College Success for Newcomers

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CAMPUS MANITOBA
BRANDON

Contents

Part IV. Expectations for Students

About This Book

The goal of this OER is to support newcomers to Canada who are entering college institutions. When international students come to Canada, they must learn not only the new content for their particular program but also new behaviours, such as studying in a new language, adapting to new customs, and communicating in new ways. This OER is designed to provide newcomer students with the skills and strategies they will need to adapt successfully and fully integrate into the Canadian college system.

This book takes on a multiple-perspective approach to college success. It has the following goals:

- respond to the needs of a diverse student population, including English language learners, students from diverse cultural backgrounds, mature students, and students who are 2SLGBTQIA+ (Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual, and other ways individuals express their gender and sexuality outside heteronormativity and the gender binary), neurodiverse and/or disabled;[1]
- help newcomers increase self-awareness regarding how their own backgrounds, expectations, and experiences may be different from those in Canada and reflect on how to adapt their behaviour in order to succeed in the Canadian college environment;
- help newcomers gain an understanding of the complex ways the Indigenous experience is intertwined into the fabric of Canadian society and realize the important of truth and reconciliation and anti-racism.

Thank you

This book was made better by the following Red River College Polytechnic staff who reviewed content, helped with copyright questions, and shared resources. We thank you for your time and energy.

- Ebony Novakowski, Copyright Officer
- Jocelyne Olson, Instructor, Math, Science and Communication
- Ginger Arnold, Instructor, School of Indigenous Education

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Note: This version is current to December 21, 2023.

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1. https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/businesswriting/front-matter/about-this-book/

Adaptation and Licensing Statement

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Adaptation Statement

In *College Success for Newcomers*, examples have been changed to Canadian references and information throughout the book, where applicable, has been revised to reflect Canadian content and language. Gender-neutral language (they/ their) has been used intentionally. In addition, while general ideas and content may remain unchanged from the sources from which this adapted version is based, word choice, phrasing, and organization of content within each chapter may have changed to reflect the authors' stylistic preferences.

This book was composed on Treaty 1 territory in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

Licensing Statement

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LEARN THE CULTURE

1. Land Acknowledgement

Land Acknowledgement

REBECCA HIEBERT

Hundreds of years ago, Europeans came to what is now North America. At first Europeans were exploring new lands for trade and travel routes, to find natural resources, and to claim land. However, when they recognized the beauty and abundant resources in what is now Canada, they began to extract the resources to ship them back to Europe and they also encouraged other Europeans to immigrate to the land to get away from the difficult situations in Europe. This resulted in Europeans taking control of the land, pushing Indigenous peoples to less desirable locations, and attempting to assimilate Indigenous peoples into European culture. We include this land acknowledgement in order to recognize these devastating acts and work toward repairing the relationships between the different groups of people now living on the land.

Consider what this land acknowledgement means to you and how it will help you build relationships with people you interact with.

**We respectfully recognize that the homes of the authors
are located on the original lands of the
Anishinaabe, Ininiwak, Anishininwak, Dakota, and Dene peoples,
and on the homeland of the Red River Métis Nation.**

In acknowledging that we are seeking "all" truths, we recognize that the content of this textbook is firmly rooted in Western traditions of knowledge, which risks re-enforcing it as the "standard" and alienating other cultural approaches to knowledge.[1]

In sharing this land acknowledgement, we aim to pause and create space and gratitude for the original stewards of this beautiful land – the Anishinaabe, Ininiwak, Anishininwak, Dakota, Dene, and Métis peoples – and are open to different ways of understanding, listening, and experiencing the world. Consider where you are living and the Indigenous peoples who lived on the land before the European settlers and immigrants arrived. What kind of acknowledgement can you offer?

1. Effective Professional Communication: A Rhetorical Approach by Rebekah Bennetch; Corey Owen; and Zachary Keesey. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. https://openpress.usask.ca/rcm200/front-matter/land-acknowledgment/

2. Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous People

REBECCA HIEBERT

While you read, consider the following:

- What information is new?
- What did I used to think?
- How can I use this information to welcome others?

When the Europeans came to what is now called Canada, they encountered people already living there. Initially the Europeans were trying to find a route to India, so they called the first peoples they saw "Indians." This name was widely used even though it does not accurately represent the identity of the first peoples living in what is now Canada. Now we use the word "Indigenous" to identify the original peoples of the land that is now Canada and the term "Indian" is only used in the federal legal context.

Who Are the Indigenous Peoples in Canada?

Before the arrival of European explorers and traders, North America was occupied by Indigenous peoples living and thriving with their own distinct cultures, languages, and ways of knowing.[1]

"Indigenous peoples" is a collective name for the original peoples of Canada and their descendants. It is the preferred term for the collective noun for the three larger groups of Indigenous people living in what is now Canada. These three groups are First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.[2]

Even though "Indigenous" is a term used to describe the descendants of the original peoples living on the land that is now Canada, Indigenous people are made of up of many diverse groups with different cultures and languages across Canada.

First Nations people are Indigenous people who do not identify as Inuit or Métis. In the past, these people were referred to as "Indians." Today, the word "Indian" is used in a federal legal context but the term is not used in contemporary Canadian society. First Nations have lived and thrived since time immemorial on this land now called Canada. They have many different languages, cultures, traditions, and spiritual beliefs. Historically, First Nations managed their lands and resources with their own governments, laws, policies, and practices. Their societies were very complex and included systems for trade and commerce, building relationships, managing resources, and spirituality.[3]

The **Métis** originated in the 1700s when many French and Scottish men migrated to Canada to work in the fur

1. [Pulling Together: Foundations Guide](#) by Kory Wilson and Colleen Hodgson (MNBC). Kory Wilson is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.](#) https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/chapter/43/
2. https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/chapter/aboriginal-or-indigenous/
3. https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/chapter/first-nations/

trade with the Hudson's Bay Company or the North West Company, or as independent traders. Some married and had children with First Nations women and formed a new culture, language, and community. The French mixed families and their descendants were most often referred to as "Métis."[4]

Inuit are Indigenous peoples living in the Arctic regions of Canada, Greenland, Alaska, and Russia.[5] Inuit have lived and thrived in the Arctic for thousands of years. Traditionally they lived off the resources of the land, and many Inuit continue to harvest these resources today. Inuit existed prior to contact with Europeans and Inuit is the accepted term for people who are Indigenous and do not identify as First Nations or Métis.[6]

Key Takeaways

Indigenous peoples have been living on the land that is now Canada since before the European settlers arrived. Indigenous peoples are diverse with many cultures, languages, and communities. Indigenous is the collective noun referring to three main groups: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.

4. https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/chapter/metis/
5. Please note that this section has not been vetted by Inuit writers and the information is based on current Nunavut government information.
6. https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/chapter/topic-inuit/

3. Truth and Reconciliation

Truth and Reconciliation

REBECCA HIEBERT

Before the arrival of European explorers and traders, Indigenous peoples were organized into complex, self-governing nations throughout what is now called Canada. In its early days, the relationship between Europeans and Indigenous peoples was mutually beneficial. Indigenous peoples were able to help European traders adjust to the new land and could share their knowledge and expertise. In return, the Europeans offered useful materials and goods, such as horses, guns, metal knives, and kettles. However, as time went by and more European settlers and immigrants arrived, the relationship between the two peoples became much more challenging.

As the European population increased, they wanted to control larger sections of what is now Canada, so the Europeans implemented laws, policies, and treaties to control the Indigenous peoples' access to land and restrict the Indigenous peoples from participating in their culture. Now some of the ancestors of the European immigrants and settlers are revisiting the treatment of the Indigenous peoples and regretting the way they were treated. They are working toward improved relationships and reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples.[1]

While you read, consider the following:

- What information is new?
- What did I used to think?
- How can I use this information to welcome others?

The most important single act affecting First Nations is the Indian Act, passed by the federal government of the new Dominion of Canada in 1876 and still in existence today. The Indian Act was an attempt to assimilate Indigenous peoples into Canadian society as quickly as possible. You can read the complete Indian Act by clicking on this link.

One of the most infamous consequences of the Indian Act was the promotion of residential schools. Duncan Campbell Scott, Head of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1932, famously said in 1920 that "the goal of the Indian Residential School is to 'kill the Indian in the child.'" Sadly, in many cases, this goal was accomplished. Children were removed from their homes and placed in residential schools where they were not allowed to speak their language and had to give up their cultural practices, beliefs, and any connection to their Indigenous way of life. In addition, children in residential schools were often mistreated, suffering from malnourishment, tuberculosis, and other diseases, as well as experiencing physical, sexual, and mental abuse. Today, Indigenous peoples are still living with the legacy of residential schools in the form of post-traumatic stress and intergenerational trauma.[2]

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1. Pulling Together: Foundations Guide by Kory Wilson and Colleen Hodgson (MNBC). Kory Wilson is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/chapter/43/
2. https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/chapter/residential-schools/

What is Reconciliation?

Like other policies under the Indian Act, the negative effects of residential schools were passed from generation to generation. Indigenous peoples have been working hard to overcome the legacy of residential schools and to change the realities for themselves, their families, and their Nations. The federal government established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) to deal with the legacy of residential schools. Its mandate was to accumulate, document, and commemorate the experiences of the 80,000 survivors of the residential school system in Canada, so the survivors could begin to heal from the trauma of these experiences.[3] [For more information, click on this link to read a summary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action.](#)

Reconciliation is an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships. A critical part of this process involves repairing damaged trust by making apologies, providing individual and collective reparations, and following through with concrete actions that demonstrate real societal change.[4]

– Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Summary of the Final Report*, 2015

Multiple Perspectives

I have had newcomers ask me: What is it that we have to do? What is our role in this dialogue?

"As a newcomer, you may not have responsibility for the past but you do have a responsibility for the future because you made a commitment to this country. And the responsibility for the future is reconciliation. So, that means that you still have to understand what this history is, you have to understand what it has done to this country, you have to understand what it is doing to this country and you have to understand what it will continue to do, unless we change it. And the leadership from those newcomer communities that are occupying more and more leadership positions in government also need to figure out where they fit into that dialogue around change for the future, because they do fit. They are going to be influential leaders of this conversation."

– Honourable Murray Sinclair

Lighting the Way Forward: The Calls to Action in Action[5]

– Vital Conversation: Winnipeg Vital Signs, The Winnipeg Foundation, March 25, 2019

Reconciliation has many meanings depending on the context in which it is used. [For more information about using the term "reconciliation" in regard to repairing relationships with Indigenous peoples, click on this link.](#)

3. https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/chapter/truth-and-reconciliation/
4. [Pulling Together: A Guide for Curriculum Developers](#) by Asma-na-hi Antoine; Rachel Mason; Roberta Mason; Sophia Palahicky; and Carmen Rodriguez de France. Licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#). https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationcurriculumdevelopers/chapter/pathways-toward-reconciliation/
5. Full conversation video link: https://www.facebook.com/wpgfdn/videos/2313357328908155?vh=e&d=n&sfns=mo

Understanding Reconciliation

Reconciliation is about addressing past wrongs done to Indigenous peoples, making amends, and improving relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to create a better future for all. Chief Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, has stated, "Reconciliation is not an [Indigenous] problem – it involves all of us."

You can think about reconciliation as work to improve a damaged relationship. Imagine that there was an individual who had been abused, lied to, and exploited for years – that person would have a lot of fear, mistrust, and trauma. The abuser would also have negative feelings: shame, guilt, self-blame, and possibly anger toward the victim. The abuser may even blame the victim. Repairing this relationship would mean apologizing, rebuilding trust, hearing each other's stories, getting to know each other to appreciate each other's humanity, and taking concrete action to show that the relationship will be different from now on.

With reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, we are not only talking about a relationship between two individuals, but we are also talking about a relationship between multiple groups of people and between many generations over hundreds of years. Clearly, the onus for this action is on the party that caused the harm, which in this case is the European settlers who came to North America. You can see from this example that reconciliation necessarily involves intensive emotional work for all parties. For Indigenous peoples it means revisiting experiences of trauma and becoming open to forgiveness, and for European settlers it involves gaining in-depth understanding of one's own relation to Indigenous peoples and the impacts of colonization, including recognizing settler privilege and challenging the dominance of Western views and approaches.[6]

For more information about history of the Indigenous people and the impact of colonialization, read *Pulling Together: Foundations Guide.*

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6. https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationcurriculumdevelopers/chapter/indigenization-decolonization-and-reconciliation/

An Indigenous tipi now used for ceremonial and teaching purposes. Image source: Pixabay

Indigenous peoples had been living on the land that is now Canada long before European settlers arrived. When the Europeans arrived, they initially formed partnerships with Indigenous peoples, supporting each other through trading, exploring, and sharing expertise. As the European population grew, they took control of the land and attempted to assimilate Indigenous peoples into their society. This resulted in intense intergenerational trauma that Indigenous peoples are still working to recover from. Everyone in Canada, including newcomers, have a responsibility to work toward reconciliation to repair the relationships between the Indigenous peoples and others living in Canada. As you work with others at college, remember that each person has their own unique background and story. Be generous and consider the possible barriers, such as intergenerational trauma, that other people might be working to overcome.

4. Gender and Sexual Diversity

Gender and Sexual Diversity

REBECCA HIEBERT

People identify themselves differently when it comes to gender and sexuality. In Canadian culture, we aim to welcome everyone and accept them as they are. Each person's background and experience can influence the assumptions they make about gender and sexuality. We need to take time to learn new things in order to understand how to welcome the people we meet.

While you read, consider the following:

- What information is new?
- What did I used to think?
- How can I use this information to welcome others?

Gender Identity

Gender refers to behaviours, personal traits, and social positions that society attributes to being female, male, or other genders. Gender identity is your internal perception of who you are. How you, in your head, think about yourself. As you know it, do you think you fit better into the societal role of woman, or man, or do neither ring true for you and you identify as a different gender such as non-binary or genderqueer? Previously, gender was understood to be a binary system – that there were only two options, "male" or "female." In Canada, we are working toward understanding gender in a non-binary way – that there are more than two genders available for a person to identify as. In different parts of the world, recognizing gender in a non-binary way continues to be a challenge.

Transgender people's sex assigned at birth and their gender identity are not necessarily the same. A transgender woman is a person who was assigned male at birth but who identifies and/or lives as a woman; a transgender man was assigned female at birth but identifies and/or lives as a man.[1]

It has been accepted that we form our gender identities around the age of three, and after that age it is incredibly difficult to change our gender identity. Formation of gender identity is affected by hormones and environment just as much as it is by biological sex. A person can feel extreme negative feelings when they are assigned a gender based on their sex at birth that doesn't align with how they've come to identify.[2]

If someone is born with male reproductive organs and genitalia, he is likely to be raised as a boy, identify as a man, and express himself in masculine ways. We call this identity "cisgender" (when your biological sex aligns with how you

1. [Introduction to Sociology](#) by Tonja R. Conerly; Kathleen Holmes; and Asha Lal Tamang. Licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#). https://openstax.org/books/introduction-sociology-3e/pages/12-1-sex-gender-identity-and-expression
2. https://www.itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2011/11/breaking-through-the-binary-gender-explained-using-continuums/

identify and express yourself). If someone is born with male reproductive organs but identifies as female we call this identity "transgender" (when your biological sex does not align with how you identify and express yourself). [3]

Gender Expression

Gender expression is all about how you demonstrate your gender through the ways you act, dress, behave, and interact – whether that is intentional or unintentional. Gender expression is interpreted by others perceiving your gender based on traditional gender roles in society (for example, men wear pants, women wear dresses). [4] As we grow, we learn how to behave from those around us. In this socialization process, children are introduced to certain roles that are typically linked to their biological sex. [5]

The term "gender expression" refers to society's concept of how men and women are expected to look and behave. These roles are based on norms, or standards, that are created by society. Characteristics of gender, on the other hand, may vary greatly between different societies. For example, in North American culture, it is considered feminine (or a trait of the female gender) to wear a dress or skirt. However, in many Middle Eastern, Asian, and African cultures, sarongs, robes, or gowns are considered masculine. Similarly, the kilt worn by a Scottish man is not an expression of female-ness in that culture. [6]

Biological Sex

Biological sex refers to having certain features as part of your body such as the organs, hormones, and chromosomes you possess. Being biologically female means having a vagina, ovaries, two X chromosomes, and predominant estrogen. Being biologically male means having testes, a penis, an XY chromosome configuration, and predominant testosterone. [7] "Intersex" is a general term used to describe people whose sex traits, reproductive anatomy, hormones, or chromosomes are different from the typical two ways human bodies develop. Some intersex traits are recognized at birth, while others are not recognizable until puberty or later in life (interACT 2021). [8]

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation is all about who you are physically, spiritually, and emotionally attracted to. Sexual orientation is

3. https://www.itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2011/11/breaking-through-the-binary-gender-explained-using-continuums/
4. https://www.itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2011/11/breaking-through-the-binary-gender-explained-using-continuums/
5. https://openstax.org/books/introduction-sociology-3e/pages/12-1-sex-gender-identity-and-expression
6. https://openstax.org/books/introduction-sociology-3e/pages/12-1-sex-gender-identity-and-expression
7. https://www.itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2011/11/breaking-through-the-binary-gender-explained-using-continuums/
8. https://openstax.org/books/introduction-sociology-3e/pages/12-1-sex-gender-identity-and-expression

typically divided into several categories: *heterosexuality*, the attraction to individuals of the other sex; *homosexuality*, the attraction to individuals of the same sex; and *bisexuality*, the attraction to individuals of multiple genders or attraction to your own gender and other genders such as non-binary, intersex, genderqueer, or transgender.[9] Other sexual orientations include: *asexuality*, not having feelings of sexual attraction or desire for sexual contact; *pansexuality*, an attraction to people regardless of sex, gender, gender identity, or gender expression; *omnisexuality*, an attraction to people of all sexes, genders, gender identities, and gender expressions; and *queer*, a term that some people choose to use to describe their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.[10]

Putting It All Together

Gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, and sexual orientation are independent of one another (that is, they are not connected). People's sexual orientation doesn't determine their gender expression, and their gender expression isn't determined by their gender identity, and their gender identity isn't determined by their biological sex. Those things certainly *affect* one another (that is, they are related to one another) but they do not *determine* one another. For example, a person who expresses themselves as male can be sexually oriented toward men or women, or a person who has the biological sex organs of a female may identify as a woman or a man.[11]

9. Adapted from: https://www.itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2011/11/breaking-through-the-binary-gender-explained-using-continuums/
10. https://openstax.org/books/introduction-sociology-3e/pages/12-1-sex-gender-identity-and-expression
11. https://www.itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2011/11/breaking-through-the-binary-gender-explained-using-continuums/

A transfeminine executive with a non-binary coworker. Author: The Gender Spectrum Collection by Zachary Drucker. Image source: https://genderphotos.vice.com/#Work. License: CC BY-ND (Attribution NonCommerical NoDerivatives)

Key Takeaways

We need to consider the importance of sexual and gender diversity when working with other people at college and in the workplace. We can recognize and value each person's unique identity and welcome people as they present themselves.

5. Cultural Diversity

Cultural Diversity

REBECCA HIEBERT

Across cultures, human beings share some universal habits such as eating and sleeping and these habits are biologically and physiologically based, not culturally based. Culture is the unique way that we have learned to eat and sleep based on our background. Other members of our culture have taught us slowly and consciously (or even subconsciously) what it means to eat and sleep. The way we behave is based on our cultural experiences.

While you read, consider the following:

- What information is new?
- What did I used to think?
- How can I use this information to welcome others?

The culture that we grew up in has dictated the value systems that we have. Values are deeply felt and often serve as principles that guide us in our perceptions and behaviours. Using our values, certain ideas are judged to be right or wrong, good or bad, important or not important, desirable or not desirable. Our culture dictates how we perceive common values such as fairness, respect, integrity, compassion, happiness, kindness, creativity, curiosity, religion, wisdom, and more.

Our values are supported by our assumptions of our world. Assumptions are ideas that we believe and hold to be true. Beliefs come about through repetition. This repetition becomes a habit we form and leads to habitual patterns of thinking and doing. We do not realize our assumptions because they are ingrained in us at a subconscious level. We become aware of our assumptions when we encounter a value or belief that is different from our own, and it makes us feel that we need to stand up for, or validate, our beliefs. When we meet someone from a different culture who has different values from us, we may judge them harshly. Furthermore, we may make the assumption that all people from that culture are the same; however, this is incorrect as each person is unique and has their own personal experiences within their culture. In this way, we can think of each of us as being a culture of one.[1]

Exercise
Reflect on these questions:

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1. [Intercultural Communication for the Community College](#) by Karen Krumrey-Fulks. Licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#). Disclaimer: Work in progress. https://www.oercommons.org/courses/intercultural-communication-for-the-community-college/view

- What values do I have because of my culture?
- What different values might others have because of their culture?
- How might these values make it difficult to work together? What can I do?

Culture as an Iceberg

The ability to recognize and understand your own cultural context is seen as an essential prerequisite for understanding and interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds. An iceberg is often used as a metaphor for culture. On the surface we are able to see the more obvious aspects of culture, such as language, clothing, or food; however, there are many more aspects that lie deeper and require time and critical thinking to comprehend, including values such as leadership skills and teamwork expectations.
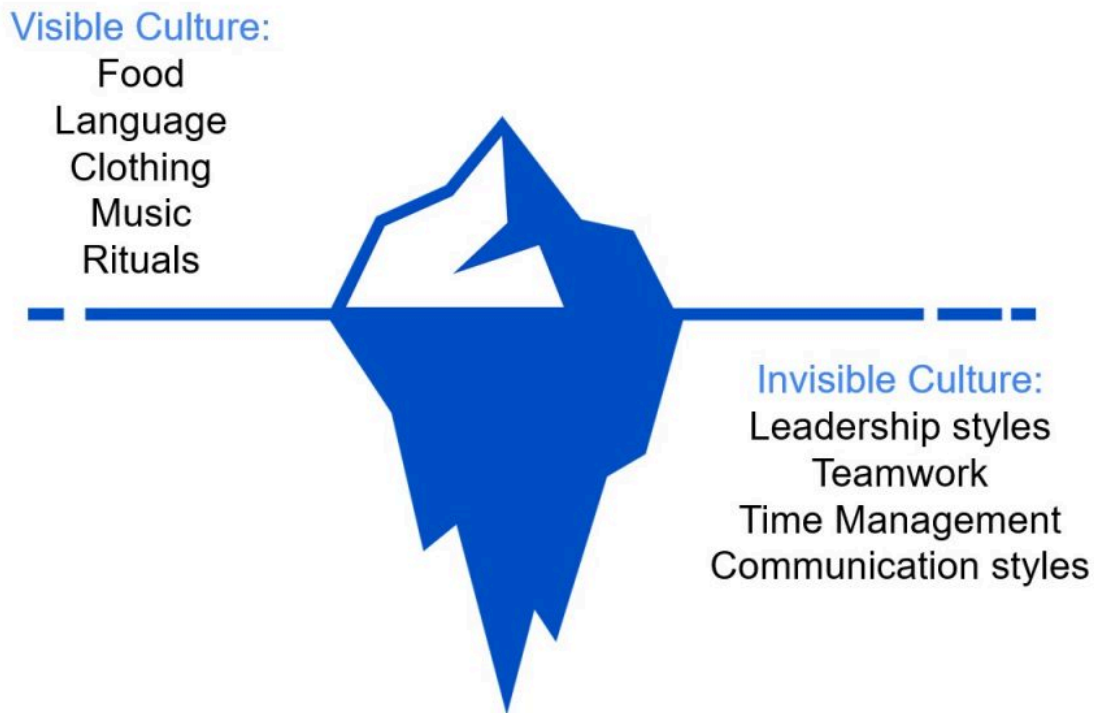
Culture Iceberg, Image Source: Adapted from https://pixabay.com/vectors/iceberg-iceburg-ice-glacier-frozen-2070977/, Author: madartzgraphics, License: CC0 Creative Commons Zero

When we begin to recognize the complexity of culture, it becomes apparent that ways of thinking about culture that tend to oversimplify, reduce, and homogenize cultures are inadequate. If we are interested in understanding our own

culture and in learning about the cultures of other people, we need to develop an awareness of how our own culture has affected our choices and behaviour and how other people's cultures have affected their choices and behaviours.[2]

Culture Shock

When a person moves to a new place with a new culture they may experience culture shock. Culture shock is associated with feelings of uncertainty or confusion because a person becomes immersed in a culture that is unfamiliar to them. This can sometimes lead to feelings of anxiety or stress and make it difficult for the person to adapt to their new home.

Culture shock can take on may different stages. At first you may be excited by all the new things that you get to experience in the new culture, but as this excitement wears off you may begin to feel frustrated with the differences in communication styles and the miscommunications occurring with others. Over time, you may begin to adjust to the culture as you become more familiar with the beliefs, values, and social practices of your new location. Eventually, you will adapt to this new culture and feel more comfortable and at ease in your surroundings.[3]

Key Takeaways

Culture is what we learn from our family and community. It influences visible features (such as dress, language, food, and religion) and invisible features (such as our values around teamwork, leadership, body language, and communication styles). When we move to a new culture, this can cause us to experience culture shock because our unique values may not align with those of the new culture. When interacting with others in college, recognize the diversity of culture in your classmates and be open to adapting your expectations to bridge culture gaps.

