity, you are going to use the Pomodoro Technique. Start by watching this video (2 minutes 21 seconds) overview of what it is:



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=770#oembed-1>*

Now, let's follow the steps outlined in the video!

## Step 1: Chose the task

For this activity, your task is to apply active readings techniques to an assigned reading in one of your courses. Now is the time to open the text and get ready to read. Select a location with reduced distractions, if possible. Think about what techniques you want to use. If you are using the SQ3R method you may want to have the steps with you for quick reference.

## Step 2: Set the timer for 25 minutes

You can use any timer for this. You may want to try the [Pomodoro Timer website](#) because it allows you to customize the length of your break and you can track the task you are working on.

## Step 3: Focus

Focus and work on the task at hand, reading your text and applying the strategies.

Start with 5 minutes for pre-reading and activating your prior knowledge.

- Preview the text by flipping through the pages and reading the titles, headings, subheadings, bolded words, defined words, and illustrations.
- Think about what you already know about the topic.
- Make connections between the text, your life, and what you are learning in the course.
- Set a purpose for reading the text — why are you reading and what do you hope to accomplish?
- Restate any questions, titles, or heading in your own words.

Read while continually asking questions to monitor your understanding of the text, such as:

- What is the author saying?
- How could I say this in my own words?
- Am I understanding what I am reading?

At the 20-minute mark, stop reading so that you can engage in the post-reading phase. This phase helps reinforce your understanding of the text. It helps codify, or cement, the information in your brain so that you are more likely to remember it later. Take five minutes to:

- summarize what you read in 3-5 sentences;
- ask yourself, “What is the most important information in this text?”;
- write down questions or items you want to review again;
- reread confusing parts or unknown words.

## Step 4: Break!

Your 25-minute timer will be buzzing now. Well done, you’ve completed your 25-minute reading session. Time to take a break! You deserve it.

## Step 5: Reflect

How did it go? Were you able to focus for 25 minutes? Were you able to apply the active reading techniques? If it didn’t go as well as you hoped or you’re looking for more advice, please connect with your instructor or the Learning Curve.

## Career Connection

Sanvi is a nursing student who is having trouble between all the reading they are expected to complete, their general dislike of reading, and their need to comprehend both their reading assignments and their own notes to be successful in nursing school. They have spoken with several of their instructors and a tutor at the Learning Curve on campus, and their advice centres around Sanvi's reluctance to read in general. Sanvi is working on how to manage their time so they have more dedicated time to read their assignments in between classes and their work schedule.

That is helping some, but Sanvi is still worried because they know one problem is that they don't exactly know what types of reading or note-taking they would need to know how to do as a nurse. This confusion makes them doubt that the extra reading they are doing now is really beneficial. After some reflection on what was holding them back, Sanvi mentioned this aspect of their studying to one of their instructors who had been a hospital nurse for years before coming to the college to teach. They recalled that the first time they read a patient chart in the hospital, they had to think quickly about how to get all the meaning out of the chart in the same way they would have read a complex textbook chapter.

Sanvi's nursing instructor reminded them that all professions need their personnel to read. They may not all need to read books or articles, but all jobs involve reading to some extent; for example, consider this list of disciplines and the typical types of reading they do. You may be surprised that not all reading is in text form.

Nurses/Doctors	patient charts, prescription side effects, medical articles
Teachers	student work, lesson plans, educational best practices
Architects	blueprints, construction contracts, permit manuals
Accountants	financial spreadsheets, tax guidelines, invoices, trend diagrams
Beauticians	client hair and facial features, best practices articles, product information
Civil engineers	worksite maps, government regulations, financial spreadsheets
Auto mechanics	car engines, auto manuals, government regulations



As this incomplete list shows, not every job you pursue will require you to read text-based documents, but all jobs require some reading.

- How could Sanvi and their instructor use this list to make more sense of how college reading will prepare Sanvi to be a stronger nurse?
- How would understanding the types of professional reading help you complete your reading assignments?
- If your chosen field of study is not listed above, can you think of what sort of reading those professionals would need to do?
- Think about the questions that opened this chapter and what you have read. How do you feel about your reading and note-taking skills now that you have some more strategies?

## Where do you go from here?

Reading is such a part of our everyday lives that we sometimes take it for granted. And even we don't formally write down our thoughts, we take notes in our heads far more often than we use our note-taking skills to make sense of a textbook passage or a graphic. Honing these fundamental skills can only help you succeed in college and beyond. What else about reading and note taking would you like to learn more about? Choose topics from the list below to research more.

- How to maximize e-readers to comprehend texts.
- How professionals use reading and note-taking in their careers.
- Is speed-reading a myth or a viable strategy?
- Compare the reading and note-taking strategies you use to those from different countries.

## REFERENCES

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Cunningham, A., & Stanovich, K. (n.d.). What reading does for the mind. *American Educator*. Retrieved from <https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/cunningham.pdf>

# SUMMARY

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*A Businessman Going Through Some Paperwork by Jacob Lund Photography from NounProject.com*

Reading is a significant part of studying and learning. You may encounter reading situations, such as professional journal articles and long textbook chapters, that are more difficult to understand than texts you have read previously. As you progress through your college courses, you can employ reading strategies to help you complete your college reading assignments.



# NOTE-TAKING IN SCHOOL AND ON THE JOB

## Learning Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify different ways of taking notes in order to support your learning in college;
- determine the best note-taking strategy for you and your context;
- recognize the importance of taking notes for college success and on the job.



# PREPARING TO TAKE NOTES

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Preparing to take notes means more than just getting out your laptop or making sure you bring a pen and paper to class. You'll do a much better job with your notes if you understand why we take notes, have a strong grasp on your preferred note-taking system, determine your specific priorities depending on your situation, and engage in some version of efficient shorthand.

The very best notes are the ones you take in an organized manner that encourage frequent review and use as you progress through a topic or course of study. More than just a skill for being a student, taking organized and efficient notes is an important skill in many industries.

For this reason, you need to develop a way to organize all your notes so they remain together and organized. As old-fashioned as it sounds, a clunky three-ring binder is an excellent organizational container for class notes. You can easily add to previous notes, insert handouts you may receive in class, and maintain a running collection of materials for each course. If the idea of carrying around a heavy binder has you rolling your eyes, then transfer that same structure into your computer files. If you don't organize your many documents into some semblance of order on your computer, you will waste significant time searching for improperly named or saved files.



*A young woman taking notes by Jacob Lund  
Photography from NounProject.com*

## Managing Note-Taking Systems

Whichever of the many note-taking systems you choose (and new ones seem to come out almost daily), the very best one is the one that you will use consistently. The skill and art of note-taking is not automatic for

anyone; it takes a great deal of practice, patience, and continuous attention to detail. Add to that the fact that you may need to master multiple note-taking techniques for different contexts, and you have some work to do. Unless you are specifically directed by your instructor, you are free to combine strategies from different systems to create a hybrid that works for you.

Just to keep yourself organized, all your notes should start off with an identifier, including at the very least the date, the course name, the topic of the lecture/presentation, and any other information you think will help you when you return to use the notes for further study, test preparation, or assignment completion. Additionally, you may note the number of note-taking sessions about this topic or reminders to cross-reference class handouts, textbook pages, or other course materials. It's also always a good idea to leave some blank space in your notes so you can insert additions and questions you may have as you review the material later.



# NOTE-TAKING STRATEGIES

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You may have a standard way you take all your notes for all your classes. When you were in high school, this one-size-fits-all approach may have worked. Now that you're in college reading and studying more advanced topics, your general method may still work some of the time, but you should have some different strategies in place if you find that your method isn't working as well with college content. You probably will need to adopt different note-taking strategies for different subjects. The strategies in this section represent various ways to take notes so that you are able to study after the initial note-taking session.



*Note-taking by Creaticca Creative Agency from  
NounProject.com*

## Cornell Method

One of the most recognizable note-taking systems is called the Cornell Method, a relatively simple way to take effective notes devised in the 1940s by Cornell University education professor Dr. Walter Pauk. In this system, you take a standard piece of note paper and divide it into three sections by drawing a horizontal line across your paper about one to two inches from the bottom of the page (the summary area) and then drawing a vertical line to separate the rest of the page above this bottom area, making the left side about two inches (the recall column) and leaving the biggest area to the right of your vertical line (the notes column). You may want to make one page and then copy as many pages as you think you'll need for any particular class, but one advantage of this system is that you can generate the sections quickly.

Because you have divided up your page, you may end up using more paper than you would if you were writing on the entire page, but the point is not to keep your notes to as few pages as possible. The Cornell Method provides you with a well-organized set of notes that will help you study and review your notes as you move through the course. If you are taking notes on your computer, you can still use the Cornell Method in Word or Excel on your own or by using a template someone else created.

Now that you have the note-taking format generated, the beauty of the Cornell Method is its organized simplicity. Just write on one side of the page (the right-hand notes column) — this will help later when you are reviewing and revising your notes. During your note-taking session, use the notes column to record information about the main points and concepts of the lecture; try to put the ideas into your own words, which will help you understand your notes when you return to them later. To keep your note section organized, skip lines between each idea in this column and use bullet points or phrases to convey meaning — we do it all the time in conversation. Sometimes it is important to move quickly to keep up, so try to use abbreviations and avoid writing in complete sentences to keep your notes brief without losing the meaning of your writing. If you know you will need to expand the notes you are taking in class but don't have time, you can put reminders directly in the notes by adding and underlining the word *expand* next to the ideas you need to develop more fully.

As soon as possible after your note-taking session, preferably within eight hours but no more than a day, read over your notes column and fill in any details you missed in class, including the places where you indicated you wanted to expand your notes. Then in the recall column, write any key ideas from the corresponding notes column — you can't stuff this smaller recall column as if you're explaining or defining key ideas. Just add the one- or two-word main ideas; these words in the recall column serve as cues to help you remember the detailed information you recorded in the notes column.

Once you are satisfied with your notes and recall columns, summarize this page of notes in two or three sentences using the summary area at the bottom of the sheet. This is an excellent time to get together with another classmate or a group of students who all heard the same lecture, read the same reading, or watched the same video to make sure you all understood the key points. Now, before you move onto something else, cover the large notes column, and quiz yourself on the key ideas you recorded in the recall column. Repeat this step often as you go along, not just immediately before an exam, and you will help your memory make the connections between your notes, your textbook reading, your in-class work, and assignments that you need to succeed on any quizzes and exams.



Handwritten Cornell Notes. Matt Cornock  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/mattcornock/25192961495>

## Outlining

Other note-organizing systems may help you in different disciplines. You can take notes in a formal outline if you prefer, using Roman numerals for each new topic, moving down a line to capital letters indented a few spaces to the right for concepts related to the previous topic, then adding details to support the concepts indented a few more spaces over and denoted by an Arabic numeral. You can continue to add to a formal outline by following these rules.

You don't absolutely have to use the formal numerals and letter, but you have to then be careful to indent so you can tell when you move from a higher level topic to the related concepts and then to the supporting information. The main benefit of an outline is how organized it is. You have to pay attention when you are taking notes in class to ensure you keep up the organizational format of the outline, which can be tricky if the lecture or presentation is moving quickly or covering many diverse topics.

You continue on with this numbering and indenting format to show the connections between main ideas, concepts, and supporting details. Whatever details you do not capture in your note-taking session, you can add after the lecture as you review your outline.

## Concept Mapping and Visual Note-Taking

One final note-taking method that appeals to learners who prefer a visual representation of notes is called *mapping* or sometimes *mind mapping* or *concept mapping*, although each of these names can have slightly different uses. There are many different forms of visual note-taking, so you may want to look for more versions online, but the basic principles are that you are making connections between main ideas through a graphic depiction; some can get rather elaborate with colours and shapes, but a simple version may be more useful at least to begin. Main ideas can be circled or placed in a box with supporting concepts radiating off these ideas

shown with a connecting line and possibly details of the support further radiating off the concepts. You can present your main ideas vertically or horizontally, but turning your paper horizontally, or in landscape mode, may prove helpful as you add more main ideas.

You may be interested in trying visual note-taking or adding pictures to your notes for clarity. Sometimes when you can't come up with the exact wording to explain something or you're trying to add information for complex ideas in your notes, sketching a rough image of the idea can help you remember. Don't shy away from this creative approach to note-taking just because you believe you aren't an artist; the images don't need to be perfect.

You can play with different types of note-taking suggestions and find the method(s) you like best, but once you find what works for you, stick with it. You will become more efficient with the method the more you use it, and your note-taking, review, and test prep will become, if not easier, certainly more organized, which can decrease your anxiety.



# ANNOTATING NOTES

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Annotating notes after the initial note-taking session may be one of the most valuable study skills you can master. Whether you are highlighting, underlining, or adding additional notes, you are reinforcing the material in your mind and memory.