2. [Intercultural Learning: Critical preparation for international student travel](#) by Peter Jones; Debra Miles; and Narayan Gopalkrishnan. Licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#). https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/intercultural-learning-critical-preparation-for-international-student-travel
3. [Creating Intercultural Communication Competence](#) by Tammera Stokes Rice. Licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#). Adapted from p. 81: https://www.oercommons.org/courses/creating-intercultural-communication-competence

6. Anti-Racism

Anti-Racism

REBECCA HIEBERT

In the past, Europeans colonized many different countries in the world. This resulted in a redistribution of world resources through the actions of the dominant Europeans. In other words, the Europeans held racist beliefs and used them to justify the exercise of power in many areas of life, thereby producing dramatic negative economic and social impacts for many peoples around the world. The effects of racism are still felt all around the globe today because racialized people, or BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of colour), continue to face barriers when accessing education, healthcare, and employment, and experience an overall lack of influence in decision making in government and business.[1]

While you read, consider the following:

- What information is new?
- What did I used to think?
- How can I use this information to welcome others?

Racism is a set of economic, political, and ideological practices whereby a dominant group exercises control over subordinate groups.[2]

Racism is a concept founded on the scientifically incorrect idea that there are biological inequalities between people of different races. Racism is informed by the belief that some races are superior than others and that the superior races should be able to control so-called inferior races. Scientifically, all human beings are from the same species and therefore have the same abilities and potentials. Only when one group of people exercises control over another group does that limit their access to opportunities and therefore the abilities of that group.[3]

For those who come from a privileged racial background, unpacking what it means to be white can prove a challenging and confronting task. The privilege of being white in a Euro-centric cultures such as Canada means that a person doesn't need to be aware of their culture. They have been designed for the culture and the culture has been designed for them. Effective change lies in making whiteness visible by exploring it as a racial or cultural construct, and defining whiteness in a non-defensive and non-racist manner.

In order to break down the barrier of racism we need to be anti-racist. This means white society must be willing to look at themselves honestly, to confront the truth about themselves and the world, and to realize that non-white people experience the world differently than white people. Being anti-racist means taking action to make space for racialized peoples' voices and recognizing when systems have not been set up to support racialized people.[4]

1. Dominelli, 2008, as cited in [Intercultural Learning: Critical preparation for international student travel](#)
2. United Nations, 1965, as cited in [Intercultural Learning: Critical preparation for international student travel](#)
3. Cheboksarov, 1980, as cited in [Intercultural Learning: Critical preparation for international student travel](#)
4. Sue, D. W., 2006, as cited in [Intercultural Learning: Critical preparation for international student travel](#)

Consider the following questions:

- How has racism affected my life?
- What can I do to be anti-racist and break down barriers to make space for everyone's voices?
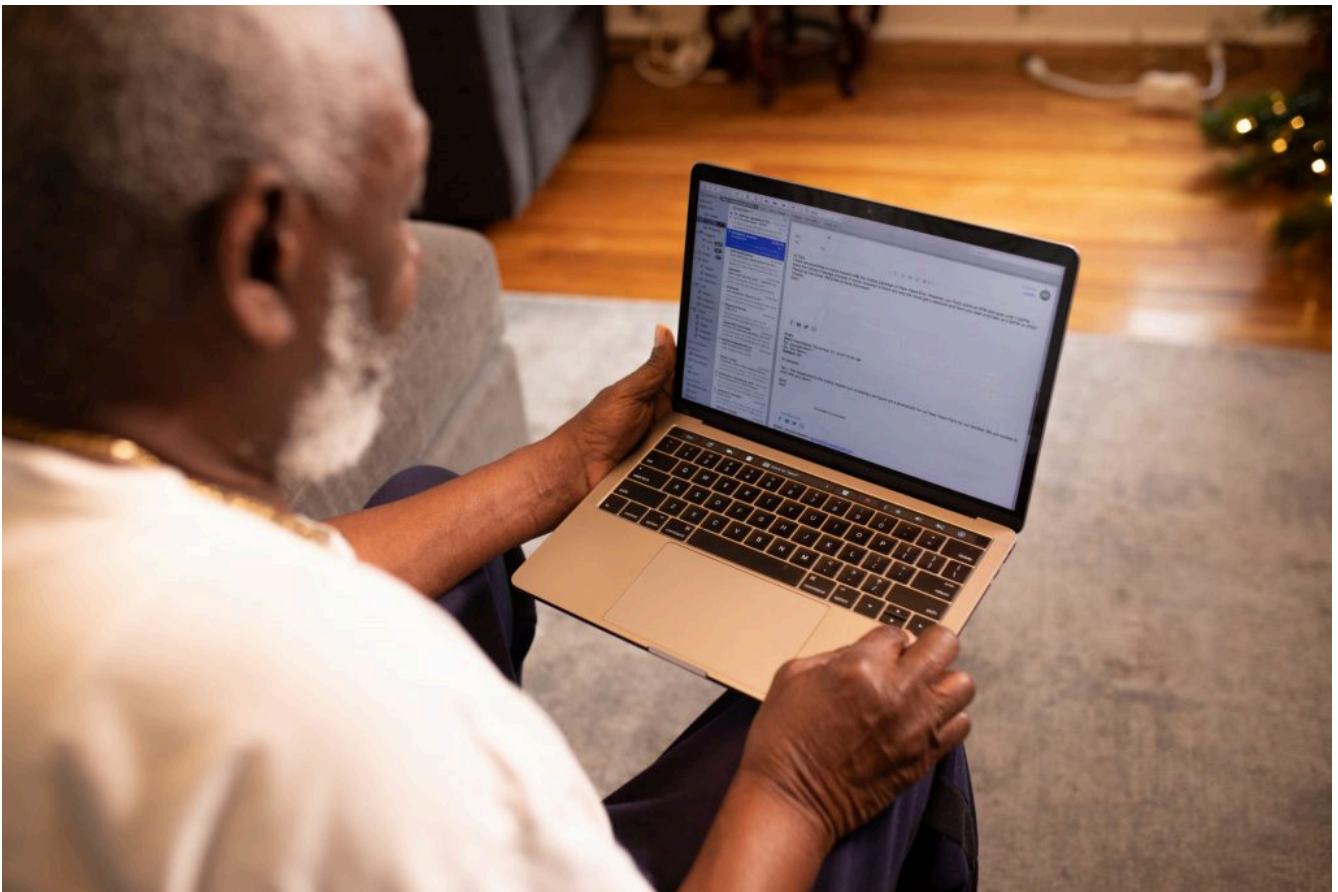
Older man using laptop. Author: Nappy Co. Image source: https://nappy.co/photo/346. License: CC0 (Creative Commons Zero)

Key Takeaways

Europeans colonized many different parts of the world and exercised control over many groups of racialized people. In Canada, this colonization continues to be felt by racialized people when they face barriers to community supports such as healthcare and education. People with privilege in Canada need to increase their awareness of what that privilege affords and how a lack of privilege can increase barriers for others. In college, we can work toward be anti-racist by ensuring that everyone's voice is heard and by breaking down barriers that create oppression for racialized people.

Attribution Statement: Adapted from [Intercultural Learning: Critical preparation for international student travel](#) by Peter Jones; Debra Miles; and Narayan Gopalkrishnan, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#).

7. Diversity of Abilities

Diversity of Abilities

REBECCA HIEBERT

The people we work with at college or in the workplace may have diverse abilities. People may wear glasses, walk with a cane, use a wheelchair, or use other assistive devices. People may have developed effective coping strategies to manage their disabilities. We can make choices in how we interact with others in order to make it equitable for those with disabilities to participate.

While you read, consider the following:

- What information is new?
- What did I used to think?
- How can I use this information to welcome others?

Multiple Perspectives

Imagine that you are standing in front of a closed door. On the other side of that door is a world of information — news, entertainment, job listings, and updates from family and friends. You see other people enter that doorway, but you can't find a way to enter.

People with disabilities come up against locked doors in the digital world continually.[1]

Accessibility

When working with others, we can *open the door* to make information more available by choosing to increase accessibility. When we make things more accessible, we create a space where everyone can contribute.

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1. Adapted from https://docslib.org/doc/9569501/enabling-access-through-web-renewal-handbook

A sidewalk ramp. Image source: https://pressbooks.library.ryers on.ca/docs/chapter/ about-accessibility/ Author: Digital Education Strategies, The Chang School, License: CC BY-NC-SA (Attribution NonCommerical ShareAlike)

A pair of glasses. Image source: https://pressbooks.library.ryers on.ca/docs/chapter/ about-accessibility/ Author: Digital Education Strategies, The Chang School, License: CC BY-NC-SA (Attribution NonCommerical ShareAlike)

A movie scene with subtitles. Image source: https://pressbooks.library.ryers on.ca/docs/chapter/ about-accessibility/ Author: Digital Education Strategies, The Chang School, License: CC BY-NC-SA (Attribution NonCommerical ShareAlike)

If you've used a sidewalk ramp, eyeglasses, or video subtitles, you've used assistive technology that aids with accessibility.

Accessibility, when it comes to digital content, is often compared to a sidewalk ramp or curb cut — it's a feature that ends up benefitting *all* people, not just those with mobility issues.

Diverse Abilities and Accessibility

There are many reasons why people may be experiencing varying degrees of auditory, cognitive, physical, speech, and visual disabilities. For instance, some may have disabilities from birth, an illness, a disease, or an accident, or they may develop impairments with age. Some may not consider themselves to have disabilities even if they do experience such functional limitations.

Here's a breakdown of the different barriers and how we can be inclusive:[2]

Visual

Diversity of visual abilities may include people with low or no vision or people with colour blindness. Accessibility may include:

- enlarging or reducing text size and images;
- using appropriate font colour and background (for more information on colour blindness, click this link.; to check if the colours you are using are colour-blind-friendly, click this link);
- using appropriate headings for text-to-speech readers.

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2. Understanding Document Accessibility by The Chang School, Toronto Metropolitan University. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. https://pressbooks.library.ryerson.ca/docs/chapter/about-accessibility/

Auditory

Diversity of auditory abilities may include people with low or no hearing. Accessibility may include:

- adding captions and subtitles to audio or video and including transcripts;
- using high-quality audio with limited background noise;
- providing a sign-language interpreter.

Mobility

Diversity of mobility may include people with weakness and limitations due to muscular control or physical form and people experiencing chronic pain. Accessibility may include:

- using a specifically designed keyboard or mouse;
- using mobile aids, such as a cane or wheelchair;
- using voice recognition, eye tracking, or other hands-free interactions.

Cognitive, Learning, or Neurodivergent

Diversity of cognitive, learning, or neurodivergent abilities may include people with neurological challenges that may affect how well they hear, see, speak, and understand information. Accessibility may include:

- ensuring content is written in plain language;
- structuring content with consistent formatting;
- providing different ways of navigating a website (for example, a menu and a search bar);
- providing options to suppress blinking, flashing, or flickering content.

Speech

Diversity of speech abilities may include people who have difficulty producing speech that is recognizable by others. Accessibility may include:

- providing alternative modes of interaction for applications that use voice commands;
- communicating using email, messaging, or feedback forms instead of telephone communication;
- using high-quality microphones to capture or enhance the vocal message.

People with different abilities. Author: Disabled and Here. Image source: https://affecttheverb.com/disabledandhere. License: CC0 (Creative Commons Zero)

In college, you may meet people who use a variety of strategies and accommodations to overcome ability challenges. You can improve interactions with others by taking the above considerations into account so everyone can contribute to activities or conversations with minimal accommodations.

8. Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity

REBECCA HIEBERT

Neurodiversity describes the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways; there is no one "right" way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and differences are not viewed as deficits.

While you read, consider the following:

- What information is new?
- What did I used to think?
- How can I use this information to welcome others?

The word neurodiversity refers to the diversity of all people, but it is often used in the context of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), as well as other neurological or developmental conditions such as ADHD or learning disabilities. The neurodiversity movement has aimed to increase acceptance and inclusion of *all* people while embracing neurological differences. Rather than viewing neurodiversity as a difficulty or a condition, it is viewed as a particular way of viewing the world. Knowledge about neurodiversity and respectful language is important to create an inclusive environment for all people, including people with neurodevelopmental differences.[1]

Although there is broad diversity across the population, some people have neurological variations that make it particularly challenging for their communication, self-expression, and interactions with others. Neurodivergence is a broad umbrella and neurological variations can include autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, and tics. Judy Singer, who coined the term *neurodiversity*, proposes that we are all neurodiverse because no two humans on the planet are exactly the same.[2]

Neurodiversity is a combination of traits that are seen as both strengths and challenges. Depending on the neurodiverse variation and its intensity, individuals can display different features. Below is information about some neurodivergent variations.

1. https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/what-is-neurodiversity-202111232645
2. Used with permission: https://www.neurodiversityhub.org/home

Autism or ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder)

Features

People who identify as autistic may:

- have average to very high intelligence;
- have good verbal skills and rich vocabulary;
- have the ability to think in visual images and identify patterns;
- have the ability to retain large amounts of information, especially about topics of special interest;
- have an ability to focus for long periods on areas of interest;
- have the ability to perform repetitive tasks where accuracy and routine are important;
- be reliable and punctual, and enjoy schedules.[3]

People who identify as autistic may:

- have trouble speaking;
- have trouble recognizing non-verbal communication;
- make repetitive actions;
- be overly sensitive to sounds, sights, or smells;
- be less sensitive to pain.[4]

Autism is considered to be a lifelong, developmental condition that affects how a person thinks, communicates with and relates to other people, and interacts with the world around them. Autism is much more common than was previously thought. One in 66 people in Canada are thought to be on the autism spectrum.[5] You may know someone with autism, or be on the autism spectrum yourself.

The Canadian college system is set up for neurotypical people. This means that colleges have brightly lit classrooms, classes are run with the expectation that students will interact freely, and students are expected sit quietly while instructors lecture. Many people with autism have strategies for adapting their needs to fit into to this neurotypical setting.

3. Used with permission: https://www.neurodiversityhub.org/what-is-neurodiversity

4. Understanding autism by OpenLearn. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. https://www.open.edu/openlearn/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=66946&section=2.1

5. https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/infographic-autism-spectrum-disorder-children-youth-canada-2018.html

ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)

Features

People who identify as having ADHD may:

- have the ability to hyper-focus;
- have higher levels of creativity and curiosity;
- be innovative and inventive;
- have leadership abilities;
- have high energy, spontaneity, and productivity.[6]

People who identify as having ADHD may:

- have difficulty completing or planning for future events;
- resist activities that don't have a clear goal;
- have difficulty re-engaging with a task after being distracted;
- communicate freely;
- have trouble regulating their emotions;
- have increased anxiety.[7]

It is estimated that 1.1 million Canadian adults have ADHD according to the Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada.[8] People who identify as having ADHD may have strategies to adapt their needs to fit into the Canadian college experience to manage meeting long-range assignment deadlines, regulating their emotions in class, and staying focused when moving between tasks.

6. Used with permission: https://www.neurodiversityhub.org/what-is-neurodiversity
7. https://www.additudemag.com/adhd-in-adults-new-diagnostic-criteria/
8. https://globalnews.ca/news/4027630/adhd-adults-symptoms/

Dyslexia

Features

People who identify as dyslexic may:

- have improved visual processing and pattern recognition;
- have good spatial knowledge;
- see things more holistically;
- have mechanical aptitude;
- have sharper peripheral vision;
- be highly creative.[9]

People who identify as dyslexic may:

- have difficulty learning to read and write;
- have difficulty coding, learning, and retrieving associations between verbal and visual information;
- have trouble with mental arithmetic;
- have trouble with directional or sequencing information.[10]

According to the Ontario Branch of the International Dyslexia Association, it is estimated that 15 to 20 percent of the Canadian population have dyslexia. That is an estimated five million people.[11] People who identify as having dyslexia may use strategies to fit into the Canadian college experience such as using screen readers, taking extra time to complete tests or assignments, or presenting information in alternative formats.

Key Takeaways

Neurodiversity describes the fact that we all have different ways of interacting with the world through thinking, learning, and behaving. Those who identify as neurodiverse, with neurological variations such as autism, ADHD, and dyslexia, may experience challenges when interacting with others and need to make accommodations in order to manage. People with neurodivergent features may or may not choose to share their experience with you. Whether someone identifies themselves as neurodivergent or not, you can be open to working with people in diverse ways in order to make space for people who may experience the world differently from you. If you are unsure, you can ask the individual what kind of interactions would best support them to be included in activities.

9. Used with permission: https://www.neurodiversityhub.org/what-is-neurodiversity
10. Understanding dyslexia by OpenLearn. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. https://www.open.edu/openlearn/education-development/education/understanding-dyslexia/content-section-1.4.1
11. https://www.bgcsoutheast.ca/programs/reading-clinic/dyslexia

ACADEMIC SKILLS

9. Study Strategies

Study Strategies

REBECCA HIEBERT

Learning Objectives

After reading this page, you will be able to:

- avoid distractions;
- create a suitable study environment;
- debunk common study myths;
- use study strategies.

Why Is This important?

While in college, you need to learn a lot of new information. It is important to have strategies to help you review and retain the information so that you can succeed with assignments and tests as well as be able to use the information when you complete your program and enter the workplace.

Preparing to Study

Studying is hard work, but you can learn some techniques to help you be a more effective learner. Two major and interrelated techniques involve avoiding distractions and creating a study environment that works to help you concentrate.

Avoiding Distractions

We have always have distractions — video games, television shows, movies, music, friends — even housecleaning can distract us from doing something else we need to do, such as study for an exam. That may seem extreme, but sometimes vacuuming is the preferred activity to buckling down and working through calculus problems! Cell phones, tablets, and

laptops that offer a world of possibilities to us have brought *distraction* to an entirely new level. When was the last time you were with a large group of people when you didn't see at least a few people on devices?

A photo shows hands operating a game controller and playing football on a video game device. Image source: https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/6-2-studying. Attribution: Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

When you study, your biggest challenge may be to block out all the competing noise. Letting go of that connection to our friends and the larger world, even for a short amount of time, can be difficult. Perhaps the least stressful way to allow yourself a distraction-free environment is to make the study session a finite amount of time: long enough to get a significant amount of studying accomplished but short enough to hold your attention.

You can increase that attention time with practice and focus. Pretend it is a professional appointment or meeting during which you cannot check e-mail or texts or otherwise engage with your devices. We have all become very attached to the ability to check in — anonymously on social media or with family and friends via text and calls. If you set a specific amount of time to study without interruptions, you can convince your wandering mind that you will soon be able to return to your link to the outside world. Start small and set an alarm — a 30-minute period to review notes, then a brief break, then another 45-minute study session to quiz yourself on the material, and so on.

When you prepare for your optimal study session, remember to do these things:

- put your phone out of sight in another room or at least some place where you will not see or hear it vibrate or ring — just flipping it over is not enough;
- turn off the television or music;
- unless you are deliberately working with a study group, study somewhere alone so you won't be distracted by other people talking.

If you live with lots of other people or don't have access to much privacy, see if you can negotiate some space alone to study. Ask others to leave one part of the house or identify an area in one room as a quiet zone during certain hours. Ask politely for a specific block of time; most people will respect your educational goals and be willing to accommodate you.

If you're trying to work out quiet zones with small children in the house, the bathtub with a pillow can make a fine study place.

Study Environment

You may not always be in the mood to study. If you have a far-away deadline, you might think you can skip a study session on occasion, but you shouldn't get into the habit of ignoring a strong study routine.

Sometimes you just need to sit down and study whenever and wherever you can manage — in the car waiting for someone, on the bus, at a sports game as you cheer on a friend, and that's okay if this is the exception. For long-term success in studying, you need a better study setting that will help you get the most out of your limited study time. Whatever your space limitations, find a place that you can dedicate to reading, writing, note taking, and reviewing. This doesn't need to be elaborate and expensive — all you need is a flat surface large enough to hold either your computer or writing paper, book or notes, pens/pencils/markers, and subject-specific materials you may need (such as stand-alone calculators, drawing tools, and notepads).

Exercise

Look at the two photos. Describe what it would be like to study in these two different environments. Which would you choose?

A neat desk and a messy desk. Image source: https://openstax.org/ books/college-success/ pages/6-2-studying (Credit: Ali West / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

If it is possible, try to make this area exclusive to your study sessions. This way, you can leave it set up all the time. You may have to try out numerous places to determine what works best for you.

You don't need an elaborate setting, but you may want to consider including a few effective additions if you have the space:

- small bulletin board for often-used formulas;
- encouraging quotes or pictures of your goal;

- whiteboard for brainstorming;
- sticky notes for reminders in texts and notes;
- file holder for most-used documents;
- bookshelf for reference books.

Study Strategies

Spacing, interleaving, and practice testing are three effective strategies that will make an enormous difference in how well you demonstrate your learning as well as how well you do on assignments and tests. Here is a brief overview of each of the three strategies:

- **Spacing** — This has to do with *when* you study. Hint: Don't cram or try to study everything at once over many hours; study over a period of days, preferably with breaks in between.
- **Interleaving** — This has to do with *what* you study. Hint: Don't study just one type of content, topic, chapter, or unit at a time; instead, mix up the content when you study.
- **Practice testing** — This has to do with *how* you study. Hint: Don't just reread content. You must quiz or test your ability to retrieve the information from your brain.

Spacing

When studying for tests, it is important to space out your study time over multiple days. Sometimes when we don't plan ahead, we end up cramming or staying up all night to review content before a test. Cramming is not an effective study strategy. Research on memory suggests that giving yourself time in between study sessions actually helps you forget the information. And forgetting, which sounds like it would be something you *don't* want to do, is actually good for your ability to remember information long term. That's because every time you forget something, you need to relearn it, leading to gains in your overall understanding and "storage" of the material.

The table below demonstrates how spacing works. Assume you are going to spend about four hours studying for a business exam. Cramming would have you spending all of those four hours the night before the exam. With spacing, on the other hand, you would study a little bit each day.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cramming					Study for 4 hours	**Business Test**	
Spacing	Study for 1 hour		Study for 30 minutes	Study for 1 hour	Study for 90 minutes	**Business Test**	

Interleaving

Another study technique is called interleaving, which calls for students to mix up the content that is being studied. This means not just spending the entire study session on one sort of problem and then moving on to a different sort of problem at a later time.

If you take the schedule we used for the spacing example above, we can add the interleaving concepts to it. Notice that interleaving includes revisiting material from a previous chapter or unit or revisiting different types of problems or question sets. The benefit is that your brain is "mixing up" the information, which can sometimes lead to short-term forgetting but can lead to long-term memory and learning.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Reread chapter 1 　Reorganize notes		Reread chapters 1 and 2 　Take chapter 1 online quiz 　Create chapter 2 concept map	Reread chapters 1-3 　Take online quizzes for chapters 2 and 3 　Reorganize notes 　Create practice test	Reread notes 　Review items missed on online quizzes 　Take practice test and review challenge areas	**Business Test, Chapters 1-3**

Practice Testing

Practice testing means testing yourself to see if you have learned the required information. You can do a practice "test" in a number of ways. One is to test yourself as you are reading or taking in information. You can ask yourself what a paragraph or text section means as you read. To do this, read a passage in a text, cover up the material, and ask yourself, "What was the main idea of this section?" Recite aloud or write down your answer, and then check it against the original information.

Another, more involved way to practice test is to create flashcards or an actual test. This takes more time, but there are online programs such as Quizlet that make it a little easier. Practice testing is an effective study strategy because it helps you practice *retrieving* information, which is what you want to be able to do when you are taking the real test.

Another form of practice testing to is to explain the information to someone else. You can explain the course material to a friend or family member and *teach them* the lesson. When doing this, you may find you know more about the subject than you thought or you may realize quickly that you need to do more studying.

Debunking Study Myths

Sometimes we think we are studying effectively when really the strategies we are using are not actually helping us retain the information. Avoiding the following ineffective study strategies will help you become a better student.

Myth #1: Multitasking while studying is effective.

How many times do you eat in the car? Watch TV while you write out a grocery list? Listen to music while you cook dinner? Type an e-mail while you're on the phone with someone else and jot down notes about the call? The common term for when you attempt to do more than one thing at a time is *multitasking* and almost everyone does it. On some days, you simply cannot accomplish all that you want to get done, so you double up. The problem is, multitasking doesn't work. When we multitask we aren't really doing two tasks at once, we are rapidly switching between tasks and this means we focus on neither task for very long and do neither task very well.

Myth #2: Highlighting main points of a text is useful.

Another study myth is the idea that highlighting a text as you read it will help you retain information. Highlighting is a surface activity that means you have only interacted with the material once. Reading and highlighting material once is only the first step in a good study practice. If you allow highlighting to take up all your time, you may think you are fully prepared for an exam when really you have not learned the information. Actually, you need to spend more time reviewing and retrieving your lessons and ideas from the text or class lecture, as well as quizzing yourself, to learn the material so you can perform well on the exam. Highlighting is a task you can do rather easily, and it makes you feel good because you are actively engaging with your text, but true learning needs reviewing and questioning to ensure the material is retained.

Myth #3: Studying effectively should be easy.

There is nothing effortless, or even pleasant at times, about studying. This is why so many students don't put in the time necessary to learn complex material: it takes time, effort, and, in some cases, a little drudgery. This is not to say that the outcome — learning and maybe making a high grade — is not pleasant and rewarding. It is just that when done right, learning takes focus, deliberate strategies, and time. Think about a superstar athlete who puts in countless hours of drills and conditioning so that she makes her work on the field look easy. If you can also *enjoy* the studying, the skill development, and the knowledge building, then you will most likely be more motivated to do the work.

Exercise

Reflect on your study skills by answering the following questions:

When are you most likely to multitask? How could you be more aware of this practice and try to eliminate it, especially when it comes to studying?

How can you make your initial text highlighting more time effective so you that you improve your information retention?

What is one more thing you can do to become a more effective studier?

Key Takeaways

It is important to have a suitable place to study, avoid distractions, and use effective study strategies to successfully learn the material for your courses.

10. Note Taking

Notetaking

REBECCA HIEBERT

Learning Objectives

After reading this page, you will be able to:

- use note taking to increase information retention;
- use different note-taking systems;
- use short forms when note taking

Why Is This important?

When attending classes and reading course materials, you will be required to learn a lot of information. By determining the key details and taking notes in an organized and clear fashion, you will be able to create your own version of the most important content for your courses. You can use your notes to review the material regularly in order to increase memory retention for assignments, tests, and when you enter the workplace.

Note taking is a study practice you will carry throughout college and into your professional life. Setting yourself up for successful note taking is almost as important as the actual taking of notes, and what you do after your note-taking session is equally significant. Well-written notes help you organize your thoughts, enhance your memory, and participate in class discussion, and they prepare you to respond successfully on exams.

Note Taking

Beyond providing a record of the information you are reading or hearing, notes help you organize the ideas and help you make meaning out of something about which you may not be familiar. Taking notes also helps you stay focused on the question at hand. You can take notes during presentations or class lectures to help you follow the speaker's main points and condense the material into a more readily usable format. Strong notes build on your prior knowledge of a subject, help you discuss trends or patterns present in the information, and direct you toward areas needing further research or reading.

A student takes down notes on a notebook inside a classroom. Image source: https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/5-3-taking-notes, Attribution: Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

When taking notes, it is not a good habit to transcribe every single word a speaker utters. Learn to listen for main ideas and distinguish between these main ideas and details that typically support the ideas. Include examples that explain the main ideas that you can refer back to later on to help you remember the class information.

The notes you take can be used as a study guide after your class is over. Research on this topic concludes that without active engagement after taking notes, most students forget 60–75 percent of material for which they took the notes — within two days! This information about memory loss was first brought to light by 19th-century German psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus. For more information about Hermann Ebbinghaus's forgetting curve click on this link.

Take Notes To Remember

You should take notes during class so that you do not forget valuable and important information. Even though there is an incredible amount of information on the internet that we can access 24 hours a day, seven days a week, you do not have the ability to access the internet during exams. We've become accustomed to searching for information on

demand to find what we need when we need it. The consequence is that we don't often commit information to memory because we know it will be there tomorrow if we wish to search for it again. This causes challenges with preparation for exams as what we're tested on is in our brain rather than information we can search for. Thus, there is an importance of taking notes. "Note-taking facilitates both recall of factual material and the synthesis and application of new knowledge, particularly when notes are reviewed prior to exams."[1]

In order to try to retain information long term, we must move it from our short-term memory to our long-term memory. One of the best ways to do that is through repetition. The more we review information, and the sooner we review once we initially learn it, the more reinforced that information is in our long-term memory. The first step in being able to review is to take notes when you are originally learning the information. Students who do not take notes in class in the first place will not be able to recall all of the information covered in order to best review.

Taking notes during lectures is a skill, just like riding a bike. If you have never taken notes while someone else is speaking, it's important to know that you will not be an expert at it right away. It is challenging to listen to someone speak and then make a note about what they said, while at the same time continuing to listen to their next thought.

Some instructors will give you cues to let you know something is important. If you hear or see one of these cues, that indicates that the information is important and that you should write it down. This might include an instructor saying, "this is important," or "this will be covered on the exam." If you notice an instructor giving multiple examples, repeating information or spending a lot of time on one idea, these may be cues. Writing on the board or presenting a handout or visual information may also be a cue.[2]

Exercise

Reflect on your past note-taking experiences by answering the following questions:

- In the past, have you taken notes during classes?
- What steps will you need to take to get into the practice of regularly taking notes?
- What would happen if you never took notes in class?

Preparing to Take Notes

The 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. For this reason, you need to develop a way to organize all your notes for each class so they remain together and organized. If you are taking notes with paper and pen, a 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 separate course. If you are typing your notes, you can organize your notes in folders on your computer. If you don't keep your notes organized, you will waste time searching for them within your class handouts or in the files of your computer.

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1. http://www.math.lsa.umich.edu/~krasny/math156_crlt.pdf
2. Blueprint for Success in College and Career by Dave Dillon, licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. https://press.rebus.community/blueprint2/chapter/27-taking-notes-in-class/
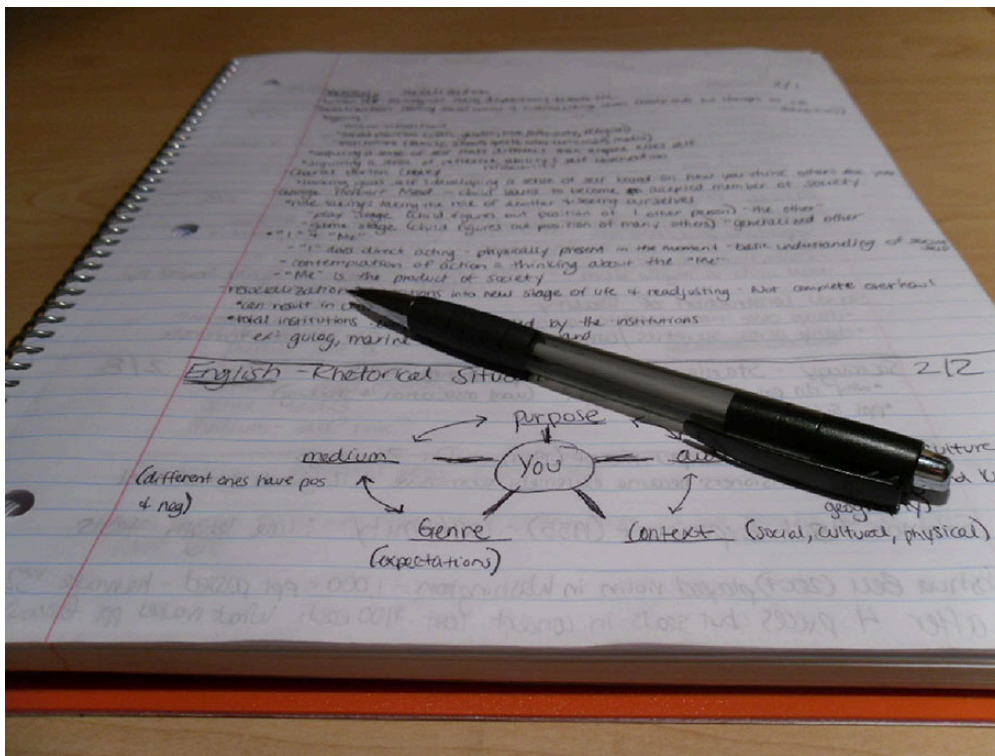
Open notebook full of notes and a pen. Image source: https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/5-3-taking-notes, Attribution: English106 / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0)

Managing Note-Taking Systems

It is best to develop a note-taking system and use it consistently. To keep yourself organized, all your notes should start off with an identifier, including 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. 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.

The strategies in this section represent various ways to take notes so that you can use them to study after the initial note-taking session. The note-taking strategies include: the Cornell method; outlining; and concept mapping and visual note taking.

Cornell Method

When using the Cornell method, take a standard piece of note paper and divide it into three sections by drawing a horizontal line across your paper about 3-5 centimetres (1-2 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 5 centimetres (2 inches) (the questions 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. 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. The Cornell Method provides you with a well-organized set of notes that will help you study and review them 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.

Topic/Objective:		Name:
		Class/Period:
		Date:
Essential Question:		
Questions:	Notes:	
Summary:		

When using the Cornell method, a note paper has rows and columns for "Topic/Objective," "Name," "Class/Period," "Date," "Essential Question," "Questions," "Notes," and "Summary." Image source: https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/5-3-taking-notes, Attribution: Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

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 instead of transcribing the speaker's words verbatim. Practice the shortcut abbreviations covered in the next section and avoid writing in complete sentences. Use bullet points or phrases to convey meaning. If you know you will need to expand on 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* by 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 24 hours, 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 — 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 heard the same lecture, to make sure you all understood the key points. Now, before you move onto something else, review the large notes column, and quiz yourself over the key ideas you recorded in the recall column. Repeat this step often, 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 will need to succeed on any quizzes and exams.

The main advantage of the Cornell method is that you are setting yourself up to have organized, workable notes. The neat format helps you move into study mode without needing to copy less organized notes or making sense of a large amount of information you aren't sure how to process because you can't remember key ideas or what you meant. If you write notes in your classes without any sort of system and later come across something like "Napoleon—short" in the middle of a your notes, what can you do at this point? Is that important? Did it connect with something relevant from the lecture? How would you possibly know? By taking organized notes, you are your best advocate for setting yourself up for success in college.

Outlining

An outline is another note-taking style. You can use 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. The following formal outline example shows the basic pattern:

I. Dogs (*main topic–usually general*)

    A. German Shepherd (*concept related to main topic*)

        1. Protection (*supporting info about the concept*)
        2. Assertive
        3. Loyal

    B. Weimaraner (*concept related to main topic*)

        1. Family-friendly (*supporting info about the concept*)
        2. Active
        3. Healthy

II. Cats (*main topic*)

It is important to 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. However, 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 would continue on with this sort of 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 note-taking method that appeals to learners who prefer a visual representation of notes is called *concept mapping* or sometimes *mind mapping*. There are many variations of this method, 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. 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 may find it helpful to use your paper in the landscape format as you add more main ideas.
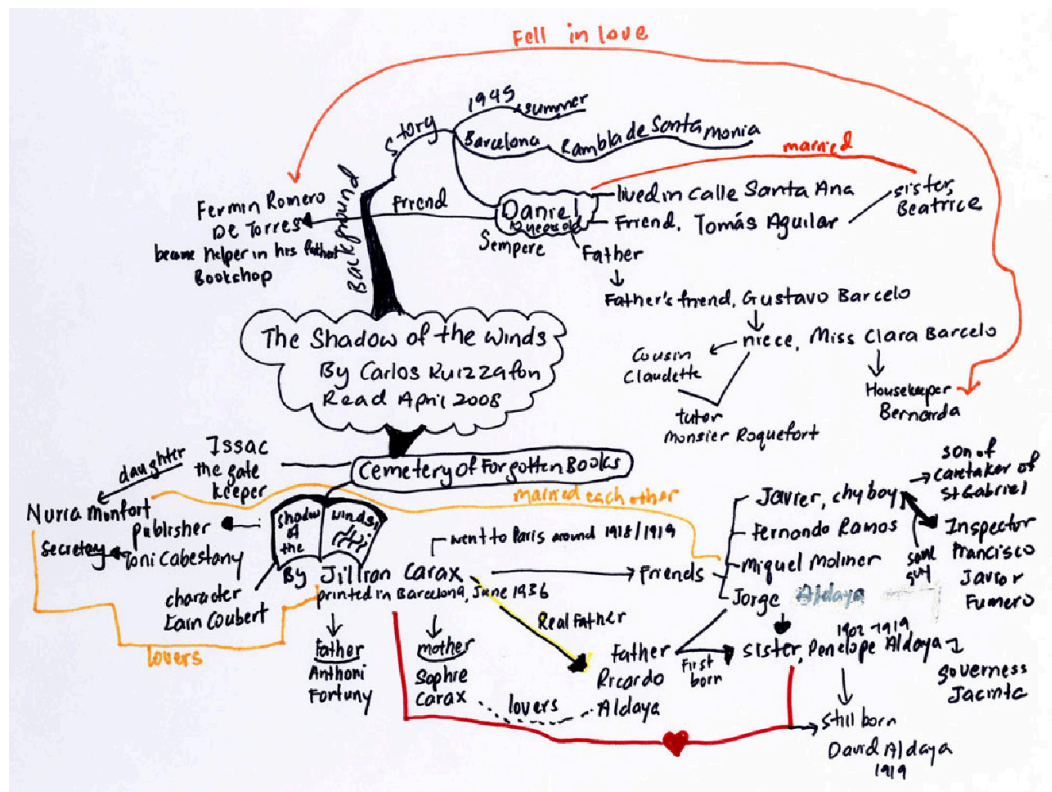
A concept map shows a student's notes using connectors, bubbles, lists, symbols, and different colours. Image source: https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/5-3-taking-notes, Attribution: ArtistIvanChew / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0)

You can play with different types of note taking 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 easier and more organized, which can decrease your anxiety and make you better prepared for tests and assignments.

Note Taking with Short Forms

You can use short forms when taking notes in order to save time. This will help you get information written down quickly so that you don't miss any important details. Below are some common short forms that you can memorize and use during note taking. Make sure to define any new short forms in the top corner of your notes so you don't accidentally forget what the short form means.

Short Form	Meaning
w/, w/o, w/in	with, without, within
&	and
#	number
b/c	because
X, √	incorrect, correct
Diff	different, difference
etc.	and so on
ASAP	as soon as possible
US, UK	United States, United Kingdom
info	information
ft, in, k, m	foot, inch, thousand, million
¶	paragraph or new paragraph
=, +, >, <, ÷	equal, plus, greater, less, divided by
WWI, WWII	World War I and World War II
impt	important
?, !, **	denote something as very significant; don't over use

Exercise

Reflect on the note-taking strategies by answering the following questions:

1. Which note-taking method do you plan to use? Why?
2. Do you have any other shortcuts or symbols that you use in your notes?
3. What are some advantages and disadvantages of using short forms in your notes?

Key Takeaways

Note taking is an important way to capture information presented during class or when reading class texts. Pick a note-taking style that will work for you and write notes in your own words using short forms to save time. After class, make sure to review your notes often so that you can retain the information in preparation for tests and assignments.

11. Memory

Memory

REBECCA HIEBERT

Why Is This important?

We need to understand how our brain works in order to maximize our ability to memorize important course material. When we implement good memorization strategies, we will be able to retain the information we need to succeed with our classes.

Memory

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 in our long-term memory in case we need to use it in the future. 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.

A flowchart shows the three stages of memory as "Encoding," "Storage," and "Retrieval." Image source: https://openstax.org/books/ college-success/pages/6-1-memory, Attribution: Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Take a few minutes to list ways you create memories on a daily basis.

- Do you think about how you make memories?
- Do you do anything that helps you keep track of your memories?

Working Memory

Working memory is a type of short-term memory we use when we are actively performing a task. 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 need to read the directions, but you must *also* remember that in class your professor reduced the number of questions you needed to finish. This was an verbal addition to the written assignment. The change to the instructions is what you bring up in working memory when you complete the assignment.

Short-Term Memory

Short-term memory 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. You may memorize what a certain corner store looks like so that you know where to turn off to get to your friends house. We help our memory along all the time, which is perfectly fine. In fact, we can modify these everyday examples of memory assistance for the purposes of studying and test taking.

Consider this list of items. Look at the list for no more than 30 seconds. Then, cover up the list and use the spaces below 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 items that you got right. Any items that you misremembered, meaning they were not in the original list, won't count in your total.

Total items remembered: _____

There is a total of 20 items. If you remembered between five and nine items, then you have a typical short-term memory and you just participated in an experiment to prove it.

Chunking

In 1956, Harvard psychology professor George A. Miller claimed humans can recall about five to nine bits of information in our short-term memory at any given time. Miller's article, "The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two," is easily accessible online if you're interested in learning more about this seminar report.[1]

Considering the vast amount of knowledge available to us, five to nine 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. It can be a challenge to remember everything we need to for a test; we have to use effective strategies, like those we cover later in this chapter, to get the most out of our memories.

Exercise

Now, let's revisit the items from the above exercise. Go back to them and see if you can organize them in a way that would give you about five groups of items. See below for an example of how to group them.

Row 1: Items found in a kitchen

Row 2: Items that a child would play with

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1. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0895717703900835

cup	spoon	ice	bread	
baseball	marble	pair of dice	doll	deck of cards
jar of sand	leaf			
marker	string	scissors	paper clip	
ring	picture frame	fingernail polish	tissue	blanket

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. Check it out below 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, won't count in your total.

Total items remembered: _____

Did you increase how many items you could remember?

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 elementary school cafeteria or how to ride 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 (for example, studying the terms every day for a period of time or memorizing multiplication tables or spelling rules) *and* some relevant manipulation for the information.

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, it 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.

Exercise

Think about your own memories and how you ensure that important information is easy to recall while you answer the following questions:

- 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 classes)?

Obstacles to Remembering

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 must also be mindful of obstacles to remembering.

Lack of Sleep

Sleep benefits all of your bodily functions, and your brain needs sleep to dream and rest through the night. You probably can recall times when you had to do something without adequate sleep. When this happens, we say things like "I just can't wake up" and "I'm walking around half asleep."

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 tests and exams in a college setting will require you to recall memorized facts as well as apply and analyze those facts to new case studies or situations. Trying to make these mental connections on too little sleep will take a large mental toll because you will have to concentrate even harder than you would with adequate sleep. 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.

Conversely, your brain on adequate sleep is amazing, and sleep can actually assist you in making connections, remembering difficult concepts, and studying for exams. Even though it may be tempting to stay up late cramming for your tests and exams, you will remember and perform better when you've had enough sleep.

Exercise

Consider you own sleep habits and answer the following questions:

- On average, how long do you sleep every night?

- 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?

Memorization Techniques

Everyone wishes they had a better memory or a stronger way to use memorization. You can make the most of the memory you have by making some conscious decisions about how you study and prepare for exams and tests. Incorporating these memory techniques into your study sessions can help with information retention.

Using Mnemonics

Mnemonics (pronounced new-monics) are a way to remember things using reminders. Did you learn the points of the compass by remembering NEWS (north, east, west, and south)? Or the notes on the music staff as FACE or EGBDF (every good boy does fine)? These are mnemonics. When you're first learning something and you aren't familiar with the foundational concepts, these help you bring up the information quickly, especially for multi-step processes or lists. After you've worked in that discipline for a while, you likely don't need the mnemonics, but you probably won't forget them either.

Here are some familiar mnemonics you may find useful:
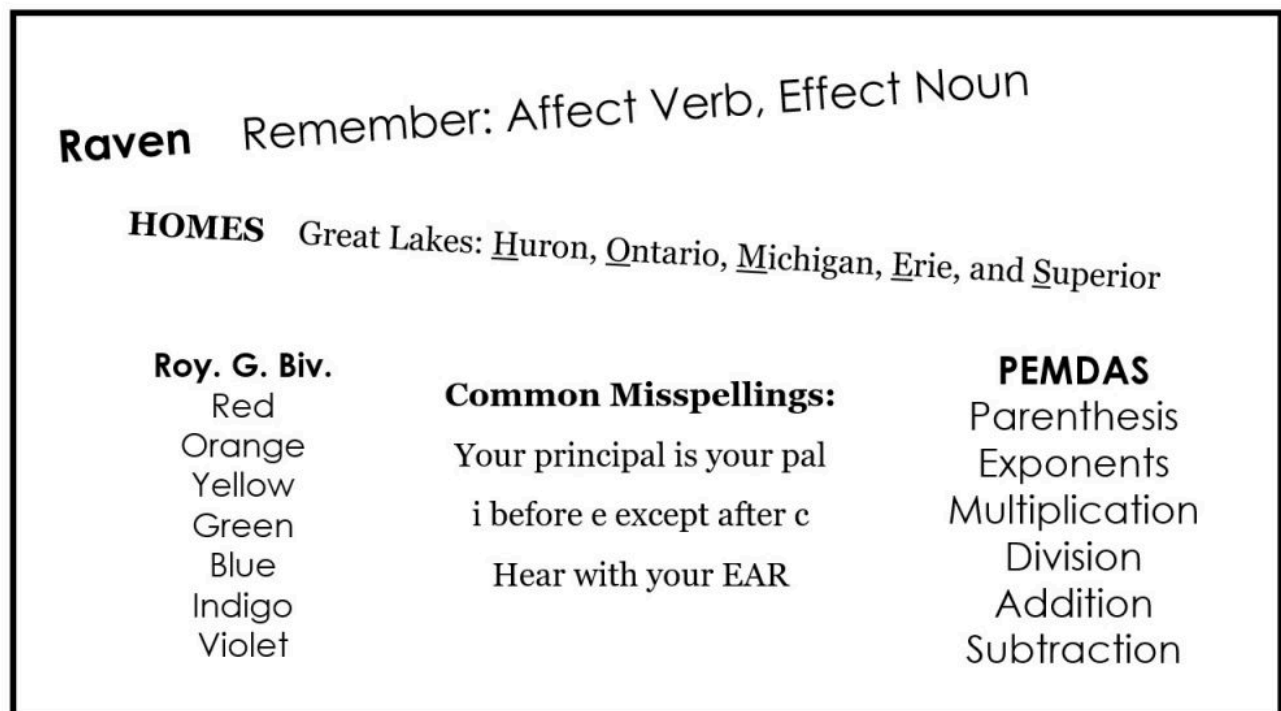
An image shows a cork board with some common mnemonics. Image source: https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/6-2-studying, Attribution: Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Reflect on the memorization strategies you use or have used in the past and answer the following questions:

- Do you have other mnemonics that help you remember difficult material?
- What are they?
- How have they helped you with remembering important things?

Generating Idea Clusters

Like mnemonics, idea clusters are a way to help your brain recall specific information by connecting it to other knowledge you already have. For example, you can remember the elements of the periodic table by singing the names to a familiar song. When you sit down to the test or exam you can sing the song and recreate the periodic table on your exam paper so that it is ready for you to use to answer the questions of the exam.

Practicing Concept Association

Concept association helps us connect ideas that we want to remember with existing information we already know. In this way we are linking the new information to some old information that is already secure in our memory. This allows us to more easily recall the new information because it is organized in our brain where we can find it.

One method for concept association involves using an image to help us understand new vocabulary. For example, if we were trying to memorize the scientific method we could associate an image for each of the sections of the method.[2]

2. https://blog.penningtonpublishing.com/spelling_vocabulary/how-to-memorize-using-the-association-technique/

The scientific method with words and images: "Observation, "Question", "Hypothesis", "Data Collection and Analysis", "Conclusion".
Source: Adapted from https://blog.penningtonpublishing.com/spelling_vocabulary/
how-to-memorize-using-the-association-technique/, Creative Commons Zero CC0

Key Takeaways

Understanding how your short- and long-term memory works will help you improve your memorization skills. You can use memorization strategies to help retain information so that you can access the information you need when completing tests and exams.

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12. Test Taking

Test Taking

REBECCA HIEBERT

Learning Objectives

After reading this page, you will be able to:

- use successful study habits for test prep;
- understand the "whole person" approach to testing;
- use strategies for before, during, and after the test;
- manage stress and anxiety during tests.

Why Is This Important?

It is important to develop good test-taking strategies so that you can make sure to communicate all the knowledge you have acquired. We need to intentionally make choices so we can be most effective before, during, and after tests.

Test Taking

Once you are practicing good study habits, you'll be better prepared for actual test taking. Since studying and test taking are both a part of learning, honing your skills in one will help you in the other.

While you are actually writing a test or exam you may experience a slight elevation in your stress level. This is actually beneficial for testing. This mild stress will keep you focused when you need to recall the information you've studied and demonstrate what you've learned on the test. Properly executed, test preparation, mixed in with a bit of stress, can significantly improve your actual test-taking experience.

Before the Test

Creating a Sense of Urgency

You can replicate the effective sense of urgency an actual test produces by including timed writing into your study sessions. Find out the format of the test in advance. Will there be multiple choice, essay, long-answer, or diagram questions? With this knowledge you can structure your practice time to prepare for the types of questions you will face. You can use a timer as you write example essay questions in order to create a sense of urgency similar to what you might feel during the real test. Making yourself adhere to a timed session during your study session will help you to find out what types of problems you need to practice more compared to the ones that you're more comfortable solving.

Leveraging Study Habits for Test Prep

It is important to develop effective study habits to get ready for tests. Here's a checklist for study and test success for your consideration:

1. **Read All Assigned Lessons** – Prepare to make the most of your class time with instructors and other students.

2. **Attend All Classes** – You cannot interact with the material and the others in your class if you are not there.

3. **Take Notes During Each Class** – Even if you are uncertain about the lesson's topics or importance, take notes so that you remember what was covered.

4. **Review and Improve Notes** – Do this within 24 hours. Memory studies show that we have to work with information quickly or we'll start to forget it.

5. **Study Regularly** – Work at least one hour per week for every hour in class; repetition and frequency are important factors for studying.

6. **Re-read Significant Text Passages** – This helps build your memory and better prepares you for class and tests.

7. **Review with Classmates** – You each receive the benefit of the other person's perspective on the material.

8. **Take Authentic Practice Tests** – Use study guides or sample tests to gauge what you really know and what you need to work on.

9. **Practice Timed Writing** – Timing is essential in most test situations. Practice can help you manage the pressure and ensure you use the time effectively.

10. **Get Enough Sleep Every Night** – Sleep impacts memory, performance, energy, and our ability to handle stress and the unexpected (both common in test situations).

"Whole Person" Approach to Testing

Just because you are facing a major test in your engineering class (or math or science or writing class) doesn't mean everything else in your life comes to a stop. Perhaps that's somewhat annoying, but that's reality. Allergies still flare up, children still need to eat, and you still need to sleep. You must see your academic life as one segment of who you are — it's an important segment, but just one aspect of who you are as a whole person. You will still need to schedule time to see your friends and family, sleep, prepare meals, do laundry, and go grocery shopping. If some of these important tasks get ignored for a long period of time, your ability to think clearly and do well on your test will be jeopardized. A "whole person" approach to testing takes a lot of organization, scheduling, and attention to detail, but the life-long benefits make the effort worthwhile.