The only reason to highlight anything is to draw attention to it, so you can easily pick out that ever-so-important information later for further study or reflection. One problem many students have is not knowing when to stop. If what you need to recall from the passage is a particularly apt and succinct definition of the term important to your discipline, highlighting the entire paragraph is less effective than highlighting just the term. And if you don't rein in this tendency to highlight long passages (possibly in multiple colours) you can end up with a whole page of highlighted text. Ironically, that is no different from a page that is not highlighted at all, so you have wasted your time. Your mantra for highlighting text should be "less is more." Always read your text selection first before you start highlighting anything. You need to know what the overall message is before you start placing emphasis in the text with highlighting.

Another way to annotate notes after initial note-taking is underlying significant words or passages. Although not quite as much fun as its colourful cousin highlighting, underlining provides precision to your emphasis. Some people think of annotations as only using a coloured highlighter to mark certain words or phrases for emphasis. Actually, annotations can refer to anything you do with a text to enhance it for your particular use (either a printed text, handwritten notes, or other sort of document you are using to learn concepts). The annotations may include highlighting passages or vocabulary, defining those unfamiliar terms once you look them up, writing questions in the margin of a book, underlining or circling key terms, or otherwise marking a text for future reference. You can also annotate some electronic texts.

Realistically, you may end up doing all of these types of annotations at different times. We know that repetition in studying and reviewing is critical to learning, so you may come back to the same passage and annotate it separately. These various markings can be invaluable to you as a study guide and as a way to see the evolution of your learning about a topic. If you regularly begin a reading session writing down any questions you may have about the topic of that chapter or section and also write out answers to those questions at the end of the reading selection, you will have a good start to what that chapter covered when you eventually need to study for an exam. At that point, you likely will not have time to reread the entire selection, especially if it is a long reading selection, but with strong annotations in conjunction with your class notes, you won't need to do that. With experience in reading discipline-specific texts and writing essays or taking exams in that field, you will know better what sort of questions to ask in your annotations.



*A student studying at a college library by Jacob Lund Photography from NounProject.com*

## Returning to Your Notes

Later, as soon as possible after the class, you can go back to your notes and add in missing parts. Just as you may generate questions as you're reading new material, you may leave a class session, lecture, or activity with many questions. Write those down in a place where they won't get lost in all your other notes.

The exact timing of when you get back to the notes you take in class or while you are reading an assignment will vary depending on how many other classes you have or what other obligations you have in your daily schedule. A good starting place that is also easy to remember is to make every effort to review your notes within 24 hours of first taking them. Longer than that and you are likely to have forgotten some key features you need to include; much less time than that, and you may not think you need to review the information you so recently wrote down, and you may postpone the task too long.

Use your phone or computer to set reminders for all your note-review sessions so that it becomes a habit and you keep on top of the schedule. Your personal notes play a significant role in your test preparation. They should enhance how you understand the lessons, textbooks, lab sessions, and assignments. All the time and effort you put into first taking the notes and then annotating and organizing the notes will be for naught if you do not formulate an effective and efficient way to use them before exams or tests.

The whole cycle of reading, note-taking in class, reviewing and enhancing your notes, and preparing for exams is part of a continuum you will ideally carry into your professional life. Don't try to take short cuts; recognize each step in the cycle builds on the previous step. Learning doesn't end, which shouldn't fill you with dread; it should help you recognize that all this work you're doing in the classroom and during your own study and review sessions is ongoing and cumulative. Practicing effective strategies now will help you be a stronger professional in your field.

# CRASH COURSE ON TAKING NOTES

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Watch the following video for an overview different note-taking methods. As you watch, consider which one you would like to try. Which would make the most sense for you as a learner and for what you are studying in college?



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=1039#oembed-1>*

# VISUAL NOTE-TAKING

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Watch the following video on visual note-taking. You might want to get a pen and paper so that you can try the exercise at the end of the video.

As you watch, consider:

- What is a common misconception of visual note-taking?
- What are the benefits of visual note-taking?
- What do you need to do in order to be an effective visual note-taker?



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=1037#oembed-1>*



# USING A DIGITAL NOTEBOOK

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As you develop your identity as an online learner, you will want to consider the role of information management in your learning process. Strong independent learners actively read, evaluate, and use information for current course tasks, but more importantly, to develop a resource file of information that will support professional growth.

Many online learners feel overwhelmed at the volume of reading and the wealth of online resources available to them. Managing information well requires you to develop skills in identifying the purpose for your reading (What do you need to learn from this reading? Why is it important to you personally and professionally?) and the strategy that will help you achieve your purpose (skimming, reading key portions, close reading).

Early in your learning journey, you will want to select a system for managing information. As you will frequently work with electronic texts and articles, selecting a system that allows you to store, search, and retrieve readings and notes from current and past courses is a good idea. Online note systems, such as OneNote or Evernote, are highly effective for this purpose.



*"20120823-13-11-10.jpg" (CC BY-ND 2.0) by Evernote*



## Benefits of Using an Online Notebook

Online notebook platforms allow you to do the following:

- create individual notebooks for courses or assignments with additional sections or pages for weekly module topics;
- create flexible notes that include text, images, audio, and video files;
- store PDFs and other course documents for your own records (note: you will eventually lose access to Moodle pages when courses are complete);
- clip and store relevant information from the web;
- search stored content to quickly find relevant information, making connections between courses and your previous learning;
- sync notes across all of your devices.

## Choosing a Notebook

Two fully-featured and common software platforms are OneNote and Evernote.

	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>OneNote</b>  <b>OneNote</b>	Included in Office 365 subscriptions (free to ACC students)	Mac version is less fully featured
<b>Evernote</b>  *Used under license from Evernote Corporation	Simple interface is easy to learn and use	Basic version is free, but additional features require an annual subscription

To evaluate which platform best serves your needs, you may wish to investigate by trying out each on your preferred devices. You may also wish to explore the following video tutorials for further information, and to begin developing your organizational system.

### OneNote:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=518#oembed-1>

### Evernote:



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=518#oembed-2>*

### **Comparison of Notebook Apps:**



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=518#oembed-3>*

# SUMMARY

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# REFERENCES

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Cunningham, A., & Stanovich, K. (n.d.). What reading does for the mind. *American Educator*. Retrieved from <https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/cunningham.pdf>

# INFORMATION LITERACY

## Learning Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain why information literacy matters to you as a college student and future professional
- Identify sources of information including web search results, databases, artificial intelligence, personal communication
- Use critical thinking when encountering varied sources of information

## Attribution

Parts of this page were written using artificial intelligence (AI), specifically ChatGPT-3. The AI technology was used to generate an outline of key points, explain complex concepts in a clear and concise manner, and help human authors think through ideas related to the topic. While ChatGPT-3 providing a starting point, subsequent and final drafts were completed by the human members of the Learning Commons team here at Assiniboine College. The human authors added additional insights and ensured the content was accurate and useful to students. In this case, AI served as a tool that helped to streamline the writing process and allowed the humans to focus on other aspects of creating high-quality content for the course.





# WHY DOES INFORMATION LITERACY MATTER?

Caitlin Munn; Josh Seeland; and KC Bateman

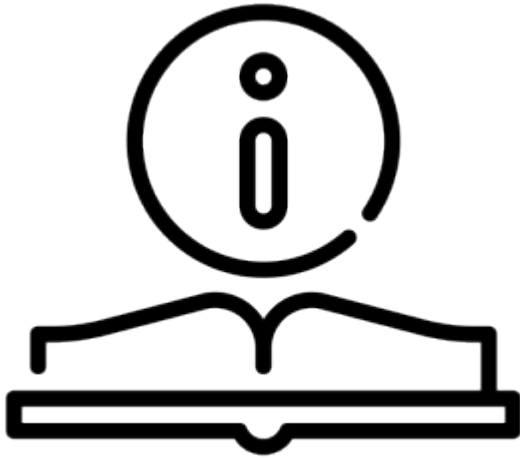
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Information literacy refers to the ability to find, evaluate, and use information effectively. It means being able to identify what information is trustworthy and relevant to your needs, and then using that information to make informed decisions or complete a task. Being information literate means being able to navigate the vast amount of information available in our world today, and being able to use it to your advantage.

Information literacy is crucial for college students because they are expected to find and analyze information, and communicate their findings effectively in their coursework. By developing strong information literacy skills, college students can:

- **Save time and effort:** With so much information available, it's easy to get lost and waste time searching for the right information. Information literacy helps students quickly identify and locate relevant information, saving them time and effort.
- **Improve the quality of their work:** By being able to critically evaluate information sources, students can ensure that the information they use is accurate and reliable, improving the quality of their work.
- **Develop critical thinking skills:** Information literacy involves analyzing and synthesizing information from multiple sources. By developing these skills, college students can become better critical thinkers, which is important in both their academic and professional lives.

The information literacy skills you develop as a college student are also beneficial in your everyday life. We are constantly bombarded with information from various sources such as social media, news outlets, and even our friends and family. Being information literate helps us make sense of this information overload and allows us to:



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from Noun Project

### [Noun Project](#)

**Make informed decisions:** With so many choices and decisions to make in our daily lives, being able to access and evaluate reliable information is critical. Information literacy enables us to make informed decisions based on accurate and trustworthy information.

- **Protect ourselves from misinformation:** With the rise of fake news and misinformation, it's more important than ever to be able to critically evaluate the information we encounter. Information literacy helps us distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources of information, protecting us from misinformation and its potential negative consequences.
- **Learn new things:** Information literacy allows us to access a wide range of information sources, enabling us to learn about new topics and expand our knowledge.
- **Communicate effectively:** Being able to understand, interpret, and communicate information effectively is a vital skill in both our personal and professional lives. Information literacy helps us communicate clearly and concisely, avoiding misunderstandings and promoting effective communication.

Overall, information literacy is essential for our everyday lives as it enables us to make informed decisions, protect ourselves from misinformation, learn new things, and communicate effectively.

# INFORMATION LITERACY IN THE WORKPLACE

Caitlin Munn; Josh Seeland; KC Bateman; Chris Budiwski; Susan Hunt; Garry Jones; and Kirk Joyce

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Regardless of what industry or workplace you enter, information literacy skills will be crucial. Information literacy enables employees to effectively access, evaluate, and use information to perform their job duties. Here are some reasons why information literacy matters in the workplace:

1. Improving productivity: Information literacy allows employees to quickly and effectively find the information they need to complete their work, reducing the time and effort required to complete tasks.
2. Making better decisions: In the workplace, decisions are often made based on data and information. By having strong information literacy skills, employees can critically evaluate and analyze this information, leading to better decision-making.
3. Staying up-to-date: In today's rapidly changing business environment, staying up-to-date on the latest trends and developments is essential. Information literacy enables employees to access and evaluate current and relevant information, helping them stay ahead of the curve.
4. Promoting innovation: By having access to a wide range of information sources, employees can identify new opportunities for innovation and growth.
5. Collaborating effectively: Effective collaboration requires effective communication and the ability to share and evaluate information. Information literacy skills enable employees to communicate effectively and collaborate with their colleagues, leading to better teamwork and outcomes.

Explore below some specific ways information literacy is used in industries and workplaces.

Overall, information literacy is essential in the workplace as it enables employees to access and use information effectively, make better decisions, stay up-to-date, promote innovation, and collaborate effectively with their colleagues.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=1445#h5p-30>

## Reflection: Sources of Information

So far, we have examined what information literacy is and why it matters to you as a college student and future professional. Now, let's take some time to explore the information literacy skills we've identified:

- Find or access information
- Evaluate information
- Use information

Get started with a short reflection. Set a timer for 2 minutes and brainstorm:

- Where do you go when you need information on a topic?
- What digital and non-digital sources of information do you use?
- Have you ever visited a Library or used online Library services to access information?

# FINDING AND EVALUATING INFORMATION

Caitlin Munn; Josh Seeland; and KC Bateman

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- Have you ever visited a Library or used online Library services to access information?

## Finding Information

Take a look at Assiniboine's library guide on [Where to Find Information](#) for more information on sources of information and how to find them.

Read LibGuide on [Search Strategies](#) for more support in finding that different information.

## Evaluating Information

Watch this 13-minute video. As you're watching, think about the following questions:



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- What does the quality of information shape?

- What does the example of the minimum wage website tell us?

## Reflection

For the next five minutes, consider the following questions. It could be helpful to write your answers down.

- How do you evaluate the information you come across?
- How do you check if it's accurate or correct?
- Have you ever believed something you read online and then realized later that it wasn't true?

This [Assiniboine Resource will help you to evaluate the information](#)

# MAKE YOUR SEARCH MORE EFFECTIVE

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# INFORMATION LITERACY

## HERE ARE SOME GENERAL TIPS ON HOW TO SEARCH FOR INFORMATION.

In your studies at the Assiniboine Community College, matching your research question to the right type of resources will not only reduce stress, but also help produce better grades for you.

### WORD CHOICE

Identify keywords (important words that you require information about).

- Aim for two to four keywords.
- Having too many words, especially ones that are not related to your subject, may result in too few or unrelated results.

### LANGUAGE

- Consider whether you will be using a search engine (e.g. Google) or a database, and looking for popular or scholarly sources.
- The language or terminology you use for searching might yield popular results from Google, or scholarly results from databases.