Establishing Realistic Expectations for Test Situations

If you become very upset and stressed when you don't score close to perfect on a test, you probably need to reevaluate your own expectations for test situations. Striving to always do your best is an admirable goal; however, realistically knowing that your current best may not achieve the highest academic score can help you plot your progress.

Realistic continuous improvement is a better plan because people who repeatedly attempt challenges for which they have not adequately prepared and understandably fail (or at least do not achieve the desired highest ranking) often experience increased frustration as they work toward their goal and may even feel like quitting. This doesn't mean you settle for mediocre grades or avoid challenges. It means you become increasingly aware of yourself and your current state and potential future. Know yourself, your strengths and weaknesses, and be honest with yourself about your expectations.

Understanding Accommodations and Responsibilities

Some people take tests in stride and do just fine. Others may need more time or a change of location or format to succeed in test taking. With adequate notice, most faculty will provide students with reasonable accommodations to assist students in succeeding in test situations. If you feel that you would benefit from receiving these sorts of accommodations, first speak with your instructor. You may also need to talk to a student services advisor for specific requirements for accommodations at your institution.

If you need accommodations, you are responsible for understanding what your specific needs are and communicating your needs with your instructors. Before tests, you may be allowed to have someone else take notes for you, receive your books in audio form, engage an interpreter, or have adaptive devices in the classroom to help you participate. Testing accommodations may allow for additional time on the test, the use of a scribe to record test answers, the use of a computer instead of handwriting answers, as well as other means to make the test situation successful. Talk to your instructors if you have questions about testing accommodations.

Prioritizing Time Surrounding Test Situations

Think of a test as an event with multiple phases. You will need to review your notes, complete practice tests, attend review sessions, and even meet with classmates to review the material together. All of these steps take time and need to be planned in advance so that you are able to adequately cover the material you need to succeed on the test. Step back and look at the big picture of this timeline. Draw it out on paper. What needs to happen between now and the test so you feel comfortable, confident, and ready?

During the Test

Once you get to the test, try your best to focus on nothing but the test. This can be very difficult with all the distractions in our lives, but if you have done all the groundwork by attending classes, completing assignments, and studying, you are ready to focus intently for the comparatively short time most tests last.

Arriving to Class

Help yourself feel calm and prepared on the day of the test by:

- getting to the testing location a few minutes early so you can settle into your place and take a few relaxing breaths;
- avoiding talking to excited classmates who may interrupt your calmness at this point; and
- getting to your designated place, taking out whatever materials you are allowed to have, and calming your mind.

Taking the Test

Before you start answering questions, listen and preview the test:

- listen carefully for any last-minute oral directions that may have changed some detail on the test, such as the timing or the content of the questions;
- scan over the entire test to make sure you are familiar with the layout and what you need to do;
- decide how you will allocate your available time for each section; and
- jot down how many minutes you can allow for the different sections or questions.

Then, if the test is divided into sections, be sure you read the section directions very carefully so you don't miss an important detail. The extra time you spend at the beginning is like an investment in your overall results. For example, instructors often offer options — for example, you may have four short-answer questions from which to choose, but you only need to answer two of them. If you did not read the directions for that section, you may have thought you needed to provide answers to all four questions. Working on extra questions for which you will receive no credit would be a waste of your limited time.

   Answer every required question on the test. Even if you don't complete each one, you may receive some credit for partial answers. If you are taking a test that contains multiple-choice questions, go through and first answer the questions about which you are the most confident.

Read the entire question carefully even if you think you know what the stem (the introduction of the choices) says, and read all the choices. Skip really difficult questions or ones where your brain goes blank. You can go back and concentrate on those skipped ones after you have answered the majority of the questions confidently. Sometimes a subsequent question will trigger an idea in your mind that will help you answer the skipped questions.

Allow yourself a few minutes at the end of the test to review your answers. Depending on what sort of test it is, you can use this time to check your math computations, review an essay for grammatical and content errors, or answer the difficult multiple-choice questions you skipped earlier.

Finally, **make sure you have completed the entire test.** Check the backs of pages, and verify that you have a corresponding answer for every question section on the test. It can be easy to skip a section with the idea you will come back to it but then forget to return there, which can have a significant impact on your test results.

After the Test

As you leave the test room, the last thing you may want to think about is that particular test, but it is important to take some time to review your experience with the test. Once you have your results, study them — whether you did really well or not as well as you had hoped. Both scenarios hold valuable information if you reflect on them.

In order to learn from your test results, you must analyze both what you did well and where you struggled. For example, maybe after looking at the mark distribution of the test, you found that you did very well in the multiple choice section but not as well on the long-answer questions. You can use this knowledge to update your studying plans. Before the next test, you can practice writing timed long-answer questions since you know that those are more challenging for you.

Test Anxiety

Overhead view of a stressed student sitting at a table, with notebooks, a smartphone, a pair of glasses, and a laptop around her. Image source: https://openstax.org/books/ college-success/pages/6-3-test-taking, Attribution: Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Test anxiety can cause you to doubt yourself so severely that you underperform or overcompensate to the point that you do not do well on the test. Don't despair; you can still succeed if you suffer from test 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 relative to test taking. Whatever you do, don't use the label *test anxiety* to keep you from your dreams of completing your education and pursuing whatever career you have your eyes on. You are bigger than any anxiety.

Understanding Test Anxiety

Test anxiety can manifest itself in different parts of our bodies. You may feel queasy or light-headed if you are experiencing test anxiety. Your palms may sweat, or you may become suddenly very hot or very cold for no apparent reason. At its worst, test 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 a testing situation pleasant.

We can become very nervous when we think about taking a test 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. You actually may encounter a few tests in your academic career that are so important that you have to alter your other life plans temporarily, but truly, this is the exception, not the rule. 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 Test Anxiety

You have to work hard to control test anxiety so it does not take an unhealthy hold on you every time you face a test situation, which could last well into your career. One of the best ways to control test anxiety is to be prepared for the test. 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: at your test site, take a deep breath, close your eyes, and smile — just bringing positive thoughts into your mind can help you meet the challenges of taking a test without anxiety taking over.

Key Takeaways

Test taking is a skill that students can develop by managing their time before the test by study effectively, planning how to answer questions during the test, and analyzing test results after the test and reflecting on how to study more effectively next time. Students also need to manage their test anxiety in order to think clearly while taking tests.

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13. Reading Skills

Reading Skills

REBECCA HIEBERT

Learning Objectives

After reading this page, you will be able to:

- use reading strategies to engage fully with a text;
- use skimming to capture important concepts when reading;
- use the SQ3R reading tool to survey, question, read, recite, and review a text.

Why Is This Important?

You will be required to read articles, textbooks, and web pages for your courses. Often the information will be presented using professional and academic language along with field-specific vocabulary that may be unfamiliar. It is important to use effective reading strategies to ensure you can fully understand the meaning of this information and apply it to your course activities.

The Importance of Reading Skills

Reading is an important aspect of all college courses. For everything that you read, you will generally need to re-read the passage more than once to ensure understanding, take notes, detect the emphasis the writer places on various aspects of the topic, and identify how the writer connects ideas within a text.

For most of what you read at the college level, you are trying to make sense of the text for a specific purpose, so you will need your full attention to decipher everything that's going on in the complex reading material. You also need to consider what the writer of the piece may *not* be including and why. This is why reading for comprehension is important.

Reading is a circular process. At first you may read a selection from beginning to end but then you will need to go back and re-read passages to increase your comprehension, determine meaning, and make connections between the reading and the bigger learning environment that led you to the selection.

Exercise

Consider a time when you read a text for the purpose of learning or studying. What strategies (if any) did you use? Did you face any challenges or barriers while reading that impacted your ability to understand the material?

As you continue to read this page, consider what strategies you could try to improve your reading skills in college.

Strategies for Being a Strong Reader

Strong readers engage in the following steps while reading. Often we need to circle back over many of these steps in order to gain a solid understanding of a text. The steps include:

- bringing any **prior knowledge** about the topic to the reading session;
- asking yourself pertinent **questions**, both orally and in writing, about the content you are reading;
- inferring and/or **implying information** from what you read;
- learning unfamiliar **vocabulary**;
- **evaluating** what you are reading; and
- **applying** what you're reading to other learning and life situations you encounter.
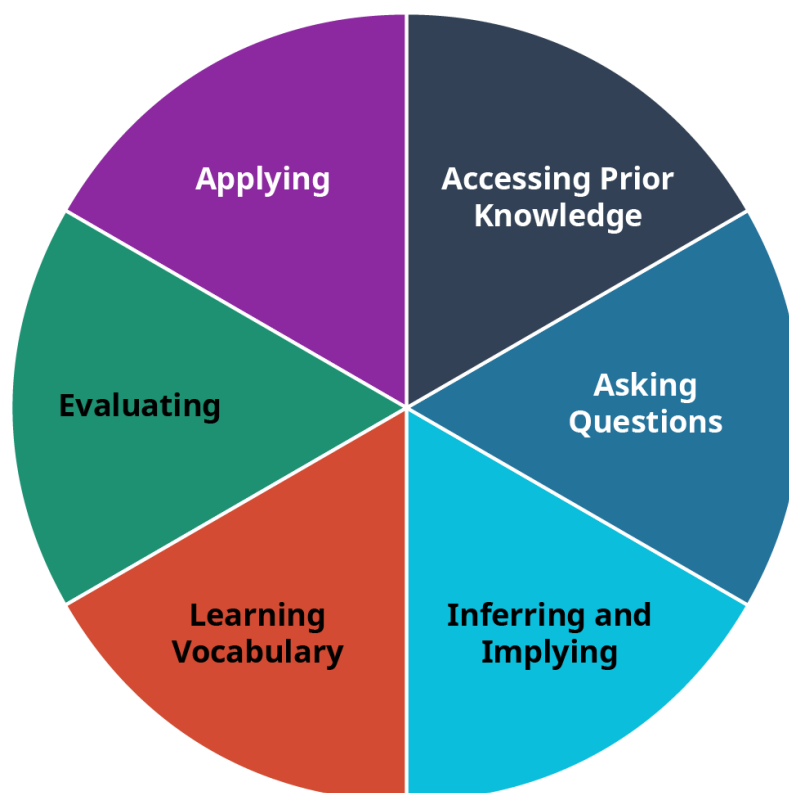
A pie diagram shows the six major components of strong reading. Image source: https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/ 5-2-effective-reading-strategies, Attribution: Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International +License.

Accessing Prior Knowledge

When you read, you naturally think of anything else you may know about the topic, but when you read deliberately and actively, you make yourself more aware of accessing this prior knowledge. Have you ever watched a documentary about this topic? Did you study some aspect of it in another class? Do you have a hobby that is somehow connected to this material? All of this thinking will help you make sense of what you are reading.

Asking Questions

Humans are naturally curious. As you read actively, you should be asking questions about the topic you are reading. Don't just say the questions in your mind; write them down. You may ask: Why is this topic important? What is the relevance of this topic currently? Why did my instructor assign this reading?

You need a place where you can actually write down these questions; a separate page in your notes is a good place to begin. If you are taking notes on your computer, start a new document and write down the questions. Leave some room to answer the questions when you begin and again after you read.

Inferring and Implying

When you read, you can take the information on the page and *infer*, or come to conclusions about related challenges from evidence or from your own reasoning. A student will likely be able to infer what material the professor will include on an exam by taking good notes throughout the classes leading up to the test.

Writers may *imply* information without directly stating a fact for a variety of reasons. Sometimes a writer may not want to come out explicitly and state a bias, but may imply or hint at, for example, their preference for one political party or another. You have to read carefully to find implications because they are indirect, but watching for them will help you comprehend the whole meaning of a passage.

Learning Vocabulary

Vocabulary specific to certain disciplines helps practitioners in that field engage and communicate with each other. Few people beyond undertakers and archeologists likely use the term *sarcophagus* in everyday communications, but for those disciplines, it is a meaningful distinction. Looking at the example, you can use context clues to figure out the meaning of the term *sarcophagus* because it is something undertakers and/or archeologists would recognize. At the very least, you can guess that it has something to do with death. As a potential professional in the field you're studying, you need to know the lingo. You may already have a system in place to learn discipline-specific vocabulary, so use what you know works for you. Two strong strategies are to look up words in a dictionary to ensure you have the exact meaning for your discipline and to keep a dedicated list of words you see often in your reading. You can list the words with a short definition so you have a quick reference guide to help you learn the vocabulary.

Evaluating

Critical thinkers always question and evaluate. This doesn't mean they don't trust others; they just need verification of facts to understand a topic well. It doesn't make sense to learn incomplete or incorrect information about a subject just because you didn't take the time to evaluate all the sources at your disposal. For example, when early explorers were afraid to sail the world for fear of falling off the edge, they weren't foolish; they just didn't have all the necessary data to evaluate the situation.

When you evaluate a text, you are seeking to understand the presented topic. Depending on how long the text is, you will repeat many of these steps to evaluate all the elements the author presents. When you evaluate a text, you need to do the following:

- **scan** the title and all headings;
- **read** through the entire passage fully;
- **question** what main point the author is making;
- **decide** who the audience is;
- **identify** what evidence/support the author uses;
- **consider** if the author presents a balanced perspective on the main point; and
- **recognize** if the author introduced any biases in the text.

When you go through a text looking for each of these elements, you need to go beyond just answering the surface questions. Think critically about each element and make notes on your evaluation.

Applying

When you learn something new, it always connects to other knowledge you already have. Think about what you know about the topic and how what you just read can be added to what you already know. When we connect new information to information we are already familiar with we build a bridge within our mind and this helps us understand and retain the new information.

A person reading with headphones on. Image Source: [Pexels](#)

Tools for Reading

There are different ways to read a passage. The first time we read it, we may skim it quickly looking for the overall idea so we can connect to our previous knowledge; the second time we read it we may go slowly, making meaning of each idea; and the third time we read it, we may skim the material again, this time looking for the key ideas that we need for our assignments and tests.

Skimming

Effective skimming allows you to take in the major points of a passage without the need for a time-consuming reading session. When you skim, look for guides to help you understand the text: headings, definitions, 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. You can also look for introductory words such as "First . . ." or "The purpose of this article . . ." or summary words such as "In conclusion . . ." or "Finally. . . ." These will help you read only those sentences or paragraphs that will give you the overall meaning or gist of a passage or book.

Next, move to the body of the passage. You want to take in the reading as a whole. For a book, look at the titles of each chapter. 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. Recognize that you likely will return to that book or article for a more thorough reading if the material is useful.

The SQ3R Reading Strategy

The SQ3R reading strategy is a good tool to help you engage with the text in multiple ways. The name stands for **s**urvey, **q**uestion, **r**ead, **r**ecite, and **r**eview. You can use these steps on virtually any assigned passage. Designed by Francis Pleasant Robinson in his 1961 book, *Effective Study*, the SQ3R reading strategy gives readers a systematic way to work through any reading material.

Survey is similar to skimming. You look for clues to meaning by reading the titles, headings, introductions, summary, captions for graphics, and keywords. You can survey almost anything connected to the reading selection, including the copyright information, the date of the journal article, or the names and qualifications of the author(s). In this step, you decide what the general meaning is for the reading selection.

Question is your creation of questions to seek the main ideas, support, examples, and conclusions about the reading selection. Ask yourself these questions separately. Try to create valid questions about what you are about to read that have come into your mind as you engaged in the survey step. Try turning the headings of the sections in the chapter into questions. Next, how does what you're reading relate to you, your school, your community, and the world?

Read is when you actually read the passage. Try to find the answers to questions you developed in the previous step. Divide how much you are reading into chunks, either by paragraph for more complex readings, or by section or even by an entire chapter. When you finish reading the selection, stop to make notes. Answer the questions by writing notes in the margins.

You may also underline or highlight the text in addition to your notes. Use caution here so that you don't try to rush this step by haphazardly circling terms or the other extreme of underlining huge chunks of text. Don't over-mark. You aren't likely to remember what these marks signify. The text is the source of information — your marks and notes are just a way to organize and make sense of that information.

Recite means to speak out loud. By reciting, you are engaging other senses to remember the material — you read it (visual) and you said it (auditory). Stop reading momentarily in this step to answer your questions or clarify confusing sentences or paragraphs. You can recite a summary of what the text means to you. If you are not in a place where you

can verbalize, such as a library or classroom, you can accomplish this step adequately by *saying* it in your head; however, it will be most effective if you can speak aloud. You may also want to try explaining the content to a friend.

Review is a recap. Go back over what you read and add more notes, ensuring you have captured the main points of the passage, identified the supporting evidence and examples, and understood the overall meaning. You may need to repeat some or all of the SQ3R steps during your review depending on the length and complexity of the material. Before you end your active reading session, write a short (no more than one page) summary of the text you read.

Key Takeaways

Use reading strategies to effectively interact with a text. Read and re-read the material using skimming and SQ3R reading techniques in order to explore, question, think critically, and thoroughly understand the material.

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14. Listening Skills

Listening Skills

REBECCA HIEBERT

Why Is This Important?

In order to engage in meaningful communication, we need to both talk *and* listen. It is important to understand how listening affects our ability to make meaning when interacting with others. We need to use active listening strategies when interacting with classmates as well as when participating in class to ensure we get the information we need to succeed.

Listening

Communication is always two-way. It is not enough to just send out a message. One has to listen carefully to the response, and not only listen, but understand that the audience receiving your message might have a very different perspective on the topic. A person's experience — due to gender, age, culture, and so forth — will have an effect on how well the communication is transmitted and received. Optimal communication occurs when both parties listen actively.

> **"We all feel better when we feel listened to. And we feel even better when we feel understood. In order to be understood, we must be listened to. Often it is more important to us to feel heard than to actually get what we said we wanted. On the other hand, feeling ignored and misunderstood is literally painful whether we are six or sixty."** — *Steve Hein*[1]

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1. http://eqi.org/listen.htm

Many variables get in the way of messages being received correctly. One of these is emotion — both yours and that of the person with whom you are trying to communicate. Sometimes you have to use emotional information to help you make a decision about how you are communicating. What this means is that you need to be able to understand your own feelings and those of others. There are five components to emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills). Understanding how these components work to help you get in touch with your and others' emotional sides is an important part of listening.

Ultimately, communication is about information. The message you are sending may be as simple as one word or as complex as a job interview. How you act on that information, how you expect others to act on it, and how it registers in your brain are all part of the complexity of communication.

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. We need to remember the difference between *hearing* and *listening*. We can hear noise, such as static coming from a unused radio channel, but we don't get meaning from it. When we listen to information, we actively engage and make meaning from the message.

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 and understood them correctly. You will be amazed at how well these strategies work to help avoid misunderstandings and confusion.

A photo shows two young women sitting on the floor of a wooden cubicle and talking to each other. Image source: https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/8-4-the-context-of-communication, Attribution: University of the Fraser Valley / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0)

Exercise

This is an activity of self-analysis. Remember, listening and hearing are not the same thing, and the difference can often lead to faulty communication. Think back on a time when your attempt at communicating with someone (face-to-face or online) didn't go the way you intended. The message you were trying to convey wasn't received in the way you meant it, and this led to some discord between you and whomever you were "talking" to. Write down what happened, then think about what could have been done differently. Was the problem yours? Did you send a message that wasn't clear? Did the receiver of this message not really "listen" to what you were saying? What got in the way of what should have been a simple communication between you and someone else?

As noted earlier, emotions are frequently involved in communication. 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, don't just hear, but listen actively.

Multiple Perspectives

Indigenizing Our Listening Skills

According to Elder Terry P'ulsemet Prest at University of the Fraser Valley in British Columbia, Indigenous culture teaches that we have to "learn to listen so we can listen to learn" and over time we learn to make the connection between the heart and the mind, the mind and the heart. He tells his students — who are very often faculty instructors — that this is because he recognizes that education has not necessarily prepared us to be "good listeners."

Read the following quote from Shirley Harman, who explains how she experiences listening differently.[2]

While you read, consider:

- How do people from different cultures listen differently?
- How might these differences affect communication?
- What can you do to adjust your expectations to improve communication with people from diverse cultures?

As an educator I am often reminded that listening with our whole self is not necessarily practiced in the academy. I learned this the hard way. One of my instructors in my graduate program pointed out to me that I rarely "spoke up" in class. I reflected upon this feedback and thought of all the times that I was eager to participate in the classroom dialogue, only to be "beaten to the punch" by classmates who either spoke up as soon as one had finished speaking or who seemingly dominated the classroom dialogue (almost always!). This self-reflection led me to understand the different ways I, as an Indigenous person, listen in comparison to many of my non-Indigenous counterparts. I began to recognize that oftentimes people would be preparing what they were going to say while the other person was still talking. While I on the other hand listened, completely listened, and only when one finishes speaking do I think about how I might respond. This is true, I came to learn, for many of the Indigenous students in my classes and at our university.

– Shirley Hardman (personal communication, 2017)[3]

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2. [Pulling Together: A Guide for Teachers and Instructors](#) by Bruce Allan; Amy Perreault; John Chenoweth; Dianne Biin; Sharon Hobenshield; Todd Ormiston; Shirley Anne Hardman; Louise Lacerte; Lucas Wright; and Justin Wilson, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#). https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationinstructors/chapter/reciprocity-and-multiple-ways-of-listening-in-oral-traditions/
3. https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationinstructors/chapter/reciprocity-and-multiple-ways-of-listening-in-oral-traditions/

Active Listening at College

There are ways to actively listen in order to get the most out of lectures and, more importantly, take all of the notes that might be required. The video in the next exercise covers several active listening strategies along with why we sometimes have difficulty listening.

Identifying Key Information in Class

When you are attending class and listening to your instructor present information, there are two types of key information cues to be aware of. A speaker will often have unique nonverbal and verbal cues that alert you to the fact that they are sharing important information. Take note of these cues and pay special attention to the information shared at this time. Write this information down because it is most likely important for tests and assignments.

Nonverbal Cues

- Nonverbal cues alert you to when the speaker will shift to a different topic. For example, the instructor may shift their weight to the other foot, move to the other side of the room, or start gesturing with the other hand.
- Nonverbal cues can also alert you to when the information is of special significance. For example, the instructor may make make their voice louder or higher in pitch, use hand motions, widen their eyes, or stand taller.

Verbal Cues

- Vocal cues may also be used when the speaker will shift to a different topic. For example, the instructor may say "Next I will discuss . . .," "And on the other hand . . .," or "Moving on. . . ."
- Vocal cues can also alert you to when the information is of special significance. For example, the instructor may repeat particular information multiple times, or say "I really want to emphasize . . .," "This next point is important . . .," or "I want to clarify. . . ." [4]

Key Takeaways

When we are interacting with others we need to remember to use our active listening skills to ensure we are making meaning of what others are saying. It is also important to adapt our listening and communication to accommodate interactions with people from diverse backgrounds. When using our active listening skills in college, we can use the presenter's nonverbal and verbal cues to take note of important information.

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4. [Blueprint for Success in College and Career](#) by Dave Dillon, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#). https://press.rebus.community/blueprint2/chapter/26-preparation-for-note-taking/

15. Speaking Skills

Speaking Skills

EMILIE JACKSON

Learning Objectives

After reading this page, you will be able to:

- identify elements of an effective speaker;
- understand expectations for speaking online;
- use inclusive language.

Why Is This Important?

Speaking is part of everyday college life. Whether interacting with peers, instructors, or other college staff, participating in classes, interacting with peers during a group assignment, or giving a presentation, it is essential that you can clearly communicate your message.

Diverse classmates talking to each other on campus. Image source: [Pexels](#)

Elements of Effective Speaking

To be an effective speaker, whether you are having a conversation with another person or giving a presentation, there are many elements to consider:

- pronunciation;
- enunciation;
- word stress ;
- thought groups;
- pitch and intonation.

Pronunciation

Vowels and consonants are at the heart of pronunciation — they are the unavoidable building blocks of oral

communication. Being able to accurately pronounce the sounds of a language largely determines the degree of clarity with which a person will be able to communicate.[1]

Pronunciation Strategies

When working on your pronunciation, remember that improving your pronunciation is not about eliminating your accent. There is not one "correct" accent in English; there are even different accents in Canada. Improving your pronunciation should be about improving your clarity so that the listener can understand your message.

With this in mind, if you wish to improve your English pronunciation skills, there are a few strategies to help you get started.

- **Search for common pronunciation errors based on your first language**: Many YouTube English teachers post videos about common pronunciation challenges for speakers of certain languages. For example, if Mandarin is your first language, check out 5 Common Pronunciation Mistakes Chinese Speakers Make by Accent's Way English with Hadar.
- **Use a mirror**: As you learn to make new sounds, watching your jaw and tongue movements can help you correct mistakes.
- **Record yourself**: When you listen to your voice, you may be able to hear mistakes. Try comparing your voice recording to an first-language English speaker.
- **Seek feedback**: If your college offers English support for newcomers, you may be able to work on your

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1. Oral Communication for Non-Native Speakers of English by Timothy Kochem; Monica Ghosh; Lily Compton; and Elena Cotos, licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication/chapter/chapter-1/

pronunciation with a tutor. If this service is not available to you, pay attention when speaking everyday English with other speakers. What do they understand? Do any sounds or words cause misunderstandings?

With intentional and frequent practice, you should be able to learn how to produce the sounds. However, while it can be easy to produce a sound in isolation when it's the primary focus, it's another story to produce it consistently while devoting mental power toward other elements of speaking.[2] Don't give up! Improving your pronunciation will take time.

Enunciation

Enunciation refers how you articulate words while speaking. Try to pronounce words as clearly and accurately as you can, enunciating each syllable. Avoid mumbling or slurring words. If you are practicing for a presentation, practice speaking a little more slowly and deliberately. Ask someone you know to give you feedback.[3]

Have you ever spoken to someone who missed what you said because you were mumbling? If so, they're signalling to you that they aren't able to understand your message. You may have pronounced the words correctly but poorly enunciated the words, leading to reduced comprehension.

One technique to increase enunciation is the "dash" strategy: *e-nun-ci-ate e-ve-ry syll-a-bal in your pre-sen-ta-tion*. The dashes signify distinct enunciation to create emphasis and expression. However, don't go too far. The dash strategy is an exaggerated exercise, but it can lead to a choppy-sounding speaking. Instead, use the dash strategy to practice difficult and longer words that need more punctuated emphasis.[4]

Word Stress

Word stress refers to the part of a multi-syllable word that gets emphasis. Word stress can effect the vowel and consonant sounds in a word, but generally, word stress is achieved by pronouncing the syllable longer, with a higher pitch, and louder.

Exercise

Unfortunately, there is no simple rule for determining where the stress falls in a word. However, there are

2. https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication/chapter/chapter-1/
3. Writing for Success by Writing for Success by University of Minnesota, licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. https://open.lib.umn.edu/writingforsuccess/chapter/14-3-giving-a-presentation/
4. Effective Professional Communication: A Rhetorical Approach by Rebekah Bennetch; Corey Owen; and Zachary Keesey, licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. https://openpress.usask.ca/rcm200/chapter/verbal-delivery/

some common features that affect the stress in a word, such as words with prefixes or suffixes, the origin of a word, or the grammatical function.[5]

Test your knowledge with this exercise.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegesuccessfornewcomers/?p=1622#h5p-59

Thought Groups

Thought groups are groups of words that belong together in a sentence.

There is no one rule-governed method for dividing your speaking into thought groups. A fast speaker may only pause once during a sentence, while a slow speaker could pause up to four times in the same sentence. However, when learning thought groups, there are a handful of grammatical structures that are typically used to express a single thought group:

1. **article + adjective + noun** ("the large textbook")
2. **subordinating conjunction + noun + verb** ("because the experiment failed")
3. **preposition + article + noun** ("in the graph")
4. **verb + object** ("use a dictionary")
5. **relative pronoun + noun + verb** ("which she solved")
6. **verb + adverb** ("rotated quickly")
7. **article + noun + verb** ("the student agreed")
8. **verb + direct object + preposition + indirect object** ("hand it to him")

If you consider the role thought groups play, you can see how important they are for effective speaking. Using logical thought groups can help a speaker sound more fluent and will help the listener to better understand your intended message.[6]

Pitch and Intonation

Pitch refers to how high or low a speaker's voice is. The overall pitch of a person's voices varies among individuals. We also naturally vary our pitch when speaking. For instance, our pitch gets higher when we ask a question and often when we express excitement. It often gets lower when we give a command or want to convey seriousness.

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5. https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication/chapter/overview/
6. https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication/chapter/overview-4/

A voice that does not vary in pitch sounds monotonous, like a musician playing the same note repeatedly. Keep the following tips in mind to manage pitch.

- Pitch should vary with your content. Evaluate your voice to make sure you are not speaking at the same pitch throughout your presentation.
- It is fine to raise your pitch slightly at the end of a sentence when you ask a question; however, some speakers do this for every sentence, and as a result, they come across as tentative and unsure. Notice places where your pitch rises and make sure the change is appropriate to the content.
- Lower your pitch when you want to convey authority. But do not overdo it. Questions should sound different from statements and commands.
- Chances are, your overall pitch falls within a typical range. However, if your voice is very high or low, consciously try to lower or raise it slightly.[7]

Pitch Range	Usage	
Extra high	Used to express emphasis/contrast focus and strong emotions, such as surprise or enthusiasm	
High	Used to express focus and/or the end of a thought group	Intonation range for normal conversation
Middle	Used as the baseline or "neutral" pitch from which the intonation contour rises and falls	
Low	Used by default to express the end of a thought group	

While pitch refers to the highness and lowness of someone's voice, intonation refers to the variation of pitch while speaking.

The following list includes common intonational patterns based on written punctuation:

- a period at the end of a sentence = falling intonation;
- a comma at the end of a clause or phrase = steady intonation (or slight rise), indicating the speaker is not finished speaking;
- exclamation points = extreme pitch changes, often signalling strong emotion.[8]

Exercise

> 📃 *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegesuccessfornewcomers/?p=1622#h5p-59*

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7. https://open.lib.umn.edu/writingforsuccess/chapter/14-3-giving-a-presentation/
8. https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication/chapter/teachers-corner-4/

Watch the video "How to Sound Interesting in English" by Accent's Way English with Hadar to review pitch and intonation and listen for examples of strong pitch and intonation.

For additional practice, record your voice and listen to your own pitch and intonation. Do you use varied pitch or is your voice monotonous?

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegesuccessfornewcomers/?p=1622#oembed-2

Speaking Online

You might take an online class that requires you to participate in a live discussion, give a live presentation, or submit a video of yourself giving a presentation while using one of many online collaboration and meeting platforms. These have become very common in the academic world because groups can meet without having to travel to another location.

First, recognize that this is a different type of venue. You have two main tools: your voice and your visuals. When speaking online, the key word is "energy" — an energetic voice has variety and interest to it. Since we tend to have a lower energy level when we sit, some experts suggest that online speakers should stand to approximate the real speaking experience. In addition, when preparing to give a presentation online or in a recording, record yourself during your practice and then reflect on how your voice sounds. If you voice is flat, work on adding energy to your presentation by including interesting examples, facts, or elaboration details.

As for using visuals in an online presentation, although the primary focus of your audience will be the slides (rather than your presence), avoid overloading the slides with information. Keep your visuals simple. One rule you can apply is the **10-20-30** rule: no more than **10** slides, no more than **20** words on the slides, and no font smaller than **30** point. Using 30-point font will will ensure the audience can read your content without taking over the whole slide with your words. Planning activities, such as polls, if the software supports it, can also be helpful.[9]

Read more about using presentation aids to support your presentation skills on the next page: Presentation Skills.

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9. Exploring Public Speaking: 4th Edition by Barbara Tucker; Kristin Barton; Amy Bruger; Jerry Drye; and Cathy Hunsicker, licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. https://oer.galileo.usg.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=communication-textbooks

People interacting on a video call. Image source: Pexels

When speaking, whether in a discussion or during a presentation, face-to-face or online, word choice is essential to communicating your message. There are times when, if not considered carefully, your word choices may cause harm to an individual or group. Consider the appropriateness of your word choice and always use gender-inclusive language.

Appropriateness

Appropriateness relates to several categories involving how individuals and groups should be referred to and addressed based on inclusiveness and context. The term "politically correct" has been overused to describe the growing sensitivity to how the power of language can marginalize or exclude individuals and groups. While there are silly extremes such as the term "vertically challenged" for "short," these humorous examples overlook the need to be inclusive about language. Overall, people and groups should be respected and referred to in the way they choose to be. Using inclusive language while speaking will help ensure you aren't alienating or diminishing any listeners.

Gender-Inclusive Language

One common form of non-inclusive language is language that privileges one of the sexes over others. There are three common problem areas that speakers run into while speaking: using "he" as generic; using "man" to mean all humans; and referring to jobs as gender specific.

- Consider the statement, "Every morning when a firefighter puts on his uniform, he risks his life to protect his fellow citizens." Obviously, firefighters of all genders, including male, female and non-binary, risk their lives when they put on their uniforms. A better way to word the sentence would be, "Every morning when a firefighter puts on their uniform, they risk their lives to protect their fellow citizens." Notice that in the improved sentence, we used neutral pronouns ("they" and "their") to avoid the generic "he."
- Likewise, speakers of English have traditionally used terms like "man" and "mankind" when referring to people in general. Instead of using the word "mankind," refer to the "human race."
- The last common area where speakers struggle with gender and language has to do with job titles. It is not unusual for people to assume, for example, that doctors are male and nurses are female. As a result, they may say "she is a woman doctor" or "he is a male nurse" when mentioning someone's occupation, perhaps not realizing that the statements "she is a doctor" and "he is a nurse" already informs the listener as to the gender of the person holding that job.[10]

Key Takeaway

10. https://oer.galileo.usg.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=communication-textbooks

Strong speaking skills are essential to college life. Being a strong speaker includes developing the elements of effective speaking, demonstrating those skills in person and online, and using inclusive language.

16. Presentation Skills

Presentation Skills

EMILIE JACKSON

Why Is This Important?

Public speaking can be stressful. In fact, some researchers have found that a large percentage of people surveyed rate public speaking as their number one fear. Most people feel at least a little bit nervous at the prospect of public speaking. At the same time, it is an increasingly necessary skill in the workplace. For example, a human resource manager may present company policies and benefits plans to large groups of employees, an entrepreneur may present the idea for a new business to potential investors, or a nurse might chair a staff meeting to introduce new hospital procedures. In some fields, such as training and teaching, speaking in public is a regular job requirement.[1]

Although there is no delete button to undo mistakes while presenting, by planning carefully and practicing you can ensure that your presentation comes across as confident, knowledgeable, and interesting — and that your audience actually learns from it.[2]

1. [Writing for Success](#) by Writing for Success by University of Minnesota, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#). https://open.lib.umn.edu/writingforsuccess/chapter/14-3-giving-a-presentation/
2. https://open.lib.umn.edu/writingforsuccess/chapter/14-1-organizing-a-visual-presentation/

Prepare your Presentation

Know Your Purpose

It is important for you to have a clear understanding of the purpose of your presentation. Here's a brief review of the three general purposes for academic presentations:

1. *To inform:* Increase the audience's knowledge, teach about a topic or issue, and share your expertise.
2. *To demonstrate:* Show the audience how to use, operate, or do something.
3. *To persuade:* Influence the audience by presenting arguments intended to change attitudes, beliefs, or values.[3]

Create an Outline

An outline is a framework that helps the speaker organize ideas and tie them to the main structural elements of the presentation.[4]

Presentations need a beginning, middle, and end, and to expand on this, you can use the five-finger model:

1. **Hook:** The hook is a statement that focuses the audience's attention on you and your presentation.
2. **Introduction:** Your introduction introduces you and your topic, and should state your topic clearly.
3. **Body:** In the body, or main content area of your presentation, you will use an organizational pattern. Keep reading to learn about organizational patterns for presentations.
4. **Conclusion:** Your conclusion should provide the audience with a sense of closure by summarizing the main points and relating the points to the overall topic.
5. **Residual Message:** The residual message is an idea or thought that stays with your audience long after the presentation.[5]

> *Exercise*
>
> Time management is the key to delivering an effective presentation. As you develop your outline, think about the amount of time you will devote to each section.

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3. [Business Communication for Success](#) by University of Minnesota, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#). https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/10-1-before-you-choose-a-topic/
4. https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/12-4-sample-speech-outlines/
5. https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/12-3-building-a-sample-speech/

Below are two examples of how you could divide a ten-minute presentation. Which example do you think is better?

Presentation Part	Example 1	Example 2
Hook	30 seconds	30 seconds
Introduction	30 seconds	2 minutes
Body	8 minutes	5 minutes
Conclusion	30 seconds	2 minutes
Residual Message	30 seconds	30 seconds

Both examples could result in a strong presentation, but what are the advantages and disadvantages?

The advantage of example 1 is that there is plenty of time for the body of the presentation, which is arguably the most important part because this is when the main points are shared. However, a disadvantage may be that the introduction and conclusion are too brief. The introduction introduces the audience to the topic, and the conclusion summarizes the main points. If these two parts of the presentation are not given enough time, the audience may not be able to follow along with the information shared in the body of the presentation. Example 2 seems to be more balanced, but there may not be enough time to share ideas and sufficient supporting information.

When creating an outline, consider the amount of time you will dedicate to each section and later, when you practice, you can time yourself to determine whether you need to adjust your content or delivery.

Determine the Organizational Pattern

You will need to organize the information in the body of your presentation. Based on the purpose and topic of your presentation, choose an organizational pattern that best suits your presentation.

Organizational Pattern	Explanation
1. Time (Chronological)	Listing a series of events or steps in a process, which typically has a beginning, middle, and end.
2. Process and Procedure	Outlining distinct steps or phases that lead to a complete end goal. This is often referred to as the "how-to" organizational pattern.
3. Comparison	Comparing similarities and/or differences between points or concepts.
4. Contrast	Contrasting points to highlight the differences between items or concepts.
5. Cause and Effect	Stating cause and effect to establish a relationship between two events or situations and making the connection clear.
6. Problem and Solution	Stating a problem and its solution. This approach is effective for persuasive presentations.[6]

6. https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/12-5-organizing-principles-for-your-speech/

Consider the following scenario: Roberto is thinking about giving an informative presentation on the current status of HIV/AIDS. He has different ideas about how to approach the presentation.

Assuming all of these subjects would be researchable and appropriate for the audience, write specific purpose statements for each. What organizational pattern could he use for each specific purpose?[7]

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegesuccessfornewcomers/?p=735#h5p-52

Add Transitions

Transitions are words, phrases, or visual devices that help the audience follow the speaker's ideas, connect the main points to each other, and understand the relationships between the ideas presented. Transitions are often described as bridges between ideas and are used by the speaker to guide the audience in the progression from one significant idea, concept, or point to the next. They can also show the relationship between the main point and the support the speaker uses to illustrate, provide examples for, or reference outside sources.[8]

The following table includes twelve types of transitions that can be used in an oral presentation. As you contemplate how to bring together the information in your presentation, consider how you will use various transitions and note them on your outline.[9]

7. Adapted from Exploring Public Speaking: 4th Edition by Barbara Tucker; Kristin Barton; Amy Bruger; Jerry Drye; and Cathy Hunsicker, licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. https://oer.galileo.usg.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=communication-textbooks
8. https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/12-6-transitions/#mclean-ch12_s06_t01
9. https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/12-6-transitions/#mclean-ch12_s06_t01

Type	Definition	Examples
1. Previews	A preview is a brief statement referring to a point you are going to make. It can forecast or foreshadow a main point coming in your presentation.	*If we look ahead to, next we'll examine, now we can focus our attention on, first we'll look at, then we'll examine*
2. Signposts	A signpost alerts the audience that you are moving from one topic to the next. Signposts or signal words draw attention to themselves and focus the audience's attention.	*Stop and consider, we can now address, next I'd like to explain, turning from/to, another, this reminds me of, I would like to emphasize*
3. Summaries	A summary briefly covers information or alludes to information introduced previously. It can remind an audience of a previous point and reinforce information covered in your presentation.	*As I have said, as we have seen, as mentioned earlier, in any event, in other words, in short, on the whole, therefore, to summarize, as a result, as I've noted previously, in conclusion*
4. Sequence Transition	A sequence transition outlines a hierarchical order or series of steps in your presentation. It can illustrate order or steps in a logical process.	*First...second...third, furthermore, next, last, still, also, and then, besides, finally*
5. Time	A time transition focuses on the chronological aspects of your presentation order. Particularly useful in a presentation that uses a story, this transition can illustrate for the audience the progression of time.	*Before, earlier, immediately, in the meantime, in the past, lately, later, meanwhile, now, presently, shortly, simultaneously, since, so far, soon as long as, as soon as, at last, at length, at that time, then, until, afterward*
6. Addition	An addition or additive transition contributes to a previous point. This transition can build on a previous point and extend the discussion.	*In addition to, furthermore, either, neither, besides, moreover, in fact, as a matter of fact, actually, not only, but also, as well as, not to mention*
7. Similarity or Comparison	A transition by similarity draws a parallel between two ideas, concepts, or examples. It can indicate a common area between points for the audience.	*In the same way, by the same token, equally, similarly, just as we have seen, in the same vein, likewise*
8. Contrast	A transition by contrast draws a distinction of difference, opposition, or irregularity between two ideas, concepts, or examples. This transition can indicate a key distinction between points for the audience.	*But, neither...nor, however, on the other hand, although, even though, in contrast, in spite of, despite, on the contrary, conversely, unlike, while, instead, nevertheless, nonetheless, regardless, still, though, yet*
9. Cause and Effect or Result	A transition by cause and effect or result illustrates a relationship between two ideas, concepts, or examples and may focus on the outcome or result. It can illustrate a relationship between points for the audience.	*As a result, because, consequently, for this purpose, accordingly, so, then, therefore, thereupon, thus, to this end, for this reason, as a result, because, therefore, consequently, as a consequence, and the outcome was*
10. Examples	A transition by example illustrates a connection between a point and an example or examples. You may find visual aids work well with this type of transition.	*In fact, as we can see, after all, even, for example, for instance, of course, specifically, such as, in the following example, to illustrate my point*
11. Clarification	A clarification transition restates or further develops a main idea or point. It can also serve as a signal to a key point.	*To clarify, that is, I mean, in other words, to put it another way, that is to say, to rephrase it, in order to explain, this means*
12. Concession	A concession transition indicates knowledge of contrary information. It can address a perception the audience may hold and allow for clarification.	*We can see that while, although it is true that, granted that, while it may appear that, naturally, of course, I can see that, I admit that even though*

Prepare a Presentation Aid

Presentation aids are the resources beyond the words and delivery that a speaker uses to enhance the message

conveyed to the audience. The type of presentation aids that speakers most typically make use of are visual aids such as pictures, diagrams, charts, and graphs.[10]

A laptop screen shows two examples of graphs: a bar graph and a pie chart. Image source: [Pexels](#)

When preparing your presentation, begin thinking about where to include media.[11] Consider what adding media can do for your presentation. Presenting information in a variety of formats will help you keep your audience's interest and help reduce misunderstandings by clarifying complex information or emphasizing important ideas.[12]

10. https://oer.galileo.usg.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=communication-textbooks
11. https://open.lib.umn.edu/writingforsuccess/chapter/14-1-organizing-a-visual-presentation/
12. https://oer.galileo.usg.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=communication-textbooks

Person delivers presentation to peers with a visual aid in the background. Image source: [Pexels](#)

Use PowerPoint

Delivering your presentation as a slideshow is one way to use media to your advantage. As you speak, you use a computer and an attached projector to display a slideshow of text and graphics that complement the presentation. Your audience will follow your ideas more easily because you are communicating with them through more than one sense. The audience hears your words and also sees the corresponding visuals. A listener who momentarily loses track of what you are saying can rely on the slide to cue their memory.

Using presentation software such as PowerPoint allows you to incorporate graphics, sounds, and even web links directly into your slides. You can also work with available styles, colour schemes, and fonts to give your presentation a polished, consistent appearance. Different slide templates make it easy to organize information to suit your purpose. Be sure your font is visible to you audience. Avoid using a small or coloured font that is not visible against your background.[13]

13. https://open.lib.umn.edu/writingforsuccess/chapter/14-1-organizing-a-visual-presentation/

Annotate your Presentation

When you make a presentation, you are giving a performance of sorts. It may not be as dramatic as a play or a movie, but it requires smooth coordination of several elements — your words, your gestures, and any media you include. One way to ensure that the performance goes smoothly is to annotate your presentation ahead of time.

To annotate means to add comments or notes to a document. You can use this technique to plan how the different parts of your presentation will flow together. For instance, if you are working with slides, add notes to your outline indicating when you will show each slide. If you have other visual or audio media to include, make a note of that, too. Be as detailed as necessary. Jotting down "Start video at 3:14" can spare you the awkwardness of searching for the right clip during your presentation.

In a face-to-face presentation, make sure your final annotated outline is easy to read. It will serve to cue you during your presentation so it does not need to look polished, as long as it is clear to you. Double space the text and use a larger-than-normal font size (14 or 16 points) if that will make it easier for you to read. Boldface or italics will set off text that should be emphasized or delivered with greater emotion. Write out main points, as well as your opening and closing remarks, in complete sentences, along with any material you want to quote verbatim. Use shorter phrases for supporting details. Using your speaker notes effectively will help you deliver an effective presentation. Highlighting, using all capital letters, or choosing different-coloured font will help you easily distinguish notes from the text of your presentation.[14]

Practice your Presentation

Practice is essential if you want your presentation to be effective. Speaking in front of a group is a complicated task because there are many components to remember — your words, your visual aids, your voice, and your body language. If you are new to presenting, the task can feel overwhelming. With experience, it gets easier, but even experienced speakers benefit from practice.

Take the time to rehearse your presentation more than once. Each time you go through it, pick another element to refine. For instance, once you are comfortable with the overall verbal content, work on integrating your visuals. Then focus on your vocal delivery and your body language. Multiple practice sessions will help you integrate all of these components into a smooth, effective presentation.

If possible, practice in front of another person (or a small group) at least once. Practicing with a test audience will help you grow accustomed to interacting with other people as you talk, and it will give you a chance to get feedback from someone else's perspective. Your audience can help you identify areas to improve. You can also record yourself while presenting and then watch the recording in order to learn how you can improve.

In addition, practice your presentation for time. When practicing your presentation, it is a good idea to time yourself at least three times. This way you can see if you are generally coming in around the same time and feel pretty good that it is an accurate reflection of how long you will speak. Conversely, if during your three rehearsals your times are 5:45, 5:12, and 6:37, then that is a clear indicator that you need to be more consistent in what you are saying and doing.[15]

14. https://open.lib.umn.edu/writingforsuccess/chapter/14-1-organizing-a-visual-presentation/
15. https://oer.galileo.usg.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=communication-textbooks

Elements of Effective Oral Presentations

While practicing your presentation, you can take the opportunity to polish it. Consider the clarity and conciseness of the information, how your voice sounds, and how to use your body language to add interest to the presentation.

In addition to the following elements, consider the elements of effective speaking (pronunciation, enunciation, word stress, thought groups, pitch and intonation) as described in the previous chapter: Speaking Skills.

Clarity

As a speaker, you may have excellent ideas to present, but if they are not made clear to the audience, your presentation will not be successful. Your word choices, how you say them, and in what order, all relate to clarity. If you use euphemisms, or indirect expressions, to communicate an idea, your audience may not follow you. If you tell a story and fail to connect it clearly to your main point, your audience will also fail to see the connection.[16]

Use simple and familiar language in order to deliver a clear message. If a speaker said, "A collection of pre-adolescents fabricated a rotund personification comprised of compressed mounds of minute aquatic crystals," you might be able to interpret it as "Some children made a snowman," but it is not likely. Although the words are correct and technically mean the same thing, the language is not simple or familiar and therefore does not communicate well.[17]

Conciseness

Another part of being clear is being concise. Conciseness refers to being brief and direct in the visual and verbal delivery of your message, and avoiding unnecessary intricacy. It involves using as few words as necessary to get your message across, and no more. If you only have five to seven minutes, how will you be concise with your language in order to budget your time? Being economical with your time is a pragmatic approach to insuring that your attention, and the attention of your audience, is focused on the point at hand.[18]

Volume

Volume is simply how loudly or softly you speak. Shyness, nervousness, or over-enthusiasm can cause people to speak too softly or too loudly. The following are some tips for managing volume effectively:

- Many people speak too quietly because they are afraid to speak too loudly. As a rule, aim to use a slightly louder volume when giving a presentation than you use in conversation.
- Think about volume in relation to content. Main points should usually be delivered with more volume and force. However, lowering your voice at crucial points can also help draw in your audience or emphasize serious content.[19]

16. https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/12-2-strategies-for-success/
17. https://oer.galileo.usg.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=communication-textbooks
18. https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/12-2-strategies-for-success/
19. https://open.lib.umn.edu/writingforsuccess/chapter/14-3-giving-a-presentation/

Tone

Tone is the emotion you convey when speaking — excitement, annoyance, nervousness, lightheartedness, and so forth. Various factors, such as volume, pitch, and body language, affect how your tone comes across to your audience.

Before you begin rehearsing your presentation, think about what tone is appropriate for the content. Should you sound forceful, concerned, or matter-of-fact? Are there places in your presentation where a more humorous or more serious tone is appropriate? Think about the tone you should project, and practice setting that tone.[20]

Rate

The rate is how quickly or slowly you say words while speaking. A slower rate may communicate to your listener that you do not fully know what you are saying. "Where is this going?" they may wonder. By contrast, speaking too fast can make it difficult for your listener to keep up with and digest what you are saying.[21]

Many less experienced speakers tend to talk faster when giving a presentation because they are nervous, want to get the presentation over with, or fear that they will run out of time. If you find yourself rushing when you are practicing your presentation, try the following strategies:

- Take a few deep breaths before you speak. Make sure you are not forgetting to breathe during your presentation.
- Identify places where a brief, strategic pause is appropriate — for instance, when transitioning from one main point to the next. Build these pauses into your presentation.
- If you still find yourself rushing, you may need to edit your presentation content to ensure that you stay within the allotted time.

If, on the other hand, your pace seems too slow, additional practice should help you. It also helps to break down how much time you plan to spend on each part of the presentation and then make sure you are adhering to your plan.[22]

Body Language

The nonverbal content of a presentation is just as important as the verbal delivery. A person's body language — eye contact, facial expressions, posture, gestures, and movement — communicates a powerful message to an audience before any words are spoken.