### EVALUATING WHAT YOU'VE FOUND

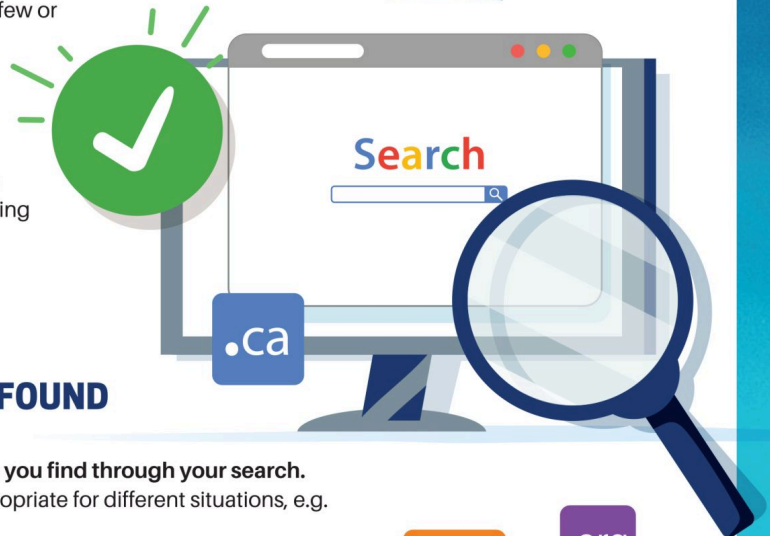
Think critically in evaluating the information you find through your search.

- Certain types of websites may be more appropriate for different situations, e.g.
  - The website of an organization (.org)
  - A commercial site (.com)
  - A website for the Canadian federal government (.ca or .gc.ca)
- Is the information authoritative?
- Emotional or sensational language may be a sign of bias.
- How recent the information is matters a lot in some cases, e.g.
  - Medical information from 1896 may be useful to a history student, but dangerous to a nursing student.

### COMBINING YOUR WORDS

When combining your terms, consider the following:

- Synonyms
- Related terms
- Word endings





# QUICK SEARCH

Caitlin Munn; Josh Seeland; and KC Bateman

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## Activity

For this activity, you are going to spend ten minutes searching on a topic of your choice. The purpose of this activity is to practice finding and evaluating sources of information.

To get started:

- Select a topic
- Select 3-5 keywords, also referred to as search terms, are words that represent the main ideas of your topic. These words are considered the most important, (or the key), ideas, concepts, or subjects about which you're looking for information.

Now, set a timer for ten minutes and search for information on your topic. You can use web search results, databases, or other sources of information.

When the 10 minutes is over, go to the next page.

## Reflect

What did you find in your search? Were you satisfied with your results? Why or why not?

What sources of information did you use?

Read the next page for tips on how to make your searches more effective.

# INFORMATION LITERACY AND THE LIBRARY

Caitlin Munn; Josh Seeland; and KC Bateman

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## **The Assiniboine Library is informed by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)**

In working with staff and faculty, we tailor our information literacy content to what you are learning as an Assiniboine student.

We also look to the Conference Board of Canada, and their employability skills for all fields which can be found [here](#).

These skills include the following:

- locate, gather, and organize information using appropriate technology and information systems;
- access, analyze, and apply knowledge and skills from various disciplines (such as the arts, languages, science, technology, mathematics, social sciences, and the humanities);
- adapt to changing requirements and information;
- seek different points of view and evaluate them based on facts.

## Your Library Connection

Academic libraries like the Assiniboine library offer support to students in a variety of ways — different than what you may have experienced in a public or school library. Beyond lending you books, ebooks, and DVDs that relate to your assignments and areas of study, the Assiniboine library also helps you develop academic skills such as academic integrity, researching, information literacy, and citing.

Furthermore, the Assiniboine library provides a selection of online tools, curated and created by library staff, that will help you to successfully complete your studies. You'll see library staff both in the library and in your

classrooms (in person and online) with the goal of helping you succeed. Whether you're working on campus or from home, the library is here to help you!

## Program Library Guides

The librarians at Assiniboine have worked hard to find the information that will be helpful to you as a student, based on your program and area of study. These library guides are a great place to start if you need to find information for a project or assignment, or if you're looking to learn more on a topic.

Why not take a couple of minutes to look at the [Program Library Guides](#) for your program, and see which resources could be useful to you?

# ETHICAL USE OF INFORMATION

Caitlin Munn; Josh Seeland; and KC Bateman

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Throughout your studies at Assiniboine, you will develop the skills to ethically use information. Ethical use of information refers to using information in a responsible and ethical manner. This involves respecting the intellectual property rights of others and giving proper credit where credit is due. Ethical use of information also means using information only for its intended purpose and ensuring that it is accurate and reliable.

Some examples of ethical use of information include:

1. Proper citation: When using someone else's work or ideas in your own research, it is important to give proper credit through citation. This helps to avoid plagiarism and gives credit to the original author or creator of the work.
2. Respect for intellectual property: Intellectual property refers to the ownership rights of authors and creators of original works. This includes copyright, patents, and trademarks. Ethical use of information involves respecting these rights and not using or reproducing copyrighted material without permission.
3. Accuracy and reliability: Ethical use of information also involves ensuring that the information you use is accurate and reliable. This means using credible sources and verifying information before using it in your work.
4. Avoiding misuse of information: Ethical use of information means using it only for its intended purpose and not using it to harm others or for unethical purposes.
5. Transparency: When using information, it is important to be transparent about the sources you use and how you use them. This helps to maintain trust and credibility in your work.

Overall, ethical use of information involves being responsible, respectful, and honest in the way you use and share information. By following college guidelines, like those outline Assinibione Policy A25: Academic Integrity, you can ensure that you are using information in a way that is fair, legal, and respectful to others.

# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Caitlin Munn; Josh Seeland; and KC Bateman

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## Artificial Intelligence

We've explored various forms of information including: books, eBooks, databases, Google, Google Scholar, videos, and podcasts. Let's take some time to examine a rapidly emerging source of information: artificial intelligence.

### What is artificial intelligence?

The video below, from Eye on Tech (2020) explains what artificial intelligence is and what it can do. While watching, ask yourself:

- What is artificial intelligence? How would you explain it to a friend or family member?
- What are some of the concerns with artificial intelligence?



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=1466#oembed-1>*

We already use artificial intelligence in our daily lives. Can you think of any examples? Take a minute to brainstorm, and then explore the examples below.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

*<https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=1466#h5p-29>*

## Recent Advancements in Artificial Intelligence

Lately, artificial intelligence tools have been featured heavily in the news media. A lot of attention has been

draw to ChatGPT, an AI-powered chat bot that has been trained on a massive amount of data, enabling it to generate human-like text.

- What do you know or have you heard about ChatGPT?
- Why do you think educators might have concerns about this new technology?

Watch this video from How It Happened (2023) for an explanation of what ChatGPT is and how it works. You'll also learn about image generating artificial intelligence such as Dall e 2.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=1466#oembed-2>*

As discussed in the video, artificial intelligence chat bots, such as ChatGPT, have limitations:

- Limited knowledge: Chat bots rely on pre-programmed responses and algorithms, which means they have limited knowledge and cannot provide answers to every question.
- Lack of context: Chat bots may not be able to understand the context of a question or the nuance of a conversation, which can result in inaccurate or irrelevant responses.
- Inability to handle complex requests: Chat bots may struggle to handle complex requests or tasks that require human intuition or creativity.
- Lack of emotional intelligence: Chat bots lack emotional intelligence, which means they cannot read emotions or respond to emotional cues in the way that humans can.

Chat bots can be a useful tool for certain tasks, but they should not be relied upon as a substitute for human knowledge and expertise.

## Can I use Artificial Intelligence for my academic work?

Artificial intelligence (AI) can be a source of information. For example, you can look up a wide range of topics in ChatGPT as it has been trained on a diverse set of text sources. However, you must approach the information provided critically as AI can provide inaccurate or irrelevant information.

Like all tools, there will be times when you can and cannot use artificial intelligence. It is important that

you follow the guidelines outlined by your instructor. Artificial intelligence is rapidly changing, and we are all learning and adapting together. If you are ever not sure of your responsibilities as a student, please ask your instructor.

If you use artificial intelligence when it is not permitted or allowed by your instructor, that is cheating. Assiniboine Policy A25 states:

*Cheating is the use or attempted use of unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. Examples of cheating include, but are not limited to:*

- *Any use of books, texts, notes, calculators, applications, artificial intelligence, electronics, websites, programming code, computers, communication, and conversation with others that are restricted or forbidden during academic exercises*
- *Copying on tests or final examinations*
- *Acquiring a portion of assigned academic work from another person or source, or acquiring a copy of or information about a test or exam*

Do not use artificial intelligence when is not allowed, as this can result in sanctions. Please read Policy A25: Academic Integrity for further information.

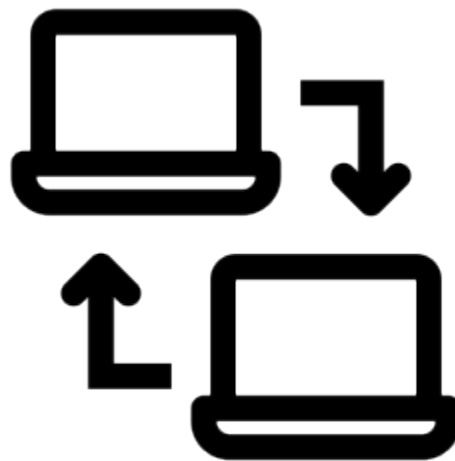
When you are permitted to use artificial intelligence in your coursework, it is expected that you **provide attribution** (acknowledge you used it). Your instructor may also ask you to explain how you used it. Your instructor will provide guidelines on how they expect you do this. If you are not sure, please ask.

# FILE SHARING SITES

Caitlin Munn; Josh Seeland; and KC Bateman

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You may come across sources of information that present themselves as ethical and appropriate for college, even when they are not. A example of this is academic file sharing websites. Generally, a file sharing website is a platform that allows users to upload and share files with other users. These files can include anything from documents and images to music and videos. Academic file sharing sites are websites that allow users to share academic materials such as course handouts, textbooks, assignments, papers, and tests. In this way, academic file sharing sites are used to facilitate academic misconduct, such as by providing students with access to answer keys or papers written by others. This is considered academic misconduct. In an effort to prevent use of academic file sharing websites, Assiniboine blocks their use on campus.



Created by DinosoftLabs  
from Noun Project

file sharing by DinosoftLabs from [Noun Project](#)  
(CC BY 3.0)

Academic file sharing sites can also come with significant risks. One major risk is that many of the materials shared on these sites are copyrighted, and sharing them without permission from the copyright owner can result in legal consequences. In some cases, academic file sharing sites may be shut down by authorities or taken offline due to copyright infringement.

Another risk of academic file sharing sites is that they may contain malware or other security threats. Users who download files from these sites may inadvertently download viruses or other malicious software onto their devices, which can compromise their security and privacy.



Lastly, academic file sharing sites may not always provide accurate or trustworthy information. Users should be cautious when relying on information found on these sites, as it may not come from reputable sources.

# DEVELOPING YOUR INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS

Caitlin Munn; Josh Seeland; and KC Bateman

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Information literacy skills are developed over time through education, practical experience, and self reflection. By continually working on your information literacy skills, you can become more effective at accessing, evaluating, and using information to make informed decisions and solve problems. Here are some examples of how you can do this at Assiniboine:

1. Attend information literacy workshops: The Assiniboine Library offers workshops that are designed to help students develop their information literacy skills. These workshops may cover topics such as evaluating sources, conducting research, and citing sources correctly.
2. Use the library: The library is an excellent resource for developing information literacy skills. The friendly Library staff can help you find relevant resources for your assignments, show you how to search databases effectively, and provide guidance on evaluating sources.
3. Use the Learning Curve: The Learning Curve is an excellent resource for developing your writing skills. They offer workshops and one-on-one consultations.
4. Take advantage of online resources: There are many online resources that can help you develop your information literacy skills. For example, the Library has [Library Guides](#) for each program. Take some time now to explore the program guide for your program.
5. Seek feedback from instructors: Your instructors can provide valuable feedback on your research, writing, and critical thinking skills. Make sure to take advantage of their expertise and ask for feedback on your assignments and projects.

By taking advantage of the resources and supports available to you, you can become more effective at finding, evaluating, and using information, which will benefit you both academically and professionally.

# REFLECTING AND LOOKING AHEAD

## Learning Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- reflect on your first term in college, including successes and opportunities;
- describe the transferable skills you have obtained in this course and how it relates to your program and career goals;
- set personal and academic goals for the next term;
- discuss how using feedback from instructors and classmates can help you improve your academic and professional performance.



# EVALUATE YOUR LEARNING

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During the learning process, we have many opportunities to receive feedback about the quality of our learning and work. In the college environment, this often comes in the form of grades and instructor comments on assignments and exams. By using this feedback to evaluate your learning strategies in light of your goals, you will be able to make adjustments to move you toward your goals in current and future courses.



"Reflection" (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)  
by dvdhaven 😊

## Reflecting at the End of a Course

The completion of a term is also an excellent time for reflection and evaluation. With respect to all the courses you took the first term of college, consider the following:

- What about my exam/assignment preparation worked well?
- What about my exam/assignment preparation did not work well? What do I want to change?
- How will what I have learned help me in my upcoming courses?
- How will I use what I have learned in my future career and other aspects of my life?

By reflecting on feedback and evaluating your learning regularly, you will avoid getting stuck in unproductive

patterns. You will contribute to your own ongoing personal growth and development, supporting your success in future courses and other life endeavours.

After you have thought of your term as a whole, consider this course specifically. And consider how you are going to apply what you learned in this course to the rest of your college courses.

# DEVELOP A GROWTH MINDSET

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We have discussed growth mindset throughout the course. As you reflect on your first term as a college student and plan for the remainder of your time as a college student, you have the opportunity to apply what you have learned about growth mindset to your own studies.

In any academic endeavour, you will encounter times when you are faced with obstacles or difficulties. Perhaps you are taking a course that you are finding particularly difficult. Perhaps you received some difficult feedback or a grade that was lower than you expected. How can you move ahead in a way that prepares you for success?

Everyone encounters setbacks at times. When this happens, you have a choice of possible responses. Some people respond to setbacks by concluding that they may lack the ability to complete the course successfully. Others respond by concluding that the course or instructor is unfair, and blame their setback on an external force beyond their control. These responses are associated with what is called a *fixed mindset*.

Others respond to setbacks and negative feedback by asking what they can learn from the experience. Their focus is less on achieving a specific grade or result, and more on learning as much as possible from their experiences in college. Individuals with this mindset, which is called a *growth mindset*, are better able to recover from setbacks and to go on to achieve greater success.

How do these two mindsets compare?

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## Growth Mindset

- Intelligence is not fixed, but it can be developed over time.
- Difficult tasks are worth pursuing.
- Feedback, even if it offers correction, is beneficial to support future growth.

## Fixed Mindset

- Intelligence is fixed, and cannot be changed.
  - If a task is difficult, it should be discontinued.
  - Negative feedback should be avoided or minimized.
- 

## Put the Growth Mindset into Practice

If you have discovered that you have a fixed mindset, consider how changing your thinking toward a growth mindset can influence your opportunities for successful learning and growth.

- **Adjust your self-talk:** A key phrase to remember is “I can’t do it — yet.” Consider feedback as information to help you as you continue to grow toward a goal, not as a final evaluation of your ability to learn and achieve.
- **Respond to feedback differently:** Rather than viewing feedback as criticism of who you are, consider feedback as an opportunity to grow.
- **Rather than quitting when you face setbacks, use them as an opportunity to adjust your approach:** You may be learning that your current approach to learning is not leading to the success you desire. Seek out support from others, and try new ways of learning. Setbacks are an opportunity to learn about yourself and to discover the ways of working that will be most effective for you.
- **Embrace challenging opportunities:** Though it may at first seem easier to avoid situations that might be difficult or have the risk of failure, embracing challenges leads to success in the long term. Consider how accepting challenges will help you become the person you want to be in the future.



# SET GOALS

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*Image Credit: Graeme Robinson-Clogg*

## Setting Goals to Move Ahead

Now that you have evaluated where you are in your learning journey, you can begin to set goals for the semester ahead. One common tool for effective goal setting is developing SMART goals. These goals are:

**Specific:** Your goal will clearly define what you are going to accomplish. You will ask and answer the *what* and *why* of your goal.

**Measurable:** You will identify criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each goal you set. This will be the definition of *how* you will attain your goal.

- How will you know when the result that you want has been achieved?
- How will you verify your achievement/performance of this goal?

**Attainable:** Is it possible for you to achieve your desired goal? Can you see a path to your accomplishment? You are the *who* in this goal-setting process. It is your positive attitude that will allow you to draw on your current strengths and develop new ones as you meet your goal.

**Relevant:** Realistic goals must represent an objective toward which you are willing to work and that are relevant to you. You need to identify *where* this goal will take you. A goal can be both ambitious and realistic;

you are the only one who can decide just how ambitious your goal should be. Just be sure that each of your goals represents substantial progress.

**Time-Bound:** You need to create a sense of personal urgency by setting times for each step along the way. Knowing *when* you have to accomplish a task keeps you on track and accountable. What needs to be done by when? Be timely! For example, I could say that my goal is to become a better runner. This goal is undefined and I will not be able to tell if I have achieved it. A SMART goal would be, “I will complete a ten kilometre run in under one hour by the end of June after training with my running group twice weekly.” Note that this goal is time-bound, and includes specific and measurable criteria that help me to know if I have successfully achieved it.

A growth mindset is associated with successful learning. Why? The growth mindset principles are supported by what we know about the brain and learning. Adult brains continue to develop over time by through learning. Working to master complex material results in the development of additional neural connections. In other words, by learning difficult material, you can actually become smarter. If you believe that you are able to succeed by working hard, you are more able to persevere through the difficult moments in learning, and continue to make progress toward your learning goals.

# GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

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Growth and learning requires giving and receiving feedback. During your course of study, you will give feedback to classmates in group projects and receive feedback from your classmates and instructors. What strategies can help you to give effective feedback? How do you best learn from the feedback given to you?



*Feedback by Tezar Tantular from Noun Project*

Effective feedback must include:

- what is being done correctly and well;
- how it can be improved;
- what the next steps might be.

## Receiving Feedback

Sometimes it can be hard to receive and learn from feedback that you are given. If another person offers you feedback, it may sound like criticism. It may be that they intend to be positive but they may not know how to say something positively. It may also be that their self-esteem is low and they are being defensive or aggressive toward you. Most importantly, you may become defensive or aggressive if you see their feedback as critical or negative, no matter what was meant.

Attempt to suspend your reaction until you understand the information that is being given. Paraphrase

what you hear. If it seems unclear, ask for clarification. Having it presented in other words or from another point of view may increase your understanding about what is being said.

Explore and discover the reasons for the feedback:

- Is a change by you indicated?
- Is it an evaluation of the past or an indication for the future?

Think about and cope with your possible defensive reaction:

- Do you see wants as demands?
- Do you feel guilty or obligated?
- Are you hearing more than is being said?

Ideally, listen to the comments and find their positive side. Then, explain your position or point of view without feeling that you must justify yourself. Determine the importance of the message to you and remember that you may choose not to make changes based on the feedback.

Any discussion will benefit from more information. You can wall yourself off from information and change by being defensive. However, you can open new lines of communication by being open.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=846#oembed-1>

## Giving Effective Feedback

It is easy to criticize and to think that we are helping a person deal with a situation. To give the right commentary, at the right time, to the right person, with the right reasons, in the right way, and to the right degree is very difficult.

You first need agreement to interact. If the other person is not ready to hear your comments, you set up a negative interaction that will cause them to block out you and your feedback. If you do not have permission to comment, you may be seen as aggressive and the other person may respond by being aggressive or defensive toward you.

**Ask if the other person wants your feedback.** If they say no, then you will have to discuss or problem-solve that before you say anything more, or say nothing at all.

**Search out all the facts** you can prior to giving your feedback. Ask the people involved about what they feel is happening and how they see the situation. This may solve or help to solve the problem.

**Time the discussion** so that you are all reasonably unstressed. Leave time so there is another chance to talk before you part ways. This will help to avoid or clear misunderstanding or confusion.

**Be positive** by beginning and ending your feedback with comments about what is working, correct, or right about the situation. No matter how bad you perceive things to be, there will be good points to comment on.

**Avoid using absolutes** or negative words, like “always,” “never,” or “don’t.” Most situations tend to be many shades of grey rather than black and white. The ways in which people behave are interpreted by each person in the light of their own experiences and perceptions. Use alternative positive words and phrases. Avoid comparing the person involved to other people in other situations — the where, when, what, and who of each situation are different. Comparisons tend to produce resentment and frustration.

**Be specific** in your description of the problem and avoid vague or misleading statements. If attitude seems to be a problem, show specific instances and then take one point at a time so as not to overload or overwhelm the other person. Make sure that it is something that can be changed.

**Offer suggestions** for how someone might improve or change and explain how those changes would affect you or the other people involved. Also, be prepared for no change — just as you can choose not to act on someone’s feedback, others can make the same choice when presented with your feedback.

Feedback can be positive if it:

- is offered at the right time and place;
- is offered with comments on good points as well as possible changes;
- is connected to facts and not rumours;
- is directed to behaviour that can be changed;
- is specific and one point at a time;
- gives information and possible solutions to change the situation.

You will not use all of these elements in all circumstances, but all of them can be used in some situations.

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# CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING

## Learning Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- differentiate fact and opinion in order to make choices;
- use metacognition and reflection to overcome obstacles and meet your professional goals;
- choose appropriate type(s) of thinking to address problems in school and on the job.





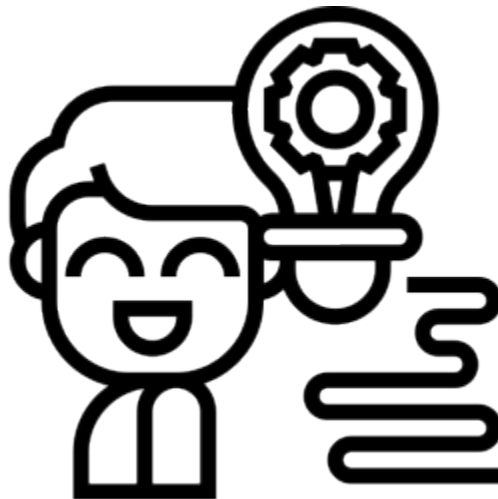
# CREATIVE THINKING

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“Everyone thinks; it is our nature to do so. But much of our thinking, left to itself, is biased, distorted, partial, uninformed or down-right prejudiced. Yet the quality of our life and that of what we produce, make, or build depends precisely on the quality of our thought. Shoddy thinking is costly, both in money and in quality of life. Excellence in thought, however, must be systematically cultivated.”

— The Foundation of Critical Thinking

## Creative Thinking



*Creative Thinking by Eucalyp from  
NounProject.com*

Creativity is needed in all occupations and during all stages of life. Learning to be more in tune with your own version of creativity can help you think more clearly, resolve problems, and appreciate setbacks. You're creative if you repurpose old furniture into a new function. You're also creative if you invent a new cookie recipe for a friend who has a nut allergy. And you're using creativity if you can explain complex biological concepts to your classmates in your lab class. Creativity pops up everywhere. When creative thinking comes into play, you'll be looking for both original and unconventional ideas, and learning to recognize those ideas improves your thinking skills all around.

While apps, software programs, thinking games, and thought exercises may help you stretch your

brain, don't let their simplicity fool you into thinking that cultivating an inquisitive, thoughtful mind is easy or automatic. Thinking is as complex as it is necessary for our success in life.

Creativity doesn't always present itself in the guise of a chart-topping musical hit or other artistic expression. We need creative solutions throughout the workplace — whether in the boardroom, emergency room, or classroom.

# CHANGING EDUCATION PARADIGMS

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As you watch Sir Ken Robinson's video below, consider the following questions:

- What problem does Robinson see with the current education system?
- What is divergent thinking? How does it relate to you as a college student and future professional?
- Why does Robinson claim that people who were geniuses at divergent thinking as children lost their skill?

You may want to watch the video more than once to lock in your learning.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=533#oembed-1>*

# THE SOCRATIC METHOD

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Before you watch the following five-minute video, consider the following:

- How do you make decisions?
- How do you come up with answers to the questions you and others have?



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=535#oembed-1>*

As you can see, Socrates was a really curious guy. He was dedicated to finding multiple answers to questions, and digging deeper, beyond the surface level.

## Reflection

Think of a time you had to make a decision. Take a few minutes to bring yourself back to the decision, and see if you can apply the Socratic Method. You might want to write your questions down as you go. In the end, do you notice you find many possible answers to the question at hand?

Using this tool can help give you multiple answers, bringing you to good solutions to a problem. How might using this technique help you in the workplace?

# REFERENCES

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# PROBLEM SOLVING

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Determining the best approach to any given problem and generating more than one possible solution to the problem constitutes the complicated process of problem solving. People who are good at these skills are highly marketable because many jobs consist of a series of problems that need to be solved for production, services, goods, and sales to continue smoothly. Think about what happens when a worker at your favourite coffee shop slips on a wet spot behind the counter, dropping several drinks she just prepared. One problem is the employee may be hurt, in need of attention, and probably embarrassed; another problem is that several customers do not have the drinks they were waiting for; and another problem is that stopping the production of drinks (to care for the hurt worker, to clean up her spilled drinks, to make new drinks) causes the line at the cash register to back up. A good manager has to juggle all of these elements to resolve the situation as quickly and efficiently as possible. That resolution and return to standard operations doesn't happen without a great deal of thinking, such as prioritizing needs, shifting other workers off one station onto another temporarily, and dealing with all the people involved, from the injured worker to the impatient patrons.