People interpret and respond to each other's body language instinctively. When you talk to someone, you notice whether the other person is leaning forward or hanging back, nodding in agreement or disagreement, looking at you attentively or looking away. In everyday conversations, people often communicate through body language without thinking about it. As a speaker, you are typically standing in front of your audience or you may be presenting on an online platform. It is not easy to see yourself as your audience sees you.

20. https://open.lib.umn.edu/writingforsuccess/chapter/14-3-giving-a-presentation/
21. Effective Professional Communication: A Rhetorical Approach by Rebekah Bennetch; Corey Owen; and Zachary Keesey, licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. https://openpress.usask.ca/rcm200/chapter/verbal-delivery/
22. https://open.lib.umn.edu/writingforsuccess/chapter/14-3-giving-a-presentation/

Body language can vary across cultures. To learn about appropriate body language for presenters in a North American context, try watching videos of academic and professional presentations online or attend presentations if possible. Make note of the presenter's body language. In presentations in a North American context, you will likely note that the presenter faces the audience, speaks directly to the audience, uses moderate hand gestures, and stands straight up, but is not rigid.

Exercise

Think about times you have been in an audience listening to a presenter. You have probably seen some presenters who seemed to own the room, projecting confidence and energy and easily connecting with the audience. Other presenters may have come across as nervous, gloomy, or disengaged. How did their body language make a difference?

Eye Contact

Eye contact norms can also vary across cultures. In a North American context, "maintain eye contact" is a common piece of advice for presenters. Why is that simple piece of advice so hard to follow? In everyday conversation, people establish eye contact but then look away from time to time, because staring into someone's eyes continuously feels uncomfortably intense. How do you manage that when you are addressing a group? The trick is to focus on one person at a time. Zero in on one person, make eye contact, and maintain it just long enough to establish a connection. (A few seconds will be enough.) Then move on. This way, you connect with your audience, one person at a time. As you proceed, you may find that some people hold your gaze and others look away quickly. That is fine, as long as you connect with people in different parts of the room.[23]

Key Takeaway

Planning and practicing can help you deliver an effective academic presentation with confidence.

23. https://open.lib.umn.edu/writingforsuccess/chapter/14-3-giving-a-presentation/

17. Writing Skills

Writing Skills

EMILIE JACKSON

Learning Objectives

After reading this page, you will be able to:

- use prewriting strategies to produce effective writing;
- identify elements of effective writing;
- review, reflect, and revise your writing;
- develop your writing skills.

Why Is This Important?

In college, whenever you sit down to write you will have a goal in mind, such as emailing your instructor a question about an upcoming class or writing the first draft of an assignment. Just as you need a recipe, ingredients, and proper tools to cook a delicious meal, you also need a plan, resources, and adequate time to create a strong piece of writing. In other words, writing is a process that requires following steps and using strategies to accomplish your goals.

A focused student sits at a desk and writes in a notebook. Image source: Pexels

Prewriting Strategies

Create an Outline

An outline is a framework that helps the writer to organize ideas.[1]

Preview the example outline below:

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1. Business Communication for Success by University of Minnesota, licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/12-4-sample-speech-outlines/

Introduction	Overall main idea

Body	I. Main idea: Point 1
	    I.1 Specific information 1
	    I.2 Specific information 2
	II. Main idea: Point 2
	    II.1 Specific information 1
	    II.2 Specific information 2
	III. Main idea: Point 3
	    III.1 Specific information 1
	    III.2 Specific information 2

Conclusion	Summary of main points 1-3

In the example outline, the left column includes the three main structural elements of an informative writing task: introduction, body, conclusion. The right column represents a generic outline. When creating an outline, you can fill in the right column of the outline with the actual ideas and points you are making in your writing task. Adapt the outline to your needs, depending on the specifics of your task.[2]

In addition, when organizing your ideas, determine the organizational pattern, such as chronological, comparison, cause and effect, and so on. Similar to organizing your information for an oral presentation, choose an organizational pattern that suits the purpose and topic of your writing.

Identify the Audience and Purpose

Before you write an opening paragraph, or even the first sentence, it is important to consider the audience and purpose of the writing task. You may read the instructions and try to put them in your own words to make sense of the assignment. Be careful, however, not to lose sight of what the instructions say versus what you think they say. Ask your instructor to clarify any points you find confusing in order to better meet the expectations.[3]

Exercise

When you receive an assignment from an instructor, paying close attention to the assignment description and expectations can help you determine what will be most effective for your writing.

Test your knowledge of these common purpose key words that you could see on a writing assignment.[4]

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2. https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/6-1-organization/
3. https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/4-2-how-is-writing-learned/
4. Academic Writing Basics by Megan Robertson, licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingbasics/chapter/keyword-clues/

Elements of Effective Writing

There are a few common elements that can be found in any writing task. When used successfully, focused paragraphs, accurate and varied sentence structures, and effective transitions will contribute to strong and successful writing.

Focused Paragraphs

Paragraphs separate writing into logical, manageable chunks. Each paragraph focuses on one central idea. It can be as long or as short as it needs to be to get the message across, but remember your audience and avoid long, drawn-out paragraphs that may lose your reader's attention.

Just as a document generally has an introduction, body, and conclusion, so does a paragraph. Each paragraph has one idea, thought, or purpose that is stated in an introductory sentence. This is followed by one or more supporting sentences and concluded with a summary statement and transition or link to the next idea or paragraph.

- The **topic sentence** states the main thesis, purpose, or topic of the paragraph; it defines the subject matter to be addressed in that paragraph.
- **Body sentences** support the topic sentence and relate clearly to the subject matter of the paragraph and overall document.
- The **conclusion sentence** brings the paragraph to a close; it may do this in any of several ways. It may reinforce the paragraph's main point, summarize the relationships among the body sentences, and/or serve as a transition to the next paragraph.[5]

Accurate and Varied Sentence Structures

The ability to write complete, correct sentences is like any other skill — it comes with practice. The more writing you do using correct grammar, the easier it will become.

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5. https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/6-1-organization/

Effective sentences are complete, containing a subject and a verb. Incomplete sentences — also known as sentence fragments — are a group of words that are written out as a sentence but that lack a subject or verb.[6]

- Sentence fragments: *Although taking notes in class can be challenging. Helps when studying for tests.*
- Complete sentence: *Although taking notes in class can be challenging, it helps when studying for tests.*

In addition, there are different sentence structures, including simple, compound, and complex. It is important to use varied sentence structures in your writing.

- Simple sentences have one subject and one verb: *The student studies every evening.*
- Compound sentences have two independent phrases and one linking word such as "and": *The student studies every evening and the study group gets together Friday mornings.*
- Complex sentences have one independent phrase and one dependent phrase with one linking word such as "so": *The student studies every evening, so they are prepared for the exam next week.*

> *Exercise*
>
> Watch the YouTube video "Simple, Compound and Complex Sentences" by EasyTeaching to learn how to use a variety of sentence structures in your writing.
>
> If you would like to access the lesson worksheet to follow along with the video lesson, open the video in YouTube and find the lesson worksheet in the video description.
>
> > *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegesuccessfornewcomers/?p=1617#oembed-1*

Effective Transitions

Transitions are words and phrases that help the reader follow the writer's ideas, connect the main points to each other, and see the relationships in the information. Transitions are often described as bridges between ideas, thought or concepts, providing some sense of where you've been and where you are going with your writing. Transitions guide the audience in the progression from one significant idea, concept, or point to the next. They can also show the relationships between the main point and the support you are using to illustrate your point, provide examples for it, or refer to outside sources.[7]

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6. https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/6-1-organization/
7. https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/6-1-organization/

For a list of transitions, see the previous chapter: Presentation Skills.

Review, Reflect, and Revise

Do you review what you write? Do you reflect on whether it serves its purpose? Where does it miss the mark? If you can recognize it, then you have the opportunity to review, reflect, and revise.

Reflection means reviewing your work and considering if it meets the expectations. Reflection also allows for another opportunity to consider the key elements and their relationship to each other.

When you revise your document, you change one word for another, make subtle changes, and improve it. However, don't revise simply to change the good work you've completed, but instead look at it from the perspective of the reader — for example, how could this be made clearer to them? If you are limited to words only, then does each word communicate the desired message?[8]

Revision Points to Consider

When revising your document, it can be helpful to focus on specific points. When you consider each point in turn, you will be able to break down the revision process into manageable steps. When you have examined each point, you can be confident that you have avoided many possible errors. Specific revision requires attention to:

- clarity;
- conciseness;
- grammar;
- punctuation;
- spelling;
- format.

Clarity

Revising requires that you look at your content closely at the paragraph level. It's now time to examine each paragraph, on its own, to see where you might need to revise. Check for a logical flow of ideas, eliminate unnecessary or repetitive information, and consider reorganizing to improve clarity.

Exercise

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8. https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/4-6-overcoming-barriers-to-effective-written-communication/

Review the paragraph below and select the most important revision that Sophie, the student writer, should focus on at this stage in her revisions.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegesuccessfornewcomers/?p=1617#h5p-61

Conciseness

It is essential to write concisely. One way to accomplish this is to refrain from using wordy language that can distract the reader from your meaning. The more complex a sentence becomes, the easier it is to lose track of its meaning. When we consider that it may read by someone for whom English is a additional language, the complex sentence becomes even more problematic. If we consider its translation, we add another layer of complexity that can lead to miscommunication.[9]

Exercise

This activity includes ten examples of wordy phrases that you should avoid in your writing. Match the wordy phrase with the more concise version.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegesuccessfornewcomers/?p=1617#h5p-53

Grammar

Nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, and articles are the building blocks you will use when composing written documents. Grammatical errors can create confusion and have a negative impact on the reception of your document.

9. https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/6-1-organization/

Errors themselves are not inherently bad, but failure to recognize and fix them will reflect poorly on you. Self-correction is part of the writing process.[10]

Editing Tips

It's important to remember that a good editing process takes time. You can't edit well in one big editing session. You should be prepared to spend the time it will take to edit in several passes and use strategies to slow yourself down and edit thoroughly.

Tip #1: Try reading your writing aloud. Reading aloud gives you the opportunity to both see and hear what you have written — and it slows your eyes down so you're more likely to catch errors and see what you have actually written, not what you think you wrote. It's also helpful to have someone else read your paper aloud so you can listen to how well it flows.

Tip #2: Read your writing backwards. Start with the last sentence. Read it first. Then, read the second-to-the-last sentence. Continue this process for your whole essay. This strategy really slows you down and helps you see each sentence on its own, which is key to effective editing.

Tip #3: Use the resources available to you for feedback and help. If you're on a campus with a writing centre, take advantage of it. If your online college offers an online writing tutorial service, submit your essay to that service for feedback. If you have the opportunity, take advantage of in-class peer reviews. Your peers understand the writing assignment you're working on and can provide helpful reader feedback. Seek help when you need it and ask your instructor questions. A good revision and editing process involves using all of the resources available to you.[11]

Develop Your Writing Skills

Becoming a strong writer takes time. If you feel anxious about writing tasks, try using the following strategies to develop your writing skills.

Read Before You Write

Reading is one step many writers point to as an integral step in learning to write effectively. You may like to read mystery novels, but if you want to write effectively in a particular field, you need to read documents related to that field. For

10. https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/4-4-style-in-written-communication/
11. The Writing Process by Excelsior Online Writing Lab (OWL), licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. https://owl.excelsior.edu/writing-process/revising-and-editing/revising-and-editing-tips/

example, if you are studying business, you should read examples of business letters, reports, and proposals. You may find these in your college's writing centre, business department, or library; there are also many websites that provide sample business documents of all kinds. Reading is one of the most useful lifelong habits you can practice to boost your writing skills.

Practice

Learning to be a successful writer comes with practice. Targeted practice, which involves identifying your weak areas and specifically working to improve them, is especially valuable. In addition to reading, make it a habit to write, even if it is not for a specific assignment. The more you practice writing the kinds of materials that are used in your field of study, the more writing will come naturally and become an easier task — even on occasions when you need to write under pressure.[12]

Think Critically

Thinking critically means becoming aware of your thinking process.[13] When you receive your writing assignment from your instructor, it's important to stop and think. Ask yourself: What are the requirements? What is the purpose of this assignment? What is your instructor asking you to write? Who are you writing for?

Thinking critically about your writing task requirements means that you're considering the purpose of the assignment, the audience for the assignment, the voice you might want to use when you write, and how you will approach the assignment overall.

With each writing assignment, you're being presented with a particular situation for writing. Learning about assignment requirements and expectations can help you learn to make good decisions about your writing. Every writing assignment has different expectations. There is no such thing as right when it comes to writing; instead, try to think about good writing as being writing that is effective in that particular situation.[14]

Exercise

Reflect on how confident you are with writing. Ask yourself these questions:

12. https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/4-2-how-is-writing-learned/
13. https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/4-2-how-is-writing-learned/
14. https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/academicwritingbasics/chapter/thinking-about-your-assignment/

- *Which of the strategies for developing writing skills would I like to try?* Possible answers could include the list of three strategies discussed above, as well as connecting with the writing skills supports at your college to get help with your writing tasks.
- *How could I prioritize developing my writing skills?* Possible answers could include scheduling time in your day to write, focusing on expanding your vocabulary, or thoroughly reading and reflecting on the feedback you receive about your writing tasks.

Key Takeaway

Writing can be a challenging part of college; however, using prewriting strategies, keeping the elements of strong writing in mind, and learning to revise your writing can help you achieve your writing goals.

18. Group Work Skills

Group Work Skills

EMILIE JACKSON

Why Is This Important?

Your college experience will likely include many teams, and not just for sport. Being able to work well in a team is a valuable employment skill. For this reason, college courses are often designed with opportunities for students to develop their teamwork skills. Beyond being an important employment skill, working well with your peers to complete group assignments, work in lab classes, form study groups, and more can help to build relationships and sense of community throughout your time in college.

Being a Team Player

Almost every posting for a job opening in a workplace lists teamwork among the required skills. This is because every employer's business success absolutely depends on people working well in teams to get the job done. A high-functioning, cohesive, and efficient team is essential to workplace productivity.[1]

Work Distribution

Teamwork is a compound word, combining team and work. The word *team* refers to the forming of a group normally dedicated to production or problem solving. The word *work* refers to the tasks that the team will complete. Each member of the team has skills, talents, experience, and education. Each is expected to contribute. Work is the activity and while it may be fun or engaging, it also requires effort and commitment, as there is a schedule for production with individual and group responsibilities. Each member must fulfill their own obligations for the team to succeed, and the team, like a chain, is only as strong as its weakest member.[2]

Before individuals can begin working on their portion or performing their role for a group project, the workload has to be distributed between the group members. If the group has a designated leader, the leader can make equitable decisions about how the workload is divided. However, if there is not a leader, the group members will have to work together to distribute the work. In order to achieve an equitable result, ask group members to discuss these questions:

- What strengths are there in the group?
- What experience do group members have with the material or similar assignments?
- Are there parts of the assignment that group members feel less comfortable performing?
- What resources do group members have access to that could support the workload?
- Who has time to take on more work at the beginning of the assignment? How about near the end? (At this point, don't underestimate how long the final steps can take. For example, if a group completes a report-writing assignment, the final steps will include editing the report for consistent voice and formatting the document. These steps take a significant amount of time, so the group members that are going to work on that part should have less initial research and report writing to do.)

Discussing these questions openly should allow group members to divide the workload fairly. However, it is important to keep in mind that group members may have competing goals for the assignment or other tasks that are drawing their attention. Teams are made up of individuals. Even if the team goal is the same (for example, to complete the first part of the project by Friday), an individual team member may be prioritizing a different goal (for example, to help my child get over their cold, or get a B on my accounting quiz on Friday).

1. [Communication at Work](https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationatwork/chapter/11-1-teamwork/) by Jordan Smith, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationatwork/chapter/11-1-teamwork/). https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationatwork/chapter/11-1-teamwork/
2. [Business Communication for Success](https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/19-5-teamwork-and-leadership/) by University of Minnesota, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/19-5-teamwork-and-leadership/). https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/19-5-teamwork-and-leadership/

A group of students work together on a project around a large table. Image source: Pexels

Leading a Team

Teamwork allows individuals to share their talents and energy to accomplish goals. An effective leader facilitates this

teamwork process. In college, you will work in a team and at some point may be called on to lead. You may emerge in that role as the group recognizes your specific skill set in relation to the task, or you may be appointed to a position of responsibility by yourself and others. Know that leading and following are both integral aspects of effective teamwork.[3]

As a group leader in a college setting, there are certain expectations that you must strive to meet. Your group members will expect you to arrange and facilitate group meetings, and they may turn to you to manage conflict if it happens.

Arranging Meetings

It is the group leader's responsibility to arrange group meetings. This includes formulating an agenda, determining whether the meeting will be online or in person (and finding an appropriate meeting space if it is in person), and then inviting group members to the meeting.

A meeting agenda includes a list of topics to be discussed. Note that it is always a good idea to leave time at the end for additional questions and points that group members want to discuss. Sharing the agenda before the meeting allows for group members to prepare, for the meeting to start with ease (because the first topic of discussion has already been chosen), and for group members to stay on topic during the meeting.

While meeting online can be a convenient and time-saving option, there are many advantages to meeting in person. People communicate not just with words but also with their body language — facial expressions, hand gestures, head nodding or head shaking, and posture. These subtleties of communication can be key to determining how group members really feel about an issue or question.

Facilitating Meetings

To facilitate an effective meeting, it is important to start promptly, follow the agenda, guide the conversation, encourage participation, take breaks, and capture and assign action items.

While social time makes people happy and relieves stress, meetings cannot only consist of social time. It is essential to keep to the agenda so that all topics are discussed during the allotted time. If your group members get off topic or social time is going on too long, use signposts to indicate where you are in your agenda. For example, "It looks like we've got 25 minutes left in our meeting, and we haven't discussed who's going to complete the final revision of the report."

If you're in charge of the meeting, that doesn't mean you're responsible for everything people say in it, nor does it mean you have to personally comment on every idea or proposal that comes up. Let the other members of the group carry the discussion as long as they're on topic.

All group members should be heard. As a leader, it is important that you encourage participation. There are a few strategies you can use to help group members contribute, including having all group members respond to the same question, using names to ask questions directly, and taking breaks. Taking a break during a meeting gives group members a chance to prepare for the next topics on the agenda, including preparing questions they may have. This is an especially effective strategy if you have group members who are less confident with speaking English.[4]

3. https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/19-5-teamwork-and-leadership/
4. Problem Solving in Teams and Groups (updated at: https://opentext.ku.edu/teams/) by Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D., licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. https://teams1.pressbooks.com/chapter/hofstedes-cultural-dimensions/

Team Conflict

Conflict is an expressed struggle between interdependent parties over goals that they perceive as incompatible or resources that they perceive to be insufficient. There are some circumstances in which a moderate amount of conflict can be helpful. For example, conflict can stimulate innovation and change. However, conflict can also affect the social climate of the group and inhibit group cohesiveness. If this happens, it is helpful to know how to manage that conflict.

Strategies for Managing Team Conflict

1. **Emphasizing group goals and objectives.** Focusing on group goals and objectives should prevent conflict. If larger goals are emphasized, group members are more likely to see the big picture and work together.
2. **Providing clear tasks.** When steps or tasks are clearly defined, understood, and accepted, conflict should be less likely to occur. Conflict is most likely to occur when team members are unsure of what they need to do or who is responsible for each task.
3. **Sharing openly.** Misperception of the the abilities, goals, and motivations of others often leads to conflict, so efforts to share information among group members should help eliminate conflict. As group members come to know more about one another, greater teamwork becomes possible.
4. **Seeking support.** In some cases, it is necessary to ask for support. In college, you can reach out to the instructor who assigned the group task. If your group cannot overcome the conflict, invite your instructor to a group meeting to discuss the issue.[5]

Valuing Diversity

Decision making and problem solving can be much more dynamic and successful when performed in a diverse team environment. Multiple diverse perspectives can enhance both the understanding of the problem and the quality of the solution. Yet, working in diverse teams can be challenging given different identities, cultures, beliefs, and experiences.

Challenges of Diverse Teams

People may assume that communication is the key factor that can derail multicultural teams as participants may have different languages and communication styles. There are three key cultural differences that can cause destructive conflicts in a team. The first difference is direct versus indirect communication, also known as high-context vs. low-context communication. Some cultures are very direct and explicit in their communication, while others are more indirect and ask questions rather than pointing out problems. The second difference that multicultural teams may face is trouble with accents and fluency. When team members don't speak the same language, there may be one language that dominates the group interaction — and those who don't speak it may feel left out. The next challenge is when there are differing attitudes toward hierarchy. Some cultures are very respectful of hierarchy and will treat team members

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5. https://teams1.pressbooks.com/chapter/conflict-and-negotiation/

differently based on that hierarchy. Other cultures are more egalitarian and don't observe hierarchical differences to the same degree. This may lead to clashes if some people feel that they are being disrespected and not treated according to their status.[6]

Developing Cultural Intelligence

Cultural intelligence is a competency and a skill that enables individuals to function effectively in cross-cultural environments. It develops as people become more aware of the influence of culture and more capable of adapting their behaviour to the norms of other cultures.

Cultural intelligence is an extension of emotional intelligence. An individual must have a level of awareness and understanding of the new culture so that they can adapt to its style, pace, language, nonverbal communication, and so on in order to work together successfully with the new culture. A multicultural team can only find success if its members take the time to understand each other and ensure that everyone feels included.[7]

Exercise

What are some ways you could learn to value and work with diverse teams?

Reflect on your experiences working in teams and consider the information on this page about valuing diversity, challenges facing diverse teams, and developing cultural intelligence.

Some of the answers you could have come up with include:

- If misunderstandings happen, do not assume that your team member is being unfriendly or difficult. Realize that there may be cultural differences in the way you communicate and/or understand roles and responsibilities within the team.
- If you can identify a cultural difference, be patient with yourself and your team members as you learn to work together. Remember that developing cultural intelligence takes time.
- Always use a language that all members of the group can use and understand for all team communications.

Key Takeaway

6. https://hbr.org/2006/11/managing-multicultural-teams
7. Technical Writing: An Open Educational Resource by LibreTexts, licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. https://human.libretexts.org/Courses/Harrisburg_Area_Community_College/ Technical_Writing%3A_An_Open_Educational_Resource/01%3A_Chapters/ 1.05%3A_Team_Work_and_Cultural_Intelligence

Working in teams is common in college. Understanding how your actions can affect your team, how to be an effective team leader, and how to value diversity in a team will help you be the type of team member that others will want to work with in a group.

PART III
COMMUNICATION SKILLS

19. Intercultural Communication Styles

Intercultural Communication Styles

REBECCA HIEBERT

Why Is This Important?

Our beliefs and values are culturally specific. What we believe depends on what we experienced as we grew up. Although these values feel like the *correct* or the *only* way to behave, people from other cultures will have different values that they also feel are correct. As we increase our awareness of the values that we hold, we can adapt our behaviours when working with people who hold different values from ourselves in order to complete tasks and achieve success together.

Cultural Values

Values and beliefs are some important, yet invisible, aspects of culture. Our values impact that way we interact with each other and a difference of values can lead to miscommunications and misunderstandings.

As you read about values, consider the following:

- Which of the values listed are important to you?
- What would it look like to interact with someone who has different values?
- What can you do to bridge these differences?

Task vs. Relationship

Cultural values surrounding the **task and relationship** dimensions are strongly tied to how we interact with each

other. In **relationship-oriented** cultures, people are valued for who they are. Their personality, character, appearance, behaviour, and family ties are all part of the picture. Social relationships take priority over professional relationships. Family commitments take precedence over work and school commitments. Achievement is measured by friendships, peer recognition, and respect. Criticism is rare and usually interpreted as negative.

Cultures with a strong **task orientation** want to get the job done quickly and correctly the first time. Tasks are more important than social relationships and family commitments. Achievement is measured by accomplishment, possessions, and power. Professional recognition is determined by expertise. Constructive criticism is welcomed.

Multiple Perspectives

Task vs. Relationship in Canada

Communities in Canada tend to be more task oriented. This means that college students are generally expected to:

- take responsibility for working on tasks quickly and efficiently;
- take the initiative to ask clarification questions if more information is needed to complete the task;
- complete work first before socializing and building relationships;
- prioritize attending class, completing assignments, and studying for tests over personal relationships.

Students working together in a park. Image Source: [Pexels](#)

Individualist vs. Collectivist

Individualism vs. collectivism anchor opposite ends of a continuum that describes how people define themselves and their relationships with others. Individualism refers to people's tendency to take care of themselves and their immediate circle of family and friends, perhaps at the expense of overall society. In individualistic cultures, what counts most is self-realization. People are rewarded for taking initiative and completing tasks on their own. In individualistic cultures, competition is the fuel of success.

In an **individualistic culture**, workers are expected to perform certain functions and have clearly defined responsibilities. People are expected to complete their assigned tasks, regardless of their ability, and it is assumed that individuals work better alone. Even when working on teams, credit is given to the specific tasks each group member has performed. Efficiency and productivity are valued above attitude.

In **collectivistic cultures**, tasks are assigned to a group and individuals generally defer to group interests over individual interests. When working in teams, credit is given to the group as a whole for task completion. Consensus decision making is preferred. Individuals are thought to perform better in groups. Loyalty to superiors is more valued than efficiency and performance.

Individualism and Collectivism at College

Individualist and **collectivist** values impact expectations at college. **Collectivism** is marked by structured relationships where individual needs are subservient to the group. Solidarity, harmony, and equal distribution of rewards among students is expected. Modesty is valued, norms are set by the average student, and failure is seen as unfortunate but not dire. Success is seen as something linked to family, classmates, and society as a whole.