*Problem Solving by Amethyst Studio from  
NounProject.com*

## Determining the Best Approach

Faced with a problem-solving opportunity, you must assess the skills you will need to create solutions. Problem

solving can involve many different types of thinking. You may have to call on your creative, analytical, or critical-thinking skills — or more frequently, a combination of several different types of thinking — to solve a problem satisfactorily. When you approach a situation, how can you decide what is the best type of thinking to employ? Sometimes the answer is obvious; if you are working a scientific challenge, you likely will use analytical thinking; if you are a design student considering the atmosphere of a home, you may need to tap into creative-thinking skills; and if you are an early childhood education major outlining the logistics involved in establishing a summer day camp for children, you may need a combination of critical, analytical, and creative thinking to solve this challenge.

# ANALYTICAL THINKING

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When we work out a problem or situation systematically, breaking the whole into its component parts for separate analysis, to come to a solution or a variety of possible solutions, we call that *analytical thinking*. Characteristics of analytical thinking include setting up the parts, using information literacy, and verifying the validity of any sources you reference.



**Created by Studio 365**

*Analysis by Studio 365 from NounProject.com*

While the phrase *analytical thinking* may sound daunting, we actually do this sort of thinking in our everyday lives when we brainstorm, budget, detect patterns, plan, compare, work through puzzles, and make decisions based on multiple sources of information. Consider of all the thinking that goes into the logistics of a dinner-and-a-movie date — where to eat, what to watch, who to invite, what to wear, and whether to get popcorn or candy — when choices and decisions are rapid fire, but we do it relatively successfully all the time.

Employers specifically look for candidates with analytical skills because they need to know employees can use clear and logical thinking to resolve conflicts that cause work to slow down or may even put the company in jeopardy of not complying with state or national requirements. If everything always went smoothly on the shop floor or in the office, we wouldn't need frontline managers, but everything doesn't always go according to plan or company policy. Your ability to think analytically could be the difference between getting a good job and being passed over by others who prove they are stronger thinkers.



A mechanic who takes each car apart piece by piece to see what might be wrong instead of investigating the entire car, gathering customer information, assessing the symptoms, and focusing on a narrow set of possible problems is not an effective member of the team. Some career fields even have set, formulaic analyses that professionals in those fields need to know how to conduct and understand, such as a cost analysis, a statistical analysis, or a return on investment (ROI) analysis.

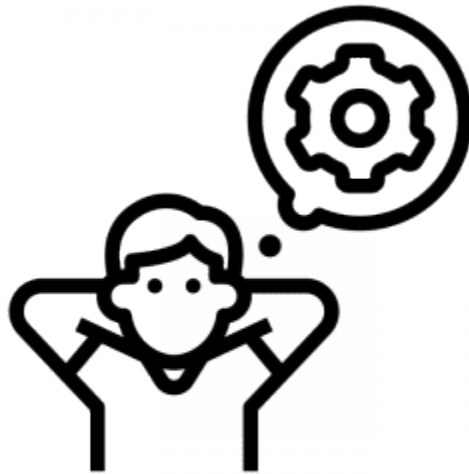
## Establishing Component Parts

Component parts refer to the separate elements of a situation or problem. It might include the people involved, the locations of the people, the weather, market fluctuations, or any number of other characteristics of the situation you're examining. If you don't identify all parts of a problem, you run the risk of ignoring a critical element when you offer the solution. For example, if you have a scheduling problem at home and seem to never see your loved ones, the first step in thinking through this problem analytically would be to decide what is contributing to this unfavourable result. To begin, you may examine the family members' individual work, school, and personal schedules, and then create a group calendar to determine if pockets of time exist that are not taken by outside commitments. Perhaps rather than reading your homework assignments at the college library, you could plan to read once a week with other members of your family who are doing quiet work. You may also need to determine how time is spent to better understand the family's use of time, perhaps using categories such as work/school, recreation, exercise, sleep, and meals. Once you sort the categories for all the family members, you may see blocks of time spent that would lend themselves to combining with other categories — if you and your significant other both exercise three times a week for an hour each time but at separate locations, one possible solution may be to work out together. You could alternate locations if both people have favourite places to run, or you could compromise and decide on one location for both of you — one week at the park, one week at the campus rec centre. This may not ultimately be the solution, but after establishing the component parts and thinking analytically, you have provided at least one viable solution.

# CRITICAL THINKING

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Before you wonder if you're even capable of critical thinking, consider that you think critically every day. When you decide to make your lunch rather than just grabbing a bag of chips, you're thinking critically. You have to plan ahead, buy the food, possibly prepare it, arrange to and carry the lunch with you, and you may have various reasons for doing that — making healthier eating choices, saving money for an upcoming trip, or wanting more quiet time to unwind instead of waiting in a crowded lunch line. You are constantly weighing options, consulting data, gathering opinions, making choices, and then evaluating those decisions, which is a general definition of critical thinking.



**Created by Kamin Ginkae**

*Critical Thinking by Kamin Ginkaew from  
NounProject.com*

## Determining the Problem

One component to keep in mind to guide your critical thinking is to determine the situation. What problem are you solving? When problems become complex and multifaceted, it is easy to be distracted by the simple parts that may not need as much thinking to resolve but also may not contribute as much to the ultimate problem resolution. What aspect of the situation truly needs your attention and your critical thinking? For example, early in the twentieth century, many people considered cigarette smoking a relaxing social pastime that didn't have many negative consequences. Some people may still consider smoking a way to relax; however,

years of medical research have proven with mounting evidence that smoking causes cancer and exacerbates numerous other medical conditions. Researchers asked questions about the impact of smoking on people's overall health, conducted regulated experiments, tracked smokers' reactions, and concluded that smoking did negatively impact health. Over time, attitudes, evidence, and opinions change, and as a critical thinker, you must continue to research, synthesize newly discovered evidence, and adapt to that new information.

## Defending Against Bias

Once you have all your information gathered and you have checked your sources for currency and validity, you need to direct your attention to how you're going to present your now well-informed analysis. Be careful on this step to recognize your own possible biases. Facts are verifiable; opinions are beliefs without supporting evidence. Stating an opinion is just that. You could say "Blue is the best colour," and that's your opinion. If you were to conduct research and find evidence to support this claim, you could say, "Researchers at Oxford University recognize that the use of blue paint in psychiatric hospitals reduces heart rates by 25% and contributes to fewer angry outbursts from patients." This would be an informed analysis with credible evidence to support the claim. Not everyone will accept your analysis, which can be frustrating. Most people resist change and have firm beliefs on both important issues and less significant preferences. With all the competing information surfacing online, in the news, and in general conversation, you can understand how confusing it can be to make any decisions. Look at all the reliable, valid sources that claim different approaches to be the *best* diet for healthy living: ketogenic, low carb, vegan, vegetarian, high fat, raw foods, paleo, Mediterranean, and so on. All you can do in this sort of situation is conduct your own serious research, check your sources, and write clearly and concisely to provide your analysis of the information for consideration. You cannot force others to accept your stance, but you can show your evidence in support of your thinking, being as persuasive as possible without lapsing into your own personal biases. Then the rest is up to the person reading or viewing your analysis.

## Factual Arguments vs. Opinions

Thinking and constructing analyses based on your thinking will bring you in contact with a great deal of information. Some of that information will be factual, and some will not. You need to be able to distinguish between facts and opinions so you know how to support your arguments.

- **Fact:** A statement that is true and backed up with evidence; facts can be verified through observation or research.
- **Opinion:** A statement someone holds to be true without supporting evidence; opinions express beliefs, assumptions, perceptions, or judgements.

Of course, the tricky part is that most people do not label statements as fact and opinion, so you need to be aware and recognize the difference as you go about honing your critical-thinking skills. You probably have heard the old saying “Everyone is entitled to their own opinions,” which may be true, but conversely, not everyone is entitled to their own facts. Facts are true for everyone, not just those who want to believe in them. For example, *mice are animals* is a fact; *mice make the best pets* is an opinion.

Determine if the following statements are facts or opinions based on just the information provided here, referring to the basic definitions above. Some people consider scientific findings to be opinions even when they are convincingly backed by reputable evidence and experimentation. However, remember the definition of *fact* — verifiable by research or observation. Think about what other research you may have to conduct to make an informed decision.

- Oregon is a state in the United States. (How would this be proven?)
- Beef is made from cattle. (See current legislation concerning vegetarian “burgers.”)
- Increased street lighting decreases criminal behaviour. (What information would you need to validate this claim?)
- In 1952, Elizabeth became Queen of England. (What documents could validate this?)
- Oatmeal tastes plain. (What factors might play into this claim?)
- Acne is an embarrassing skin condition. (Who might verify this claim?)
- Kindergarten decreases student dropout rates. (Think of different interest groups that may take sides on this issue.)
- Cell phones cause brain tumours. (What research considers this claim?)

Many people become very attached to their opinions, even stating them as facts despite the lack of verifiable evidence. Think about political campaigns, sporting rivalries, musical preferences, and religious or philosophical beliefs. When you are reading, writing, and thinking critically, you must be on the lookout for sophisticated opinions others may present as factual information. While it’s possible to be polite when questioning another person’s opinions during intellectual debate, thinking critically requires that you do conduct this questioning.

For instance, someone may say or write that a particular political party should move its offices to different cities every year — that’s an opinion regardless of whether you side with one party or the other. If, on the other hand, the same person said that one political party is headquartered in a specific city, that is a fact you can verify. You could find sources that can validate or discredit the statement. Even if the city the person lists as the party headquarters is incorrect, the statement itself is still a fact — just an erroneous one. If you use biased and opinionated information or even incorrect facts as your evidence to support your factual arguments, then you have not validated your sources or checked your facts well enough. At this point, you would need to keep researching.

# RESOURCES FOR THINKING

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When you look into books, articles, and documentaries on thinking, you will find plenty of choices. Some books or articles on thinking may seem to apply only to a narrow group of readers, such as entrepreneurs or artists. For example, the audiences for these two books about thinking seem highly selective: Carl Sagan's *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark* may be mostly directed to the science community; and James Lohan's *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Taught Wrong* is likely of interest primarily to historians. Some chapters may focus specifically on those groups; however, most texts on thinking are also applicable to other disciplines. You may have to work a bit harder to find a common ground or generate your own examples that explain the concepts from the book, but you can still reap benefits from understanding different perspectives. Don't immediately disregard a book or article just because it doesn't seem to fit your thinking perspective on the surface; dig a bit more deeply to see what you can learn. Remember, being open-minded and considering as many alternate approaches as possible are two hallmarks of critical thinking.

Quite literally, all careers need thinkers. Many jobs today expect employees to come up with original ways of doing routine tasks. Nurses may consider a more effective way to convey necessary information about patient care to other members of the medical team. Teachers must reconcile individual student learning needs with the reality of large classrooms. Attorneys think about all the consequences of presenting a client's case in a certain manner. And chefs balance the cost of using the finest ingredients with customer preferences and profit margins.

## Career Connection

All professions need thinkers to take good ideas and make them better and to tackle problems that seem unresolvable and make sense of them. No job or career area is exempt from this crucial human resource. Your critical thinking in college will help you succeed in the work you do after your academic journey.

# METACOGNITION

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For many of us, it was in kindergarten or first grade when our teacher asked our class to “put on our thinking caps.” That may partially have been a clever way for a harried teacher to get young scholars to calm down and focus, but the idea is an apt depiction of how we think. Depending on the situation, we may have to don several very different caps to do our best thinking. Knowing which cap to wear in which situation so we are most prepared, effective, and efficient becomes the work of a lifetime. When you can handle more than one complex thought at a time or when you need to direct all your focus on one crucial task is highly individual. Some people study well with music on in the background while others need absolute silence and see any noise as a distraction. Many chefs delight in creating dinners for hundreds of people in a chaotic kitchen but don’t care for making a meal for two at home. When an individual thinks about how they think, this practice is called *metacognition*.

Developmental psychiatrist John Flavell (1976) coined the term metacognition and divided the theory into three processes of planning, tracking, and assessing your own understanding.

“Becoming aware of your thought processes and using this awareness deliberately is a sign of mature thinking.”

You may be reading a difficult passage in a textbook on chemistry and recognize that you are not fully understanding the meaning of the section you just read or its connection to the rest of the chapter. Students use metacognition when they practice self-awareness and self-assessment. You are the best judge of how well you know a topic or a skill. In college especially, thinking about your thinking is crucial so you know what you don’t know and how to fix this problem, that is, what you need to study, how you need to organize your calendar, and so on.

If you stop and recognize this challenge with the aim of improving your comprehension, you are practicing metacognition. You may decide to highlight difficult terms to look up, write a summary of each paragraph in as few sentences as you can, or join a peer study group to work on your comprehension. If you know you retain material better when you hear it, you may read out loud or watch video tutorials covering the material. These are all examples of thinking about how you think and adapting your behaviour based on this metacognition. Likewise, if you periodically assess your progress toward a goal, such as when you check your grades in a course every few weeks during a long semester so you know how well you are doing, this too is metacognition.