In **collectivistic** classrooms, education is seen as a tool for strengthening the country rather than for the betterment of an individual. Working together is not seen as cheating, but rather a happy by-product of good relations. Fast learners are expected to help slow learners.

Conversely, **individualism** is marked by loose relationships and ties that are forged according to self-interest. Status and grades are based on individual success. Competition is encouraged, norms are set by the best students, and failure is perceived as fairly significant.

In **individualistic** classrooms, education is seen as a tool for getting ahead. Students are responsible for their own learning. Academic progress is measured through individual assessment and reported as individual grades. The learning relationship is primarily between the teacher and the student, not the classmate group. If a student needs help, they ask the teacher questions. Students are taught to be more engaged in discussions and arguments. Schools encourage students to become independent thinkers. An academic task has value in and of itself so getting one's work done is important. Relationships with other students is secondary. In certain situations, helping others could be cheating.

Multiple Perspectives

Individualism in Canada

Communities in Canada tend to be more individualistic. This means that college students are generally expected to:

- take initiative to manage their time and get tasks done;
- work in groups but get marked individually for tasks;
- complete individual assignments alone;
- give credit when using outside sources.

Because individuality is emphasized, when students copy other people's work without giving credit, they may be charged with plagiarism and this may result in a lower or zero grade in an assignment or even removal from a course. It is important to understand the academic policies at your college so that you can be sure to meet the expectations.

Hierarchy vs. Equality (High Power vs. Low Power)

The hierarchy-equality dimension, also referred to as power distance, helps us understand how people with different levels of power and status should interact with one another. Communication across power divides can be difficult, especially when there are cultural differences in how power is viewed or expressed.

Cultures that practice **hierarchy**, or **high power distance**, feel that organizations function best when differences are

clearly observed, and there is no confusion as to who the boss is and who the worker is. Managers may reject assistance from subordinates, but willingly consult with their peers. Subordinates may compete for the attention of their superiors, while avoiding disagreements. Education signals greater social status, although being average means a lack of power. Leaders in high power distance cultures are expected to resolve conflict, while subordinates are expected to support the conflict resolution process. Overall, in high power distance cultures, the division between superior and subordinate is clear.

Cultures that practice **equality**, or **low power distance**, feel that power differences should be minimized. Managers accept the support of subordinates, with subordinates expecting to have some voice or power in the decision-making process. Subordinates are relatively unthreatened by disagreeing with superiors, therefore are more likely to cooperate rather than compete with each other. Education signals accomplishment, whereas being seen as average means acceptance and inclusion. In low power distance cultures, managers and workers expect to work together to resolve conflict.

Multiple Perspectives

Equality in Canada

Communities in Canada tend to be more equality focused. This means that college students are generally expected to:

- share the workload equally with group members regardless of their gender or background;
- address instructors using their first names;
- reach out to instructors, program managers, and college staff to ask for information;
- show equal respect to people in all power positions;
- be creative and share new ideas when interacting with people in all power positions.

Exercise

Reflect on the following questions:

- Which value, *task completion or relationship building*, was more important in your home culture? How is this different from Canada?
- Which value, *individualism or collectivism*, was more important in your home culture? How is this different from Canada?
- Which value, *hierarchy or equality*, was more important in your home culture? How is this different from Canada?

How can you adapt to Canadian values when working with people who have different cultural values?

When interacting with people from different cultures, it is important to consider how each person's culture may influence their expectations in regard to the values of task vs. relationship, individualism vs. collectivism, and hierarchy vs. equality. Develop an awareness of your own values and consider how to adapt them to meet the expectations of college students in Canada.

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20. Verbal and Non-verbal Communication

Verbal and Non-verbal Communication

REBECCA HIEBERT

Learning Objectives

After reading this page, you will be able to:

- understand the cultural impact of different styles of verbal communication, including direct and indirect styles;
- recognize the importance of non-verbal communication.

Why Is This Important?

Communication is culturally dependent. The way that a person uses verbal and non-verbal communication impacts the message they deliver to others as well as how they perceive messages that they receive from others. It is important to be aware of how your verbal and non-verbal communication differs from those around you so that you can adapt your messages to reduce miscommunications and misunderstandings.

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication is the words and language a person uses to communicate. Words and language are culturally dependent and they send a message about where a person is from. When a person uses the same words and language as those in their group they feel part of a bigger whole; however, when that person is around people from a different group, who are speaking differently from themselves, they feel like an outsider.

What would your life be like if you had been raised in a country other than the one where you grew up? You would have learned another set of customs, values, traditions, and different language patterns and ways of communicating. You would be a different person who communicated in different ways.

Cultural rules about when and how certain speech acts can be performed may differ greatly. In some cultures, such as in Canada, speech is highly valued, and it is important to be articulate and well-spoken in personal as well as public settings. People in cultures like Canada tend to use language as a powerful tool to discover and express truth, as well as to extend themselves and have an impact on others. In Canada, people tend to take silence as a sign of indifference, indignation, objection, and even hostility. The silence confuses and confounds Canadians since it is so different from expected behaviour. Many are even embarrassed by silence and feel compelled to fill the silence with words so they

are no longer uncomfortable. Or, if a question is not answered immediately, people are concerned that the speaker may think that they do not know the answer.

Direct vs. Indirect

Whether a person communicates directly or indirectly is dependent on their culture. Cultures with direct styles ask for more information, whereas cultures with indirect styles may not feel comfortable either giving or asking for information. If an instructor from a verbally *direct* culture receives a poorly written assignment, they might say, "You have made many errors in this report. Go back and proofread this report to check for errors." A verbally *indirect* instructor who receives a poorly written report, might say, "Readers may have questions about this report. Can you check this over one more time?" Good intercultural communication involves slowing down and increasing your awareness about the intended meaning from other people's messages. You should listen and observe how others get information from one another. Remember to watch for variations impacted by status and relationship.

Direct styles are those in which verbal messages reveal the speaker's true intentions, needs, wants, and desires. The focus is on accomplishing a task. The message is clear and to the point, without hidden intentions or implied meanings. The communication tends to be impersonal. Conflict is discussed openly and people say what they think. In Canada, professional correspondence is expected to be short and to the point. "What can I do for you?" is a common question when a business person receives a call from a stranger; it is an accepted way of asking the caller to state their business.

Indirect styles are those in which communication is often designed to hide or minimize the speaker's true intentions, needs, wants, and desires. Communication tends to be personal and focuses on the relationship between the speakers. The language may be subtle and the speaker may be looking for a "softer" way to communicate a problem by providing many contextual cues. A hidden meaning may be embedded into the message because harmony and "saving face" is more important than truth and confrontation. In indirect cultures, long before the topic of business is raised, business conversations may start with discussions of the weather, family, or sports, as the partners gain a sense of each other.

Multiple Perspectives

Direct vs. Indirect in Canada

Communities in Canada tend to speak in a more **direct** manner. This means college students are generally expected to:

- front-load the message by stating the main idea at the beginning (for good news);
- ask their instructor a question when they don't understand;
- tell group members why they need to reschedule a group meeting;
- ask their instructor for an extension on an assignment before the assignment is due.

Even though direct communication is accepted in North America, when bad or negative news is being shared, a more **indirect** style is preferred. You must add softeners to your language to cushion the negative message. This means college students are generally expected to:

- share a compliment or appreciation before stating the bad news and state the bad news at the end of the message;

- make requests instead of demands, such as, "*Would it be possible to* get an extension on this assignment?" instead of, "*Give* me an extension on this assignment";
- use softeners to cushion the phrase, such as, "*I wonder if it would be a good idea* to switch assignment topics?" instead of, "*We have to* switch assignment topics."

Exercise

Test your knowledge of direct and indirect communication by labelling the phrases below.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegesuccessfornewcomers/?p=586#h5p-65

A person sitting on a couch communicating with someone across the room. Image Source: Unsplash

Non-verbal Communication

Understanding non-verbal communication is important and challenging. It's important because much meaning is conveyed non-verbally, and challenging because non-verbal communication is often multi-channeled and culturally specific.

Human beings all have the capacity to make the same gestures and expressions, but not all of those gestures and expressions have the same meaning across cultures. Types of non-verbal communication vary considerably based on culture and country of origin. Every culture interprets posture, gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, vocal noises, and use of space differently. Non-verbal communication contributes a large part to the message the listener receives. Sometimes we put a lot of effort into choosing the words we use when communicating; however, it is really our body language that is influencing the message the receiver is getting.

Types of Non-verbal Communication

- **Movements**: We use facial expressions, gestures, and posture to enhance our message.
- **Eye contact**: We use our eyes to express emotion, show respect, and demonstrate that we are listening.
- **Physical appearance**: We use our clothing, hair style, and personal grooming to communicate our power level in a

particular environment.

- **Proxemics**: We use proximity to the person we are interacting with to communicate relationship level. People from diverse cultures may have different normative space expectations. If you are from a large urban area, having people stand close to you may be normal. If you are from a culture where people expect more space, someone may be standing "too close" to you for comfort and not know it. We recognize the basic need for personal space, but the normative expectations for space vary greatly by culture.

Multiple Perspectives

Non-verbal Communication in Canada

In Canada, a person's non-verbal body language communicates a lot of information to the listener. This means that college students are generally expected to:

- make eye contact to show that they are interested and confident;
- maintain a well groomed, professional appearance with business-casual attire in order to demonstrate respect for the college environment;
- adjust their distance from the listener depending on familiarity.

  ◦ In Canada, intimate space ranges from 0-18 inches. Personal space is the distance we occupy during encounters with friends and ranges from 18 inches to 4 feet. Many people use social space in social situations or with strangers, and this ranges from 4 to 12 feet. In public space, when among strangers, the distance ranges from 12 feet and beyond.

Indigenous cultures may view holding eye contact as a sign of disrespect and/or think it is unimportant when showing that the listener is paying attention.

Communicating Between Cultures

In college you will be communicating with people from many different cultures. Try adapting to other people's communication preferences. Notice how long a turn people take when speaking, how quickly or slowly they speak, how direct or indirect they are, and how much they appear to want to talk compared to you. You may also need to learn and practice cultural norms for non-verbal behaviours, including eye contact, power distance, and touch. Avoid mimicking people directly but instead take note of their behaviours, consider their perspectives, and think about how you can adapt your behaviour to match the culture of your surroundings.

Key Takeaways

Verbal communication (the words and language we use) and non-verbal communication (the facial expressions and body language we use) are culturally dependent and send specific messages to the receiver. As we interact with people from diverse groups, it is important to adapt our verbal and non-verbal communication styles to clearly communicate our message to the listener.

21. Online Communication

Online Communication

REBECCA HIEBERT

Why Is This Important?

Much of our communication now happens online. In order to maintain a professional image, you need to use the appropriate communication channel and the appropriate message structure for the material you want to communicate. It is important to practice these skills during college so that you can communicate effectively when you enter the workforce.

Online Communication

Text messaging, emailing, and posting on social media in a professional context requires that you are familiar with proper etiquette for using the internet. The way that you represent yourself in writing carries significant weight. Writing in an online environment requires tact, skill, and an awareness that what you write may be there for a very long time and may be seen by people you never considered as your intended audience. From text messages to memos to letters, from business proposals to press releases, your written communication represents you. Your goal should be to make your online communication clear, concise, constructive, and professional.

We create personal pages, post messages, and interact via online technologies as a normal part of our life, but how we conduct ourselves can leave a lasting image, literally. The photograph you posted on your Instagram profile or Twitter feed may have been seen by your potential employer, or that insensitive remark in a Facebook post may come back to haunt you later.

Guidelines for Communicating Online

Following several guidelines for online postings, as detailed below, can help you avoid embarrassment later.

- **Know your context**

  ◦ Introduce yourself
  ◦ Avoid assumptions about your readers and their communication styles and practices
  ◦ Familiarize yourself with policies about online communication in your college

- **Remember the human behind the words**

  ◦ Ask for clarification before making judgments
  ◦ Avoid jokes, sarcasm, and irony as these can often be misinterpreted online
  ◦ Respond to people using their names
  ◦ Remember that culture, age, and gender can play a part in how people communicate
  ◦ Remain authentic and expect the same of others
  ◦ Remember that people may not reply immediately or at all

- **Recognize that text is permanent**

  ◦ Be judicious and diplomatic as what you say online may be difficult or even impossible to retract
  ◦ Consider your responsibility to the group and to the professional environment
  ◦ Agree on ground rules for text communication if you are working collaboratively

- **Respect privacy and original ideas**

  ◦ Quote the original author if you are responding with a specific point made by someone else
  ◦ Ask the author of an email for permission before forwarding the communication

- **Research before you react**

  ◦ Accept and forgive mistakes
  ◦ Seek clarification before reacting
  ◦ Ask your instructor or supervisor for guidance*

Sometimes, online behaviour can appear so disrespectful and even hostile that it requires attention and follow up. In this case, let your instructor or supervisor know right away so that the right resources can be called upon to help.

Texting

Whatever digital device you use, written communication in the form of brief messages, or texting, has become a

common way to connect. This is particularly true with platforms such as [Slack](#) and [Microsoft Teams](#), which are becoming increasingly popular with organizations as a means for people to quickly communicate with each other.

On these platforms, short exchanges are common as they are a convenient way to stay connected with others when talking on the phone or sending an email would be cumbersome. If you need a quick, brief answer right away, texting is often the best choice.

However, it's also important to be mindful of the organization's culture and what is deemed "appropriate" on these texting platforms. For example, when people text their friends and family, they often send GIFs as a way to communicate their reactions. Should you also do this at your college or company? Pay attention to how others are communicating in these spaces and use that as a guide for your own communication style.

Texting is not useful for long or complicated messages. When deciding whether a text or email is better, careful consideration should be given to the audience. Wouldn't it seem strange if someone sent you a text that was like an email? When texting, always consider your audience, and choose words, terms, or abbreviations that will deliver your message appropriately and effectively.

Guidelines for Professional Texting

If your organization allows or requires you to communicate via text messages, keep the following tips in mind.

- **Know your recipient:** "ROFL" (rolling on the floor laughing) may be a short form you use when texting friends; however, when communicating at college it would be wiser to write, "That was funny. Thanks for brightening my day!"
- **Anticipate unintentional misinterpretation:** Texting often uses symbols and codes to represent thoughts, ideas, and emotions. Given the complexity of communication, and the limitations of texting, be aware of the possibility that symbols and codes can create misunderstandings when used in brief messages.
- **Use appropriately:** Texting is a tool; use it when appropriate but don't abuse it. Contacting someone too frequently can border on harassment.
- **Don't text and drive:** Texting and driving is dangerous and illegal in many places.
- **Format messages appropriately:** Texts usually have a greeting in line with the rest of the message. Combine your greeting and message all in one text bubble.

Exercise

Test your knowledge about texting etiquette by indicating if the following actions are appropriate or inappropriate.

A person texting on a couch. Image Source: [AllGo – An App For Plus Size People](#) *on* [Unsplash](#)" data-url="http://Photo by [AllGo – An App For Plus Size People](#) on [Unsplash](#)">All Go*

Emailing

Email is familiar to most students and workers. Email can be very useful for messages that have slightly more content than a text message, but it is still best used for fairly brief messages. When writing emails in a college setting, use a professional and formal voice. Emails require a high attention to detail because your email reflects who you are as a student. Although email may have an informal feel, remember that when used in college, it needs to convey

professionalism and respect. Never write or send anything that you wouldn't want read in public or in front of your instructor or program manager.

Guidelines for Professional Emails

When communicating by email, keep the following tips in mind.

- **Be brief:** Omit unnecessary words.
- **Use an effective email format:** Divide your message into brief paragraphs for ease of reading. A good email should get to the point and conclude in three small paragraphs or less.
- **Reread, revise, and review:** Catch and correct spelling and grammar mistakes before you press "send." It will take more time and effort to undo the problems caused by a hasty, poorly written email than getting it right the first time.
- **Avoid abbreviations:** An email is more formal than a text message, so avoid unprofessional short forms such as ROTFLOL (roll on the floor laughing out loud).
- **Reply promptly:** Watch out for an emotional response (never reply in anger), but make a habit of replying to all emails within 24 hours, even if only to say that you will provide the requested information in 48 or 72 hours.
- **Use "Reply All" sparingly:** Do not send your reply to everyone who received the initial email unless your message absolutely needs to be read by the entire group.
- **Avoid using all caps:** Capital letters are used on the internet to communicate emphatic emotion or yelling and are considered rude.
- **Test links:** If you include a link, test it to make sure it is working.
- **Email ahead of time if you are going to attach large files:** Audio and visual files are often quite large so give advanced warning to prevent exceeding the recipient's mailbox limit or triggering the spam filter.
- **Give feedback or follow up:** If you don't get a response in 24-48 hours, email or call. Spam filters may have intercepted your message so your recipient may never have received it.

Tips for Writing Effective Emails

As with all writing, professional communications require attention to the specific writing context. The receiver expects to receive an email with certain formatting, including correct use of grammar and spelling conventions. It is important to take note of each of the following details *each and every time* you write emails to instructors and students.

Subject Line

This helps the recipient understand the essence of the message. The recipient will choose to open the email based on the subject line. The subject line should be specific and give information on what the email is about. For example, "Absent from COMM 1173 on May 3rd" or "Question about Presentation Assignment, COMM 1173"

Opening Greeting

A proper greeting demonstrates respect and avoids mix-ups in case a message is accidentally sent to the wrong recipient. In the Canadian college setting, instructors and students are generally referred to by their first names. For example, use an opening like "Hello Sarah" (for an instructor) or "Hi Barry" (for a student). When sending emails within college, avoid using formal titles such as Mr., Mrs., Ms., or Miss. Never use the title Mrs. as you should not assume a woman is married.

Body of Your Message

State your purpose for writing directly at the beginning of your email to provide context for your message. Reference any included attachments as well, so that readers are aware of the additional content and its purpose. State the name of the file, along with the type of document and program needed to open it. For example, "Please see the attached Word document of my report, *The Economic Climate of Russia.*" In the case of an included question, cut and paste any relevant text (for example, computer error messages, assignment prompts, or segments of a previous message) into the email so that the reader has a frame of reference from which to answer. When replying to someone else's email, it may be helpful to either include or restate the sender's message.

Use paragraphs to separate thoughts (or consider writing separate emails if you have many unrelated points or questions), and state the desired outcome at the end of your message. When requesting a response, let the reader know what type of response you require, such as an email reply, possible meeting times, or a recommendation letter. If you request something that has a due date, be sure to place the due date in a prominent position in your email. End your email with the upcoming action item that will help the recipient understand what tasks they need to complete. For example, you might write "I will follow this email up with a phone call this week" or "Let's discuss this further at the Wednesday meeting."

Closing

Close with a simple sign-off such as "Thanks," or "Thank you." Avoid being overly formal with sign-offs such as "Yours truly" or "With Sincerest Regards."

After the closing sign-off, include a signature. Identify yourself by creating a signature block that automatically contains your name and email. Do not include your student number in your signature.

Exercise

Test your knowledge of email etiquette by identifying if the following actions are appropriate or inappropriate.

Sample Email

From: Raj Peters <rpeters@academic.rrc.ca>

To: Sarah Patel <spatel@rrc.ca>

Date: September 21, 2022

Subject: Questions about Assignment #3, ACCT 1001

Hello Sarah,

I have started working on assignment #3 from ACCT 1001 and it is giving me trouble. I don't understand what question #5 is asking and I'm having trouble figuring out which equation to use. Would it be possible to come to your office to get some help with this assignment? I have time Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays after 3pm. Which day/time is best for you?

I look forward to your reply.

Thanks!

Raj

Applied Accounting Student

Red River College Polytechnic

Key Takeaways

You will use many forms of online communication at college including text messaging and emailing. Make

sure to pick the appropriate communication channel according the message you want to send and write professionally at all times. Structure your email using the expected format and review it for errors multiple times before sending to ensure your message is understood.

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22. Adapting Communication

Adapting Communication

REBECCA HIEBERT

After reading this page, you will be able to:

- understand the importance of adapting communication for different people;
- consider how identities can lead to communication barriers;
- adapt written and verbal communication for instructors and students at college.

Why Is This Important?

The way we communicate with each other is culturally dependent. Our use of formal or informal titles or formal or informal language sends a message to the receiver about the nature of our communication. When adapting to a new culture it is important to take note of the level of formality of communication and adapt your communication to fit in order to build relationships with those around you and reduce miscommunication.

Communication and Context

The circumstances surrounding a message provide the context. These include the setting you are in, the culture that guides you, whomever you are communicating with, and the purpose of the communication. Context also includes the values people have, appropriateness of the message, the timing with which 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, do you always understand each other? Are you wide awake and your roommate almost asleep? Is the football 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 chatter? Is the conversation about something serious that just occurred? What are some of the relevant steps to understanding context? Pay attention to timing. Is there enough time to cover what you are trying to say? Is this the right time to ask the instructor about an assignment due date extension? What about the location? Should your conversation take place in person, over email, in a chat room? Is everyone in the conversation involved for the same reason?

Exercise

Each situation has different communication expectations. Consider the context of a family dinner. You are at the table with siblings, cousins, parents, aunts and uncles, and grandparents. A wide variety of age groups are present around the dinner table. Are there any rules about how you behave in this circumstance? What are they?

Now put yourself in the context of a chat room with people you might know and some that you do not know. Are there rules for communicating in that situation? What are they?

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, "Hmmmm, my classmate is a vegetarian and probably would be offended by a conversation about beef farming." Or, "My friend is having a bit of financial trouble, and this might not be the right time to ask them if they want to go out for dinner to an expensive restaurant."

Communication and the Audience

There are so many instances in our lives when we think about our needs first and blurt out exactly what we are thinking, leading to some critical misunderstandings. It is really important to not only be concerned about our need to communicate, but to also take into consideration who we are communicating with, 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 who you are attempting to communicate with.

Identities and Communication Barriers

Aside from our actual communication abilities and tools, we bring to each interaction many unique aspects based on who we are and where we come from. Diversity requires us to consider the different perspectives and experiences others bring to a discussion or interaction, and to understand that our own views and contexts may be unfamiliar to others. We should exercise patience and practice when communicating with new people or groups.

Identity is generally a feeling of belonging to a group. It is your self-perception and is usually related to nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, sexual orientation, gender, generation, region, or any social group that has its own distinct identity. Examples of cultural identity markers include the rituals people observe, the music that a group prefers, the style of clothing that is worn, the languages spoken, the ethnic group one belongs to, and its various foods and celebrations. Cultural identity also includes the way people from a group communicate, act as leaders, manage time, value hierarchy, and many other values. All of these variables can constitute a cultural identity for people. Belonging to these groups gives people an identity and a frame of reference on how to communicate and relate to the world around them.

Gender identity refers to the deeply held, internal sense of a person's gender. Sometimes, a person's sex assigned at birth does not line up with their gender identity. These individuals might refer to themselves as transgender, non-binary, or gender-non-conforming.

While gender is internal, social influences and perceptions can shape a person's attitude and method of communication. For example, in some families and cultures, men are raised to be more dominant or less emotionally expressive. Their use of that approach may lead to communication problems with others. However, people's *assumptions* about men may also lead to communication problems. The same can happen with other gender identities.

> *Exercise*
>
> What are your communication experiences with different genders? Have you seen people communicate a specific way based on the genders involved in the conversation? For example, does a classmate have a way of speaking to men that is different from their way of speaking to women? Does that difference become a barrier or issue in the communication?

Age can also have a significant impact on communication. People from varying generations bring very different experiences to their contact with others. We all grow up surrounded by certain music, clothing styles, language, and cultural influences. Modes of parenting have evolved, food choices have expanded, tragedies and world politics have

occurred, and each of these has had an effect on the generation that experienced them firsthand. Additionally, most of us live or have lived with multiple generations in our lives and have experienced many of the differences ourselves.

The above categories of cultural identity, gender, age, and your own stereotypes about people illustrate that there are many barriers that can come into play when you are trying to communicate with someone. On a college campus, you probably will run into a large variety of differences in the people you meet. Many come from other countries, cultures, religions, and family backgrounds. Some may be in the country solely for the purpose of going to college and intend to return home when they graduate. Some may have a lot of life experience, while others could have just graduated from high school. All of that will have an effect on how they communicate, as your own upbringing and experiences have had an influence on how you communicate. Keep that in mind as you try to create relationships with the many people that you meet, both face-to-face and online.

Using Pronouns Respectfully

A person's gender identity is an important feature of who they are. We can show respect during communication when we use the correct pronouns that are aligned with a person's gender identity. Any pronoun that a person wants to use is valid. Each person gets to decide.

- **Pronouns replace people's names.** For example, "Sam is nice" could be replaced with "He is nice." It makes sense to give pronouns the same respect we give people's names.
- **Pronouns add gender.** With gender comes all the implicit assumptions and associations we have with it. For example, "He is nice" and "[Everything the listener associates with men] is nice."
- **We don't *have* to use pronouns, ever.** We can always just use the person's name (or language like "the person"), it just might sound repetitive.

Sometimes we need to ask about a person's pronouns so that we can communicate respectfully. There are a few ways to ask.