Beyond just being a good idea, thinking about your own thinking process allows you to reap great benefits from becoming more aware of and deliberate with your thoughts. If you know how you react in a specific thinking or learning situation, you have a better chance to improve how well you think or to change your thoughts altogether by tuning in to your reaction and your thinking. You can plan how to move forward because you recognize that the way you think about a task or idea makes a difference in what you do with that

thought. The famous Greek philosopher Socrates reportedly said, “The unexamined life isn’t worth living.” Examine your thoughts and be aware of them.

## Becoming Aware of Your Thinking

Just as elite athletes watch game footage and work with coaches to improve specific aspects of their athletic performance, students can improve their mindset and performance reliant upon their thinking by starting to be aware of what they think. If a baseball pitcher recognizes that the curveball that once was so successful in producing strikeouts has not worked as well recently, they may break down every step of the physical movement required for the once-successful pitch. The pitcher and their coaches may notice a slight difference they can remedy during practice to improve the pitch.

Likewise, if Dayo, for instance, wants to be more generally optimistic and not dwell on negative thoughts, they may ask their friends to mention every time they post something negative on social media. Dayo may go even further by stopping themselves when they say something that is not in line with their new optimistic mindset. They could jot down the instance in a journal and capture their feelings at the time so that later they could analyze or think through why they were negative at that time. If you procrastinate on assignments, you may ask a friend to be your accountability buddy to help keep you on track. Thinking about how to focus on the positive, in Dayo’s case, or avoid procrastination doesn’t magically change the situation. It does, however, allow the owner of the thought to contemplate alternatives instead of becoming frustrated or mindlessly continuing to sabotage sincere goals. Think now of a personal example of a habit you may want to change, such as smoking, or an attribute such as patience or perseverance you may want to improve in yourself. Can you determine what steps you may need to undertake to change this habit or to develop a stronger awareness of the need to change?

## Using Thought Deliberately

If you need to plan, track, and assess your understanding to engage in metacognition, what strategies do you need to employ? You can use metacognition strategies before, during, and after reading, lectures, assignments, and group work.

### Planning

You can plan and get ready to learn by asking questions such as:

- What am I supposed to learn in this situation?
- What do I already know that might help me learn this information?

- How should I start to get the most out of this situation?
- What should I be looking for and anticipating as I read or study or listen?

As part of this planning stage, you may want to jot down the answers to some of the questions you considered while preparing to study. If the task is a writing assignment, prewriting is particularly helpful just to get your ideas down on paper. You may want to start an outline of ideas you think you may encounter in the upcoming session; it probably won't be complete until you learn more, but it can be a place to start.

## Tracking

You can keep up with your learning or track your progress by asking questions such as:

- How am I doing so far?
- What information is important in each section?
- Should I slow down my pace to understand the difficult parts more fully?
- What information should I review now or mark for later review?

In this part of metacognition, you may want to step away from a reading selection and write a summary paragraph on what the passage was about without looking at the text. Another way to track your learning progress is to review lecture or lab notes within a few hours of the initial note-taking session. This allows you to have a fresh memory of the information and fill in gaps you may need to research more fully.

## Assessing

You can assess their learning by asking questions such as:

- How well do I understand this material?
- What else can I do to better understand the information?
- Is there any element of the task I don't get yet?
- What do I need to do now to understand the information more fully?
- How can I adjust how I study (or read or listen or perform) to get better results moving forward?

Looking back at how you did on assignments, tests, and reading selections isn't just a means to getting a better grade the next time, even if that does sometimes happen as a result of this sort of reflection. If you rework the math problems you missed on a quiz and figure out what went wrong the first time, you will understand that mathematical concept better than if you ignore the opportunity to learn from your errors. Learning is not a linear process; you will bring knowledge from other parts of your life and from your reading to understand



something new in your academic or personal learning for the rest of your life. Using these planning, tracking, and assessing strategies will help you progress as a learner in all subjects.

Have you ever been in a situation where a series of events transpired that on reflection you wish you had handled differently? What if you were tired after a long day at work or school and snapped at your roommates over an insignificant problem and that heated exchange ruined your weekend plans? You'd been anticipating a fun outing with a large group, but now several people don't want to go because of the increased tension. Afterwards, you come up with several other ways you wish you had acted—you might have explained how tired you were, ignored the irritation, or even asked if you could continue your discussion of the problem at another time when you were less tired. You could call that wish metacognition after the fact.

How much more effective could you be in general if instead of *reacting* to events and then contemplating better alternatives later, you were able to do the thinking *proactively* before the situation arises? Just the act of pausing to think through the potential consequences is a good first step to accomplishing the goal of using metacognition to reduce negative results. Can you think of a situation in which you reacted to events around you with less than ideal results? How about a time when you thought through a situation beforehand and reaped the benefits of this proactive approach?

Let's look at two seemingly ordinary examples of this concept. Think about your reaction and the eventual long- and short-term results of you walking into your math class on Tuesday afternoon to recall only then that you have a major closed-book exam that class session. You look around to see nervous classmates reading notecards or working through practice problems. You choose to stay and take the exam wholly unprepared. You end up with a low D on the exam and now must contemplate the consequences of that result.

Scoring such a low exam grade may not be the end of the world, certainly, but you may not maintain the GPA you had hoped for, you may need to repeat the course, or you may get further behind in this subject because you didn't master the skills on this test. This is quite a bit of awareness about your thinking. Now you need to decide what actions to take as a result of your self-awareness thinking. Contemplating this negative consequence may lead you to make an appointment with your instructor to discuss your situation, which is always a good idea. Could you take an alternate exam to replace this atypical low score? Even if the answer is no, you have still made a connection and shown your instructor that you are seriously thinking about your coursework.

Now consider the opposite scenario. What if you had entered your exam schedule onto your calendar beforehand and devised a viable plan to be prepared? You likely would have prepared in advance of exam days, studied the required materials, worked through similar problems, and come to the exam session more prepared than you did in the first example. Because you know you need a set amount of time to prepare for exams, you would have blocked that time on your calendar, possibly changing your work schedule for the week, declining social invitations, and otherwise altering your daily routine to accommodate this significant event. Consider how much better your results would be with this amount of preparation and how this would improve your overall performance in the course. You can take advantage of thinking about consequences before they happen so you can employ specific strategies to improve your learning.



# WORKING IN A DIGITAL WORLD

## Learning Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify strategies for communicating effectively online;
- explain how to manage an online identity;
- discuss strategies for maintaining wellness in a digital world.



# USING EMAIL IN THE ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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## Reconciliation

“Get up, show up, rise up, but never give up.”

— Assiniboine College Alumni

In an online learning environment, communicating by email is an important part of getting things done. For many students, emailing instructors can be intimidating, at least at first. Being able to write a professional email will help you to be successful during your time at college and is an important skill for many workplaces.

Communicating with your instructor throughout the semester is an important part of being an active and engaged post-secondary student. Email is by far the most popular means by which this type of communication takes place. For students, emailing instructors is particularly appealing because it is familiar, easy, and convenient. But messages sent via email can easily be misunderstood unless special care is taken in their composition.

To avoid confusion, and to make it as easy as possible for your busy instructors to read and understand your email, there are a few basic principles to keep in mind. In this video, we cover five of these principles to ensure that your email communication is clear, effective, and professional.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=494#h5p-17>

Following these five principles in written communication will help you to communicate clearly, effectively, and professionally.

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# ONLINE PRIVACY

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## Privacy Primer

There are a number of laws in Canada that relate to privacy rights. The two you should be familiar with are [the Privacy Act](#), which instructs government organizations on how to handle your personal information, and [PIPEDA](#), which governs how businesses should handle personal information.

## Privacy Quiz

How much do you already know about privacy? [Take this quiz, developed by the Office of the Privacy Commissioners of Canada, to find out.](#)

## Privacy Settings

You can set up your digital environment to reflect your privacy preferences. Learn more about various options by interacting by watching the following videos.

## Protecting Privacy on your Phone



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=500#oembed-1>

## Understanding App Permissions



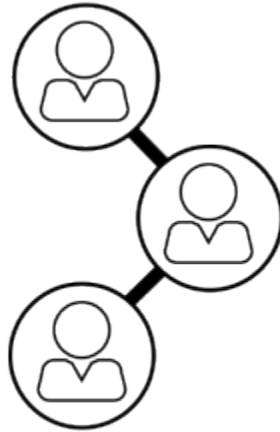
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# SOCIAL MEDIA

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**Created by Guilherme Furtado  
from the Noun Project**

*Social Media by Guilherme Furtado from [Noun Project](#)*

Social media is defined as online communities where people communicate and share information and content. Popular examples of social media sites include TikTok, Threads, X, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn.

**Think carefully before you post:** Anything you share online is permanent, even after you delete it. Don't post anything you may regret later.

**Check your privacy settings:** Your content may be visible to more people than you realize.

**Make a good first impression:** Social media isn't just used by family and friends. People who you don't know may also view your profiles and information.

**Consider your health:** Use of social media can have an impact on our mental, emotional, and physical health.

For information about social media and privacy (in a fun comic) see [Social Smarts, Privacy, the Internet and You](#).

Do you ever wonder about whether or not to share information online? Practice making this choice with [Activity: Should I Post it Online?](#)

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# HEALTH AND WELLNESS

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This page explores the effects of digital habits on your mental and physical health. Included here are tools and techniques for examining personal digital use, identifying warning signs, and employing mitigating techniques.

Please note that this page *provides information only*. We do not provide medical or other professional advice. If you require advice, you need to speak with an expert.

## Tips

- **Check your desk:** Assess your workstation area with the Ontario Ministry of Labour’s Guide: [Computer Ergonomics: Workstation Layout and Lighting](#). Small changes can make a big difference in your comfort.
- **Sleep tech-free:** Limiting tech use at bedtime will help you get a better sleep, so you can feel good and be productive in the day. Experts recommend that you eliminate smartphone use in the hour before bed, and avoid charging your phone in the bedroom.
- **Get mindful with your mobile:** Is real life passing you by while you check your phone and scroll endlessly? Taking a day or two to track your mobile habits will illuminate any areas of concern. We’ve got lots of tips to help you here.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=504#oembed-1>

[Digital Health and Wellness Assessment](#): Are your digital habits affecting your well-being? Complete this activity to find out.

[How Does Technology Affect Sleep?](#): Good sleep hygiene is critical for academic performance, productivity, mood, mental health, physical fitness, and more. Some technology habits severely disrupt our sleep patterns and can cause cumulative sleep deprivation.

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# MEMORY SKILLS

## Learning Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- apply a growth mindset to your memory skills;
- describe memory techniques that can be applied in school and on the job;
- describe lifestyle strategies that support memory function.



# WHAT IS MEMORY?

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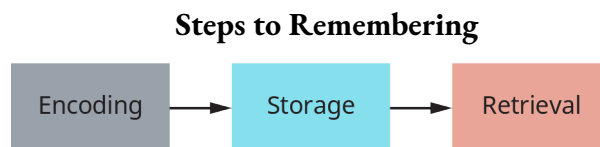
## Questions to consider:

- Do you think about how you make memories?
- Do you do anything that helps you keep track of your memories?

Memory is one of those cherished but mysterious elements in life. Everyone has memories, and some people are very good at rapid recall, which is an enviable skill for test-takers. We know that we seem to lose the capacity to remember things as we age, and scientists continue to study how we remember some things but not others and what memory means, but we don't know that much about memory, really.

Nelson Cowan is one researcher who is working to explain what we do know about memory. His article “What Are the Differences between Long-Term, Short-Term, and Working Memory?” breaks down the different types of memory and what happens when we recall thoughts and ideas (Cowan, 2008). When we remember something, we actually do quite a lot of thinking.

We go through three basic steps when we remember ideas or images: we encode, store, and retrieve that information. *Encoding* is how we first perceive information through our senses, such as when we smell a lovely flower or a putrid trash bin. Both make an impression on our minds through our sense of smell and probably our vision. Our brains encode, or label, this content in short-term memory in case we want to think about it again. If the information is important and we have frequent exposure to it, the brain will *store* it for us in case we need to use it in the future in our aptly named long-term memory. Later, the brain will allow us to *recall or retrieve* that image, feeling, or information so we can do something with it. This is what we call remembering.



## Foundations of Memory

William Sumrall et al. (2016) in the *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* explain the foundation of memory by noting:

Memory is a term applied to numerous biological devices by which living organisms acquire, retain, and make use of skills and knowledge. It is present in all forms of higher order animals. The most

evolutionary forms of memory have taken place in human beings. Despite much research and exploration, a complete understanding of human memory does not exist. (p. 23)

## Working Memory

Working memory is a type of short-term memory, but we use it when we are actively performing a task; for example, nursing student Shaun needs to use their knowledge of chemical reactions to suggest appropriate prescriptions in various medical case studies. They do not have to recall every single fact they learned in years of chemistry classes, but they do need to have a working memory of certain chemicals and how those chemicals work with others. To ensure they can make these connections, Shaun will have to review and study the relevant chemical details for the types of drug interactions they will recommend in the case studies.

In working memory, you have access to whatever information you have stored in your memory that helps you complete the task you are performing; for instance, when you begin to study an assignment, you certainly need to read the directions, but you must also remember that in class your professor reduced the number of problem sets the written instructions indicated you needed to finish. This was an oral addition to the written assignment instructions. The change to the instructions is what you bring up in working memory when you complete the assignment.

## Short-Term Memory

Short-term memory is a very handy thing. It helps us remember where we set our keys or where we left off on a project the day before. Think about all the aids we employ to help us with short-term memory: you may hang your keys in a particular place each evening so you know exactly where they are supposed to be. When you go grocery shopping, do you ever choose a product because you recall an advertising jingle? You see the box of cereal and you remember the song in the TV commercial. If that memory causes you to buy that product, the advertising worked. We help our memory along all the time, which is perfectly fine. In fact, we can modify these everyday examples of memory assistance for purposes of studying and test-taking. The key is the deliberate use of strategies that are not so elaborate that they are too difficult to remember in our short-term memory.

## Activity

Consider this list of items. Look at the list for no more than 30 seconds. Then, cover up the list and use a blank piece of paper or Word document to complete an activity.



Baseball	Picture frame	Tissue	Paper clip	Bread
Pair of dice	Fingernail polish	Spoon	Marble	Leaf
Doll	Scissors	Cup	Jar of sand	Deck of cards
Ring	Blanket	Ice	Marker	String

Without looking at the list, write down as many items as you can remember.

Now, look back at your list and make sure that you give yourself credit for any that you got right. Any items that you misremembered, meaning they were not in the original list, you won't count in your total. What was the total number of items remembered?

There were 20 total items. Did you remember between 5 and 9 items? If you did, then you have a typical short-term memory and you just participated in an experiment, of sorts, to prove it.

Considering the vast amount of knowledge available to us, 5 to 9 bits isn't very much to work with. To combat this limitation, we clump information together, making connections to help us stretch our capacity to remember. Many factors play into how much we can remember and how we do it, including the subject matter, how familiar we are with the ideas, and how interested we are in the topic, but we certainly cannot remember absolutely everything for a test or any other task we face. As such, we have to use effective strategies, like those we cover later on, to get the most out of our memories.

## Activity

Now, let's revisit the items above. Go back to them and see if you can organize them in a way that you would have about five groups of items. The following are examples of how to group to them:

- items found in a kitchen;
- items that a child would play with;
- items of nature;
- items in a desk drawer/school supplies;
- items found in a bedroom.

Now that you have grouped items into categories, also known as chunking, you can work on remembering the

categories and the items that fit into those categories, which will result in remembering more items. Try it out by covering up the list of items again and writing down what you can remember.

Now, look back at your list and make sure that you give yourself credit for any that you got right. Any items that you misremembered, meaning they were not in the original list, you won't count in your total. Did you increase how many items you could remember?



**Created by Eliricon  
from the Noun Project**

*Memory by Eliricon from NounProject.com*

## Long-Term Memory

Long-term memory is exactly what it sounds like. These are things you recall from the past, such as the smell of your favourite meal or how to pop a wheelie on a bicycle. Our brain keeps a vast array of information, images, and sensory experiences in long-term memory. Whatever it is we are trying to keep in our memories, whether a beautiful song or a list of chemistry vocabulary terms, must first come into our brains in short-term memory. If we want these fleeting ideas to transfer into long-term memory, we have to do some work, such as causing frequent exposure to the information over time (such as studying the terms every day for a period of time or the repetition you performed to memorize multiplication tables or spelling rules) and some relevant manipulation for the information.

According to Alison Preston (2007) of the University of Texas at Austin's Center for Learning and Memory:

A short-term memory's conversion to a long-term memory requires changes within the brain...and result[s] in changes to neurons (nerve cells) or sets of neurons. . . . For example, new synapses — the connections between neurons through which they exchange information — can form to allow for communication between new networks of neurons. Alternatively, existing synapses can be strengthened to allow for increased sensitivity in the communication between two neurons.

When you work to convert your thoughts into memories, you are literally changing your mind. Much of this brain work begins in the part of the brain called the *hippocampus*. We learn the lyrics of a favourite song by singing and/or playing the song over and over. That alone may not be enough to get that song into the coveted long-term memory area of our brain, but if we have an emotional connection to the song, such as a painful breakup or a life-changing proposal that occurred while we were listening to the song, this may help. Think of ways to make your study session memorable and create connections with the information you need to study. That way, you have a better chance of keeping your study material in your memory so you can access it whenever you need it.

### Questions to consider:

- What are some ways you convert short-term memories into long-term memories?
- Do your memorization strategies differ for specific courses (for example, how you remember for math or history)?

# OBSTACLES TO REMEMBERING

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If remembering things we need to know for exams or for learning new disciplines were easy, no one would have problems with it, but students face several significant obstacles to remembering, including a persistent lack of sleep and an unrealistic reliance on cramming. Life is busy and stressful for all students, so you have to keep practicing strategies to help you study and remember successfully, but you also must be mindful of obstacles to remembering.

## Lack of Sleep

Let's face it, sleep and college don't always go well together. You have so much to do! All that reading, all those papers, all those extra hours in the science lab or tutoring center or library! And then we have the social and emotional aspects of going to school, which may not be the most critical aspect of your life as you pursue more education but are a significant part of who you are. When you consider everything you need to attend to in college, you probably won't be surprised that sleep is often the first thing we give up as we search for more time to accomplish everything we're trying to do. It might seem reasonable to just wake up an hour earlier or stay up a little later, but you may want to reconsider picking away at your precious sleep time.

Sleep benefits all of your bodily functions, and your brain needs sleep time to dream and rest through the night. You probably can recall times when you had to do something without adequate sleep. We say things like "I just can't wake up" and "I'm walking around half asleep." In fact, you may actually be doing just that. Lack of sleep impairs judgment, focus, and our overall mood. Do you know anyone who is always grumpy in the morning? A fascinating medical study from the University of California Los Angeles (n.d.) claims that sleep deprivation is as dangerous as being drunk, both in what it does to our bodies and in the harm we may cause to ourselves and others in driving and performing various daily tasks.

If you can't focus well because you didn't get enough sleep, then you likely won't be able to remember whatever it is you need to recall for any sort of studying or test-taking situation. Most exams in a college setting go beyond simple memorization, but you still have a lot to remember for exams; for example, when Kelan sits down to take an exam on introductory biology, they need to recall all the subject-specific vocabulary they read in the textbook's opening chapters, the general connections they made between biological studies and other scientific fields, and any biology details introduced in the unit for which they are taking the exam.

Trying to make these mental connections on too little sleep will take a large mental toll because Kelan has to concentrate even harder than they would with adequate sleep. They aren't merely tired; their brain is not refreshed and primed to conduct difficult tasks. Although not an exact comparison, think about when you overtax a computer by opening too many programs simultaneously. Sometimes the programs are sluggish or

slow to respond, making it difficult to work efficiently; sometimes the computer shuts down completely and you have to reboot the entire system. Your body is a bit like that on too little sleep.

On the flip side, though, your brain on adequate sleep is amazing, and sleep can actually assist you in making connections, remembering difficult concepts, and studying for exams. The exact reasons for this are still a serious research project for scientists, but the results all point to a solid connection between sleep and cognitive performance.

### Questions to consider:

- How long do you sleep each night on average?
- Do you see a change in your ability to function when you haven't had enough sleep?
- What could you do to limit the number of nights with too little sleep?

## Downsides of Cramming

At least once in their college careers, most students will experience the well-known action phenomenon *cramming*. See if any of this is familiar: Kelly has lots of classes, works part-time at a popular restaurant, and is just amazingly busy, so they put off serious study sessions day after day. They aren't worried because they have set aside time they would have spent sleeping to cram just before the exam. That's the idea anyway. Originally, they planned to stay up a little later and study for four hours from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. and still get several hours of refreshing sleep. But it's Dolphin Week or a sports game or whatever else comes up, and their study session doesn't start until midnight — they'll pull an *all-nighter* (to be more precise, this is actually an *all-really-early-morning-er*, but it doesn't quite have the same ring to it). So, two hours after their original start time, they try to *cram* all the lessons, problems, and information from the last two weeks of lessons into this one session. Kelly falls asleep around 3 a.m. with their notes and books still on their bed. After their late night, they don't sleep well and go into the morning exam tired.



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from the Noun Project

*Cramming by WEBTECHOPS LLP from  
NounProject.com*

Kelly does okay but not great on the exam, and they are not pleased with their results. More and more research is showing that the stress Kelly has put on their body doing this, combined with the way our brains work, makes cramming a seriously poor choice for learning. Your brain simply refuses to co-operate with cramming — it sounds like a good idea, but it doesn't work. Cramming causes stress, which can lead to debilitating test anxiety; it erroneously supposes you can remember and understand something fully after only minimal exposure; and it overloads your brain, which, however amazing it is, can only focus on one concept at a time and a limited number of concepts all together for learning and retention.

Leading neuroscientist John Medina (2018) claims that the brain begins to wander at about 10 minutes, at which point you need a new stimulus to spark interest. That doesn't mean you can't focus for longer than 10 minutes; you just have to switch gears a lot to keep your brain engaged. Have you ever heard a speaker drone on about one concept for, say, 30 minutes without somehow changing pace to engage the listeners? It doesn't take much to re-engage — pausing to ask the listeners questions or moving to a different location in the room will do it — but without these subtle attention markers, listeners start thinking of something else. The same thing happens to you if you try to cram all reading, problem-solving, and note reviewing into one long session; your brain will wander.

# FEATS OF MEMORY ANYONE CAN DO

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There are people who can quickly memorize lists of thousands of numbers, the order of all the cards in a deck (or ten!), and much more. Science writer Joshua Foer describes the technique — called the memory palace — and shows off its most remarkable feature: anyone can learn how to use it, including him.

Watch the following video with these questions in mind:

- Do some people have good memories and others have bad memories?
- Is a memory a fixed thing, meaning something that you can't grow or change?
- What is the baker vs. Baker paradox?
- Why does the memory palace technique work?



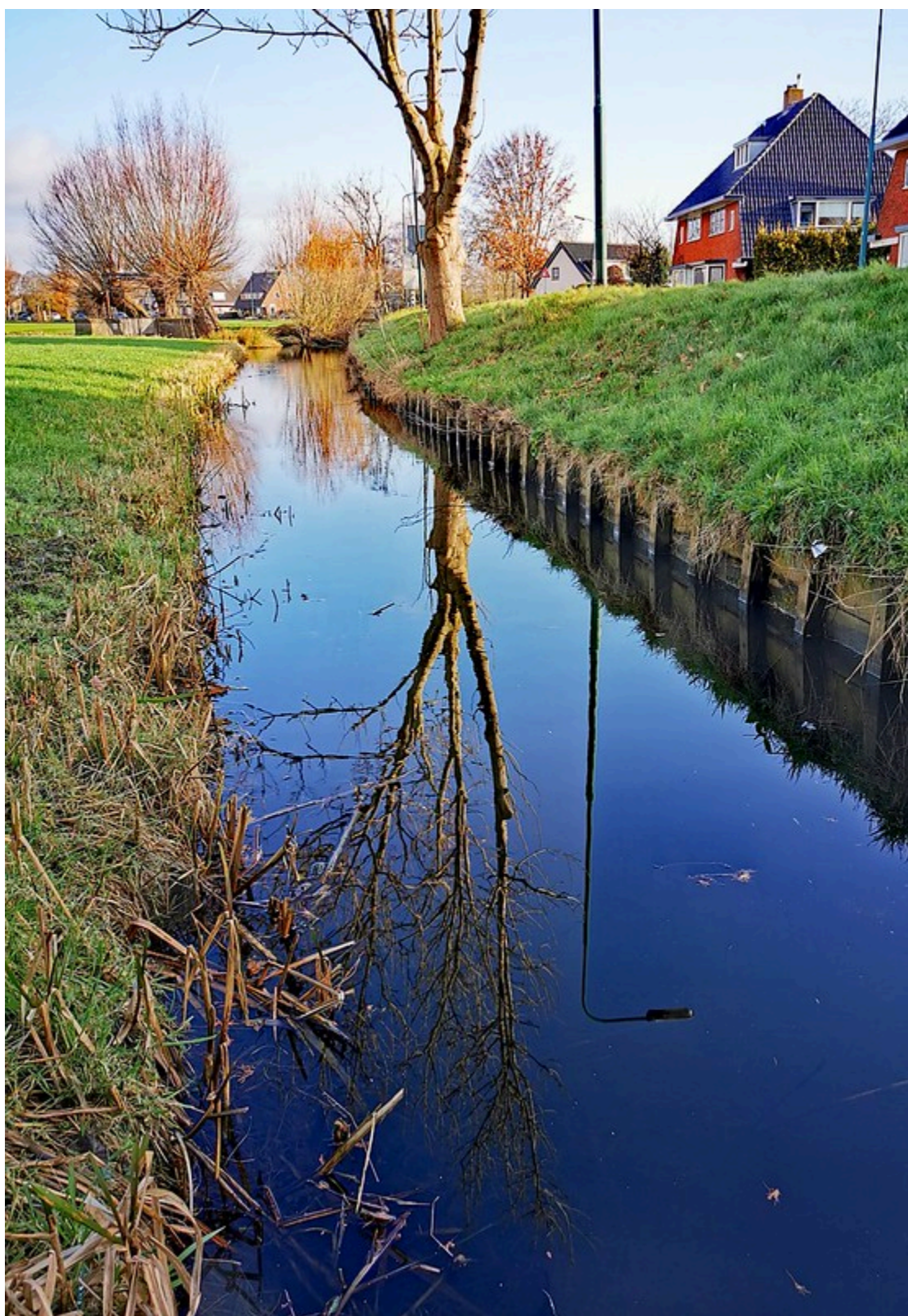
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*“When information goes ‘in one ear and out the other,’ it’s often because it doesn’t have anything to stick to.”*  
— Joshua Foer

# REFLECTING ON YOUR MEMORY

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*“Reflection” (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0) by dvdhaven 😊*

## Reflection

Take a moment to consider these questions. You might want to write them down or draw how you feel about them.

- How do you think about your memory now? Do you ever use techniques to remember things?
- As a college student, are there times you will need to remember things? What about in your future job?

# SUMMARY

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In this chapter, you were introduced to short- and long-term memory, as well as obstacles to remembering.

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# WORKING TOGETHER

## Learning Objectives



# THE CONTEXT OF COMMUNICATION

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## Does My Form of Communication Change in Certain Situations?

The circumstances surrounding a message provide the context. These include the setting you are in, the culture that guides you and whomever you are communicating with, and the purpose of the communication to begin with. Context also includes the values people have, appropriateness of the message, the timing you choose to convey your message, and the reason behind your wanting to communicate. This means considering your audience, the place, the time, and all other variables that impact communicating constructively.

Generally, all communication happens for a reason. When you are communicating with people, are you always on the same wavelength? Are you wide awake and your roommate almost asleep? Is the baseball game really important to you but totally boring to the person you are talking with? It is important that everyone involved understands the context of the conversation. Is it a party, which lends itself to frivolous banter? Is the conversation about something serious that occurred? What are some of the relevant steps to understanding context? First of all, pay attention to timing. Is there enough time to cover what you are trying to say? Is it the right time to talk to the boss about a raise? What about the location? Should your conversation take place in the elevator, over email, in a chat room? Is everyone in the conversation involved for the same reason?

Sometimes we have misconceptions about what is going on in a group situation. Perhaps we think that everyone there knows what we are talking about. Or we think we know everyone's opinions on an issue or situation. Or we come into the conversation already thinking we are right and they are wrong. Communication in these instances can go very wrong. Why? We aren't listening or even preparing ourselves adequately for the conversation we hope to have. So often we are only concerned about what we have to say to an individual or a group and we don't step back long enough to reflect on what our message might mean to them. We seem to not care about how the message will be received and are often surprised by how poorly the communication actually went. Why? Because we didn't step back and think, "Hmmm, my aunt is a really religious person and would probably be offended by a conversation about sexual intimacy." Or, "My father is having a bit of financial trouble, and this might not be the right time to bring up money I need for a new car."



*"Communication" (CC BY-NC 2.0) by P Shanks*

## Do I Use an Altered Style of Talking When I'm With Different People?

There are so many instances in our lives when we focus on our needs first and blurt out what we are thinking, leading to some critical misunderstandings. It is really important not only to be concerned about our need to communicate, but to take into consideration with whom we are communicating, when and where we are communicating, and how we are going to do so in a positive way. First, you should step back and think about what you want to say and why. Then reflect on with whom you are attempting to communicate.

## Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence — or recognizing your own emotions and those of others — will help you avoid miscommunication as well. When you are aware of your own emotional state and you have the skills to address and adjust, your communication with others will improve. You're less likely to blurt out an angry retort to a perceived criticism, for example. You're also better able to manage communication when you recognize someone else's emotions as well. A conversation can veer into hostile territory if someone feels attacked, or perhaps simply because they've had an emotional experience related to the conversation that you



don't understand. Taking note of other people's emotional responses during a conversation and listening and speaking with empathy will help you manage the situation.

When conversations begin to feel heated, it's a good idea to pause and ask yourself why. If it's you who is feeling defensive and angry, make an effort to recognize the source of your frustration and try to take a step back, perhaps leaving the conversation until you're better able to control your emotions and communicate in a way that's more clearheaded and calm. If it's someone else who's emotional, again, ask yourself why. Can you see reasons that this person may feel attacked, belittled, or usurped? If you can recognize their emotion and address it, you may be able to get the communication back on solid footing.

## Listening Is A Communication Action

Our communication includes both sending and receiving messages. Unfortunately, we often don't take the time to focus on the latter part. Often we are already thinking about what we are going to say next and not listening to what is being said to us. This lack of focus occurs in intense, oppositional discussions, but it can also be common in one-on-one conversations and when someone is confiding in us. When we listen, we need to embrace the concept of empathy, meaning you understand what a person might be feeling, and understand why that person's actions made sense to them at the time. This way our ideas can be communicated in a way that makes sense to others, and it helps us understand others when they communicate with us. Even though it is silent, listening is communication. We can often "hear" what is being said but don't really listen well enough to discern what is meant by the person trying to communicate with us. In order to listen effectively, we should consider it an active process, in the same way we think about speaking or messaging.

So what does active listening entail? There are some strategies you can use to help you become a good listener. First of all, stop talking. You can't listen if you are talking. Secondly, turn off the television, put your phone in your pocket, silence the music and, if needed, go somewhere quiet so you can actually focus on what is being said. Next, have empathy for the person talking to you. In other words, don't begin thinking of ways to answer. Even if someone has a problem (with you or something else), avoid trying to immediately solve it; consider whether the person speaking to you really wants advice or action, or might simply want to be seen and heard. Finally, before you say anything as a reply, repeat what you heard so the other person can confirm that you heard them correctly. You would be amazed at how well these strategies work to help avoid misunderstandings and confusion.

Think of what context and what communication tool you would consider in the following situations:

- You need to let your instructor know you won't be able to hand in your assignment on time. What will you say, when and where will you say it, and what form of communication will you use and why?
- Your roommate wants to have friends over for a party and you aren't sure you are up for that. What and how do you tell your roommate?
- The weekend is full of activities, but you are expected home for a family gathering. How do you let your

parents know you aren't coming?

As said earlier, emotions are frequently involved in communication. It might seem like it would be easier if everything was logical and everyone was always coming from a place of no emotion. But that's not how it works in most instances. People have opinions, needs, desires, and outcomes they are looking for; feelings that can be hurt; and differing attitudes. What is important is that we need to be aware of our own emotions, and those of others, when attempting to communicate. Consider other people's feelings as well as your own. Have empathy. And in the midst of trying to do that, listen, don't just hear!



*"Listening" (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0) by Chris (a.k.a. MoiVous)*

## Barriers to Effective Communication

Meredith and Anvi are working together on a project on marketing for a communications class: Anvi will create content for a flier, and Meredith will determine the best platform for advertising. In their brainstorming session the two realized they had some outstanding questions about how much content the flier should contain and whether they needed to turn in additional documentation. Meredith left it to Anvi to clarify this since the content of the flier was her responsibility. Meredith waited impatiently the entire class session for Anvi to ask about the assignment. With class time almost up, Meredith spoke up, telling the instructor in front of the class that Anvi had a question about the assignment.

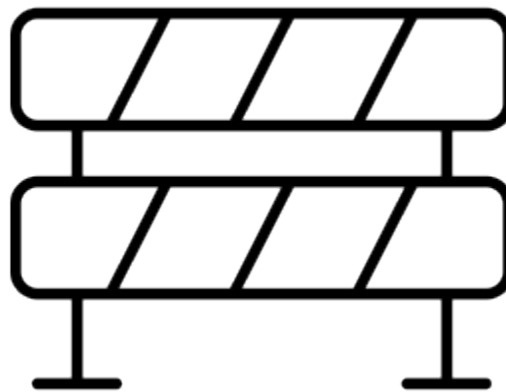
Anvi clarified the assignment with the instructor, but when Meredith tried to find her after class to talk about next steps, Anvi had gone. Meredith was surprised to receive an angry text from Anvi soon after class accusing Meredith of embarrassing her. Anvi pointed out that she'd managed to complete every assignment so far in the course and she didn't need Meredith to take over on this one.

Communication can go awry for a number of reasons. One could use jargon or technical language that

is unfamiliar. There can be differences in the perception of an issue. People may speak different languages, or the colloquialisms that one uses don't make sense to everyone. As in the case with Meredith and Anvi, cultural considerations can also affect the way people communicate. Anvi, for instance, prefers not to speak to the instructor during class because she feels that she's interrupting. She prefers to approach the instructor after class time is over. Meredith, on the other hand, usually has a task list she likes to tick off one by one to make sure everything is moving on time, and she can sometimes become insensitive to the communication styles of others.

Some barriers are likely to be emotional, often caused by topics that are sometimes considered problematic, such as sex, politics, or religion, which can interfere with effective communication. Sometimes what you are trying to communicate is embarrassing or otherwise a bit personal, and you kind of skirt around the edges of really saying what you want to say. Other emotions, such as stress, anger, depression, sadness, and the like can have an effect on how well you communicate with another person, or they with you. Physical disabilities, such as hearing loss, can also come into play and get add challenges to successful communication.

Some of our behaviour and communication is based on previous encounters, and we don't see past that and start fresh. Sometimes the barrier can be a lack of interest or attention on the part of the receiver. There are also expectations about what might be said or stereotyping on the part of the sender or the receiver. Often when we communicate with people we have preconceptions about who they are, what they are thinking, and how they will react to whatever we say. These preconceptions can get in the way of productive communication. A person could have an attitude that comes with whatever is being said or written. Or perhaps there is a lack of motivation to clarify what you want to communicate, and the end result is not what you were hoping for.



*Barrier by Scarlett Mckay from Noun Project*

## Preconceptions and Assumptions

Have you ever thought about the message you are conveying to others? If you were standing on the street

corner, what would others see? How do you play into others' preconceptions simply based on your appearance? Of course, you should be yourself, but certain environments or situations require us to consider and, perhaps, change our appearance. Wearing a t-shirt with a sports team's logo may be appropriate when you're at home or out with friends, but you wouldn't wear it to a job interview. College presents us with many situations where people's preconceived notions of our appearance may come into play. For example, while it might not be fair, faculty may have a certain perception of students who attend lecture or office hours in pajamas. Consider the implications of sitting in your instructor's office, asking for help, when they think you haven't changed your clothes since you woke up. You are absolutely free to express yourself in a certain manner, but your appearance may miscommunicate your motivation or intent.

Recognizing how our own preconceptions come into play, and acknowledging those of others, generally leads to more effective interactions. One of the biggest changes about the way we interact is the vast number of people available with whom we can communicate. This is a wonderful thing as we get to meet many people from diverse places. It can also be challenging because we are not always prepared to communicate with people from varying cultures, genders, ages, or religious and political views. Sometimes a simple lack of familiarity can lead to errors or even offense.

# WHAT IS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?

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Watch the following video from the School of Life for an overview of emotional intelligence and why it matters.



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegefoundations/?p=529#oembed-1>*

# HOW TO DISAGREE PRODUCTIVELY AND FIND COMMON GROUND

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Some days, it feels like the only thing we can agree on is that we can't agree — on anything. Drawing on her background as a world debate champion, Julia Dhar offers three techniques to reshape the way we talk to each other so we can start disagreeing productively and finding common ground over family dinners, during work meetings, and in our national conversations.

As you watch this video, consider the following questions:

- What examples does Dhar give to show that public discourse is broken?
- What do people who disagree most productively do first?
- Why does she claim it's so hard for people to disagree productively?
- How do you think the practice of debate relates to your future workplace?



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## Wellness

Pause for a moment and think about the positive relationships in your life and what those people mean to you.

# SUMMARY

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Communication is one of the basic components of how we live our lives. It's a foundation of society and civilization as a whole. And the better we become at navigating through all of our various communication options, the more fulfilled and productive we will become. You have the capability to communicate with myriad people and groups in faraway places, as well as just next door or the room down the hall. In all of those interactions, the sender and recipient of each message brings their own context, purpose, and perspective.

Your communication will be much more effective if you think about those differences before communicating with and especially before *responding to* people. Sometimes thinking so deeply about a simple conversation seems overwhelming and unnecessary, but keeping in mind the reasons you're communicating and focusing on the words you use can lead to better relationships and outcomes. Listening, practicing empathy, and working on your cultural competence will enrich you and the people around you.

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# APPENDIX

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This is where you can add appendices or other back matter.