- **Offer your own name and pronouns.** This will indirectly ask the person you are speaking to share their name and pronouns.
- **Explain why you are asking.** For example, "I want to introduce you to my friend and want to make sure I get your pronouns right. What are they?"
- **Just ask!** "What are your pronouns?" Be ready to explain why you're asking, or for the person to be confused and need a little coaching.[1]

> *Multiple Perspectives*
>
> **Gender and Pronouns**
>
> Gender is an identity that we understand to be less clearly defined as was previously the norm. Some people

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1. https://www.itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2018/04/pronoun-best-preferred-practices/

identify themselves as male or female and some as gender fluid or non-binary. "Binary" refers to the notion that gender is only one of two possibilities, male or female. Fluidity suggests that there is a range or continuum of gender expression. Gender fluidity acknowledges that a person may vacillate between different gender identities. When addressing other people, it is important to recognize their gender correctly as they express it, not how you perceive it to be. People who identify as non-binary or other genders, may choose to use they/them pronouns or other pronouns that resonate with them.

Transgender men and women were assigned a gender identity at birth that does not fit their true identity. They may transition to a different gender in order to become their true selves. It is important to use a person's pronouns that align with their self-identified gender.

To make ourselves feel comfortable, we often want people to fall into specific categories so that our own social identity is clear. However, instead prioritizing our own comfort, we should accept the identity people choose for themselves. Cultural competency includes respectfully addressing individuals as they ask to be addressed.

The following table outlines pronouns for different genders.

Subjective	Objective	Possessive	Reflexive	Example
She	Her	Hers	Herself	She is speaking. I listened to her. The backpack is hers.
He	Him	His	Himself	He is speaking. I listened to him. The backpack is his.
They	Them	Theirs	Themself	They are speaking. I listened to them. The backpack is theirs.
Ze	Hir/Zir	Hirs/Zirs	Hirself/Zirself	Ze is speaking. I listened to hir. The backpack is zirs.

The website Transstudent.org provides educational resources, such as the above graphic, for anyone seeking clarity on gender identity. Note that these are only examples of some gender pronouns, not a complete list.

Communicating in College

In North American culture, we often address people by their first names, even when they may have higher positions of power than we do. This is important to remember when communicating with staff and students. Instead of showing respect by using formal titles or honorifics (Mr. or Ms., for example), we use a person's first name and then adjust our words to become more formal. In college, it is generally accepted to address your instructor by their first name in

verbal and written communication. Using formal titles or honorifics will cause discomfort and misunderstandings. Similarly, students use first names when addressing each other in both verbal and written communication.

Exercise

Read the following emails between students and instructors. Click on the exclamation marks to learn more. As you read think about:

- How are the emails the same? How are they different?
- What types of greetings are used?
- What types of words and phrases are used?

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegesuccessfornewcomers/?p=709#h5p-33*

Key Takeaway

As we interact with different groups of people we need to adapt our communication to fit the situation. It is important to consider formality, age, pronouns, titles, and power level, among other considerations, when communicating with others. When we adapt our communication to fit the receiver, we are more likely to succeed in delivering our intended message.

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PART IV
EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS

23. Setting Goals

Setting Goals

EMILIE JACKSON

Learning Objectives

After reading this page, you will be able to:

- set goals that focus on learning;
- develop motivational goals;
- use the SMART goal system.

Why Is This Important?

Success in college does not typically happen by accident. Students must have some motivation to achieve success. Motivation often means the difference between success and failure. Motivation applies to school, to specific tasks, and to life in general. One of the most effective ways to keep motivated is to set goals, but it is important to remember that goals always require action to complete. Setting goals is something that is frequently talked about, but it is often treated as something abstract. Goal setting is best done with careful thought and planning.

A person stands at the bottom of a tall climbing wall planning their route. Image source: Pexels

What is a Goal?

The first thing to know about goal setting is that a goal is a specific end result that you desire. Goals can be big or small. A goal can range from *I am going to write one extra page tonight*, to *I am going to work to get an* A *in this course*, all the way to *I am 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 tasks 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 completing of assignments you do for that course contribute to the larger goal of graduating at the top of your class. The larger goal helps motivate you to do each of those smaller tasks and to do them well.

Set Learning Goals

Learning vs. Performance Goals

Much of our ability to learn is governed by our motivations and goals. Sometimes hidden goals or mindsets can impact the learning process. In truth, we all have goals that we might not be fully aware of, or if we are aware of them, we might not understand how they help or restrict our ability to learn. An illustration of this can be seen if we compare a student that has *performance*-based goals with a student that has *learning*-based goals.

For example, if you are a student who is strictly performance-goal-oriented, you might only says things in a classroom discussion when you think it will make you look knowledgeable to the instructor or your classmates. On the other hand, if you are a student who is learning-goal-oriented, your interactions in classroom discussions will look quite different. You see the opportunity to share ideas and ask questions as a way to gain knowledge quickly. In a classroom discussion, you can ask for clarification immediately if you don't quite understand what is being discussed. If you are a person guided by learning goals, you are less worried about what others think since you are there to learn and you see that as the most important goal.

Another example where the difference between the mindsets of performance-based goals and learning-based goals is clear can be found in assignments and other coursework. If you are a student who is more concerned about performance, you may avoid work that is challenging. You will take the "easy A" route by relying on what you already know. You will not step out of your comfort zone because your goals are based on approval of your performance instead of being motivated by learning. However, if you are a student who is motivated by learning goals, you may actively seek challenging assignments, and you will put a great deal of effort into using the assignment to expand on what you already know. While getting a good grade is important to you, what is even more important is the learning itself.
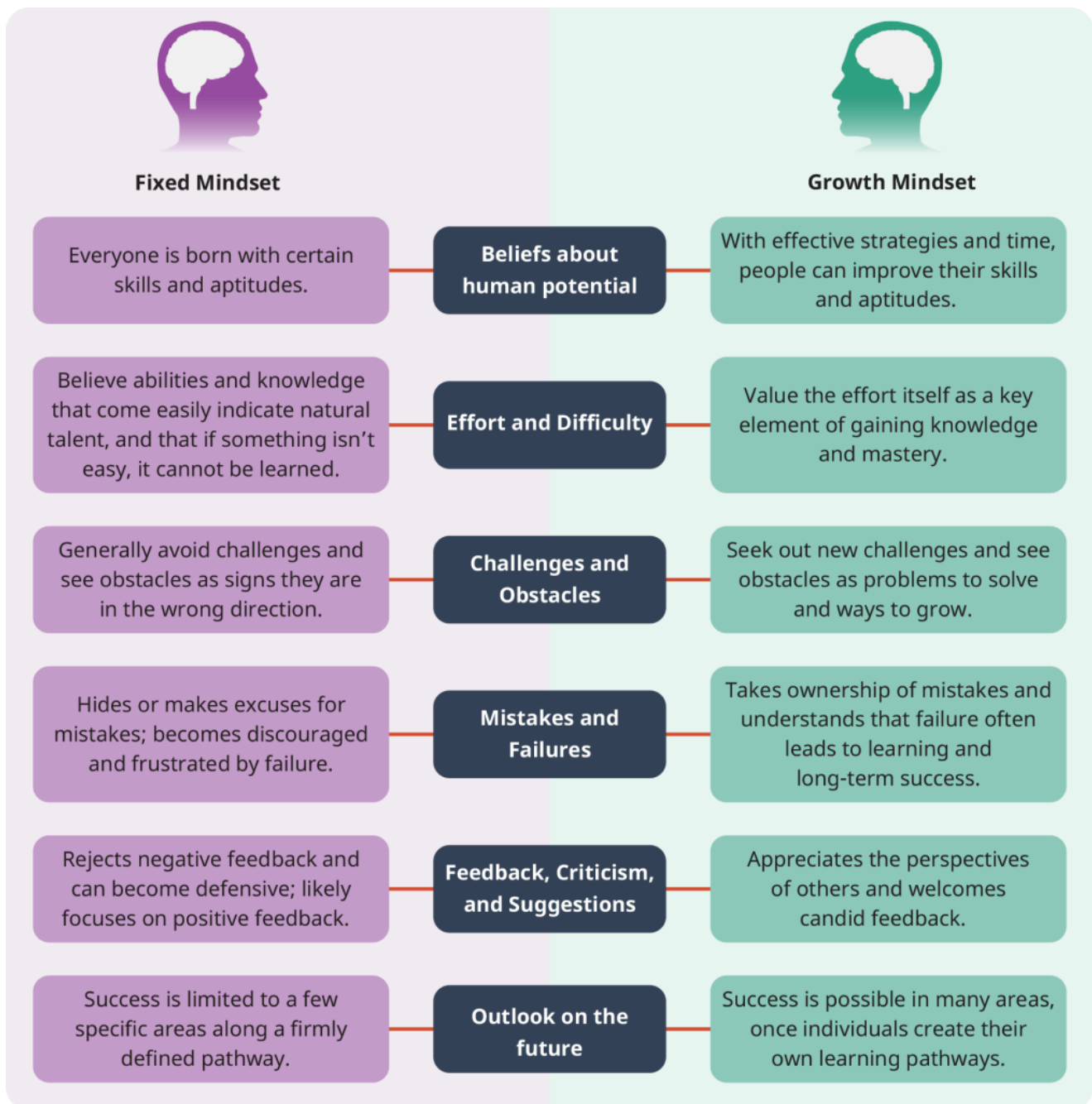
If you find that you sometimes lean toward performance-based goals, do not feel discouraged. Many of the best students tend to initially focus on performance until they begin to see the ways it can restrict their learning. The key to switching to learning-based goals is a matter of recognizing that focusing on learning can positively impact your success in college and in life.[1]

1. College Success by Amy Baldwin. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/2-3-its-all-in-the-mindset

Fixed vs. Growth Mindset

The research-based model of the fixed and growth mindsets and their influence on learning was presented in 1988 by Carol Dweck. In Dr. Dweck's work, she determined that a student's perception about their own learning, accompanied by a broader goal of learning, had a significant influence on their ability to overcome challenges and grow in knowledge and ability. 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.

In the following graphic, based on Dr. Dweck's research, you can see how many of the components associated with learning are impacted by these two mindsets.

Fixed Mindset		Growth Mindset
Everyone is born with certain skills and aptitudes.	**Beliefs about human potential**	With effective strategies and time, people can improve their skills and aptitudes.
Believe abilities and knowledge that come easily indicate natural talent, and that if something isn't easy, it cannot be learned.	**Effort and Difficulty**	Value the effort itself as a key element of gaining knowledge and mastery.
Generally avoid challenges and see obstacles as signs they are in the wrong direction.	**Challenges and Obstacles**	Seek out new challenges and see obstacles as problems to solve and ways to grow.
Hides or makes excuses for mistakes; becomes discouraged and frustrated by failure.	**Mistakes and Failures**	Takes ownership of mistakes and understands that failure often leads to learning and long-term success.
Rejects negative feedback and can become defensive; likely focuses on positive feedback.	**Feedback, Criticism, and Suggestions**	Appreciates the perspectives of others and welcomes candid feedback.
Success is limited to a few specific areas along a firmly defined pathway.	**Outlook on the future**	Success is possible in many areas, once individuals create their own learning pathways.

Fixed and growth mindset comparison chart based on work by Dr. Carol Dweck. Image source: https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/2-3-its-all-in-the-mindset#ch02rfin-7. Attribution: Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Access for free at https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/1-introduction.

If learning is your goal and you have a growth mindset, you would keep trying to achieve a goal even if it took you multiple attempts, and you would see progress as success even if you had not achieved complete mastery of what 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 mindset) persisted despite challenges.

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 (such

as "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 came to learning.[2]

Exercise

This survey has been designed to explore ideas about your intelligence (statements 1-4) and character (statements 5-8). Reach each statement and give yourself a score that best describes you. Add up the scores for a total. Read the feedback for your total score when you've completed the survey.

1. Your intelligence is something very basic about you that you can't change very much.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
4	3	2	1

2. You can learn new things, but you can't really change how intelligent you are.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
4	3	2	1

3. No matter how much intelligence you have, you can always change it quite a bit.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
4	3	2	1

4. You can always substantially change how intelligent you are.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
4	3	2	1

5. You are a certain kind of person, and there is not much that can be done to really change that.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
4	3	2	1

6. No matter what kind of person you are, you can always change substantially.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
4	3	2	1

7. You can do things differently, but the important parts of who you are can't really be changed.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
4	3	2	1

8. You can always change basic things about the kind of person you are.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
4	3	2	1

Total scores can be interpreted as follows:

4-6: You have a strong fixed mindset. This will likely be a barrier to your learning.

2. https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/2-3-its-all-in-the-mindset

7-10: You have a fixed mindset with some growth ideas. You may experience some barriers to your learning, particularly when experiencing challenges.

10-13: You have a growth mindset with some fixed ideas. Your growth mindset will be helpful when learning new things and experiencing challenges, but your fixed ideas may still create some barriers.

14-16: You have a strong growth mindset. Your growth mindset will help you achieve success in college as you will be able to tackle challenges with an openness for learning.[3]

Set Motivating Goals

When you set a goal, it is important that the goal comes from *you*. If the goal is not something you are really interested in, there is little motivational drive to achieve it. Think back to when you were much younger and some well-meaning adult set a goal for you — something that didn't really appeal to you at all. How motivated were you to achieve the goal? More than likely, if you were successful at all in meeting the assigned goal, it was because you were motivated by earning the approval of someone or receiving a possible reward, or you were concerned with avoiding something adverse that might happen if you did not do what you were told. From an honest perspective in that situation, your real goal was based on something else, not meeting the goal that was set for you. 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 (for example, telling yourself that if you finish studying by Friday, you can go out on Saturday), but the idea is to be honest with yourself about what is important and why.

As with anything else, the key to reaching goals is to keep yourself motivated. In the following graphic you will find seven methods that highly successful people use to stay motivated.[4]

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3. Adapted from https://positivepsychology.com/wp-content/uploads/The-Mindset-Survey.pdf
4. https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/3-6-goal-setting-and-motivation

1. Increase Personal Responsibility

Adopt the mindset that *you* are the only person responsible for your goals. Roadblocks may happen, but you are responsible for navigating around them. Take control of the journey! Issues are not other people's problems. They are for you to solve.

2. Reward Yourself for Completing the Task

We are all motivated by rewards. Use this to your advantage and give yourself rewards for a job well done.

3. Make Certain They Are *Your* Goals

Your motivation level is not as high if the end result is not something you want to achieve.

4. Visualize the Results

Keeping in mind the benefits and visualizing the end results of each goal is extremely effective in keeping motivated.

5. Break the Goal Down Into Manageable Tasks

As with any task, accomplishing the whole is easier when each part is tackled individually.

6. Tap Into Other People's Energy

Surround yourself with other people that are motivated. Humans are social creatures, which means our emotions can be influenced by others. If you are around positive people who work toward achieving their own goals, their energy can become infectious.

7. Remind Yourself Why You Set the Goal

Sometimes it is easy to become stuck with a difficult task and forget why you are doing something in the first place. Reminding yourself of the end goal helps reinforce everything you do that works toward your goal.

Set SMART Goals

Goals should be SMART. In this case, the word *smart* is not only a 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.

What does it mean to create 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 *get 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 *measurable* is one that is often overlooked when setting goals. 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 setting a goal of *graduating with a GPA above 3.0* is measurable and something you can work toward. 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 mean they 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** — Setting a *time-bound* goal means you have a specific time frame to achieve the goal. *I will get my paper written sometime soon* does not help you plan how and when you will accomplish the goal. *I will get my paper written by Wednesday* is time-bound. You know when you have to meet the goal. [5]

Exercise

The following multiple choice questions include 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.[6]

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegesuccessfornewcomers/?p=705#h5p-35*

Key Takeaway

Setting goals, big or small, that are focused on learning will help you feel motivated in college and keep you on the path to success.

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5. https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/3-6-goal-setting-and-motivation
6. Examples from https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/3-6-goal-setting-and-motivation

24. Time Management

Time Management

EMILIE JACKSON

After reading this page, you will be able to:

- understand the importance of time management;
- use time management strategies to succeed in college.

Why Is This Important?

A very unfortunate but all-too-common situation in higher education is the challenges students face from poor time management. A single mishap or a case of poor time management can set into motion a series of events that can seriously jeopardize a student's success. While it may not be possible to prevent life challenges while you are in college, you can do a great deal to prevent the chaos and the chain reaction of unfortunate events that they can cause. This can be accomplished through thoughtful prioritization and time management efforts.[1]

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1. College Success by Amy Baldwin, licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/3-1-the-benefits-of-time-management

A clock drawn on a chalkboard. Image source: Pexels

Balancing College, Work, and Life

The academic year is divided up in to terms or semesters. While dividing up the academic year results in varied learning opportunities, it also means new faces in classes, unknown expectations from new teachers, and juggling a new schedule. It means you may have new routes to travel on campus as you make your way to a different building or room. If a student is working as well as going to college, a change in term may mean negotiating new work hours with a boss and coworkers. Attending classes, studying, working, and finding time for family, friends, and yourself can be hard for college students to balance. How a student organizes their class load can affect their overall success in college.[2]

For college-level learning, you can expect to spend much more time on learning activities outside the classroom than you will inside the classroom: approximately two hours of outside learning for every one hour of lecture.[3] College classes tend to cover course material at a faster pace and expect students to carry more of the burden of learning the material on their own, outside of classroom activities. Not all classes are worth the same amount of credit or have the same attendance requirements. Some classes may have additional lab requirements, while classes with writing assignments will require preparing, editing, and revising time outside of class.[4] Some weeks may be more intense, depending on

2. [A Different Road to College: A Guide For Transitioning To College For Non-traditional Students](#) by Alise Lamoreaux, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#). https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/collegetransition/chapter/chapter-5/
3. https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/3-2-time-management-in-college
4. https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/collegetransition/chapter/chapter-5/

the time of the semester and the courses you are taking. Unfortunately, many students do not always take this into consideration, and they spend far less time than is needed to be successful.[5]

<div style="background:#cce0ee;padding:1em;">

<div style="background:#1f5f8b;color:#fff;padding:1em;">

Exercise

</div>

This survey has been designed to help you identify the challenges you may face when trying to manage your time in college. Reflect on each statement and answer honestly. This activity is not scored.

---

1. I admit it. Just like everyone else, I feel that I am lazy when it comes to getting my assignments and/or work done.

| Usually | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |

2. I am disorganized when it comes to getting my assignments and/or work done.

| Usually | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |

3. I get confused about what I am supposed to do for the assignment or task.

| Usually | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |

4. I have a hard time saying "no" to others which puts me behind in my work/studies.

| Usually | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |

5. When I was in high school it wasn't a problem studying for most tests the night before.

| Usually | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |

6. When what I have to study or accomplish is just not that important to me, I find it more tempting to procrastinate.

| Usually | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |

7. I think I have more time to finish something than I usually do.

| Usually | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |

8. I am very social and spending time with my friends sometimes gets in the way of doing my work.

| Usually | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |

9. I am easily distracted by people or other personal tasks when I am studying at home.

| Usually | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |

10. I can't seem to stay away from social media.

| Usually | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |

Which statements did you answer with "Usually" or "Sometimes"? What other challenges might you face that are not in the list? (Possible challenges might include a disability, mental health challenges, family responsibilities, work hours, or other life stressors.) What strategies could you use to overcome these challenges?[6]

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5. https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/3-2-time-management-in-college
6. Adapted from Blueprint for Success in College and Career by Dave Dillon, licensed under a Creative Commons

Time Management Strategies

While time management is a regular challenge for college students, strategies such as getting organized, prioritizing your tasks, avoiding procrastination, and reflecting on your goals, can help you manage your time successfully.

Get Organized

Organization is an important part of being a successful college student. Continue reading to learn how to create a term or semester schedule, break down large tasks, and use small blocks of time to help you get organized and stay organized.

Create a Term or Semester Schedule

One important aspect of organization is knowing the important dates for your classes and the college in general. Academic deadlines matter and deadlines in college may not be flexible. A student needs to be aware of key dates throughout the term. The responsibility for knowing important dates lies with the student. A course syllabus is prepared by your instructor and is like a roadmap for your learning journey ahead. The course syllabus that you get for each class you take will have important dates for that specific class. The college will also put important dates on an academic calendar for the school.

Examples of key dates to know for a college:

- Term/semester start and end dates
- Holidays or campus closures
- Last day to drop a class with a complete refund
- Last day to drop a class
- Exam or finals week [7]

The following video will help you to better understand how to read your syllabus and how to plan for the semester ahead.[8]

> One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: *https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegesuccessfornewcomers/?p=637#oembed-1*

Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. https://press.rebus.community/blueprint2/chapter/18-procrastination/

7. https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/collegetransition/chapter/chapter-5/
8. Time Management for Busy Students by KPU Learning Centres, licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/timemanagement/chapter/using-your-course-outline-to-prepare-for-the-semester/

A semester schedule gives you a visual picture of the tasks and events that will happen during the semester. If you are taking a number of classes, this is a tool that will help you see what is coming up next. You may wish to use different colours to distinguish between different classes, or between your academic events and personal events.[9]

Break Down Large Tasks

One of the biggest challenges college students may have is accurately estimating how much time it will take to complete a task. We might think we're going to be able to read an assigned chapter in an hour, but what if it takes three hours to read and understand the chapter? Having the skill to know how long a homework assignment will take is something that can be developed. However, until we can anticipate work and study time accurately, it is best to leave some time in our schedule in case it takes longer than we had anticipated.[10]

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 do not want to do is plan on studying only a few hours the night before the exam only to find out that you greatly underestimated the time that you would need. If that happened, you would run out of time before finishing, with no way to go back and get more time to study. In this kind of situation, you might even be tempted to or "cram" or "pull an all-nighter," which means going without sleep for the entire night and using that time to study. While this method of trying to make up for poor planning is common enough to have a name, rarely does it produce the best work.[11]

Use Small Blocks of Time

By using smaller blocks of time, you can cover material in chunks and not have to worry about the larger whole. A mistake that many people make is that they try to cram information into their minds in one large session. This isn't a successful strategy for most students.

Look for smaller blocks of time to study. If you are a public transit user, you can likely spend 20 minutes on your bus ride to read or review for your upcoming class or exam. You could even listen to an audio recording of your notes. In the evening, instead of watching three episodes of your favourite TV show, you could watch one and spend the remaining time preparing for your studies. Do you go out to eat often? Consider making something simple at home that you could cook in the oven untended; that time could be used for studying and still leave you time for other activities once dinner is finished.[12]

Exercise

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9. https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/timemanagement/chapter/scheduling-your-semester/
10. https://press.rebus.community/blueprint2/chapter/16-time-management-reality/
11. https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/3-4-how-to-manage-time
12. https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/timemanagement/chapter/using-small-blocks-of-time-productively/

Making time for your studies can be overwhelming. The following video introduces you to ways of using smaller blocks of time to get your tasks done while not using up numerous hours at once.

Watch the video and answer the questions (by clicking on the icons that appear) to further your learning.[13]

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegesuccessfornewcomers/?p=637#h5p-50

Prioritize Your Tasks

People like to check things off that they have completed because it feels satisfying but don't confuse productivity with accomplishment of tasks that aren't important. You could have a long list of things that you completed, but if they aren't important to you, it probably wasn't the best use of your time. It is important to prioritize your tasks so the most important tasks get completed first.[14]

Continue reading to learn how to use the time management matrix and daily top three strategies to help you prioritize tasks.

13. https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/timemanagement/chapter/using-small-blocks-of-time-productively/
14. https://press.rebus.community/blueprint2/chapter/14-time-management-theory/

A person using a laptop on a bed. Image source: Pexels

Time Management Matrix

To better see how things may need to be prioritized, you can make a list of the tasks you need to complete and then arrange them based on importance and urgency in a quadrant map often called a Time Management Matrix.[15]

To create a matrix, you begin by making a list of things you need or want to do in a day and then draw your own version of the grid below. Write each item in one of the four squares; choose the square that best describes the item based on its urgency and its importance. When you have completed writing each of the tasks in its appropriate square, you will see a prioritization order of your tasks.

Review the following example of a completed Time Management Matrix and try creating one of your own:

1. Urgent and Important (blue quadrant)
2. Not Urgent but Important (orange quadrant)
3. Urgent but Not Important (green quadrant)
4. Not Urgent and Not Important (purple quadrant)[16]

15. https://press.rebus.community/blueprint2/chapter/14-time-management-theory/
16. https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/3-5-prioritization-self-management-of-what-you-do-and-when-you-do-it

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	**Urgent and Important** • Paper due tomorrow • Apply for internship by deadline	**Not Urgent but Important** • Exam next week • Flu shot
Not Important	**Urgent but Not Important** • College used textbooks sale • Laundry	**Not Urgent and Not Important** • Check social media • TV show

Example chart demonstrating the Time Management Matrix that can help organize priorities and ensure that you focus on the most urgent and important tasks. Image adapted from: https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/3-5-prioritization-self-management-of-what-you-do-and-when-you-do-it.

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 significant number of things crossed off your list.[17]

17. https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/3-7-enhanced-strategies-for-time-and-task-management

Avoid Procrastination

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. Procrastination is when you avoid doing some tasks that need to be completed. Often we procrastinate because we feel overwhelmed by the task and can't figure out how to get started with it. It is something we all do to greater and lesser degrees. Continue reading to learn how to manage distractions and use the Pomodoro technique to help you avoid procrastination.

Manage Distractions

Distractions are a significant cause of procrastination. It is so easy to play a video game a little while longer, scroll 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 so that important tasks get completed.[18]

Some distractions are obvious: your friend sends you a text, your family needs your attention, or there is loud construction outside the window. However, other distractions are less obvious. Sometimes we can be distracted by our thoughts and feelings. When we are feeling stressed or overwhelmed, these internal causes can be just as distracting. One way to deal with internal distractions is to keep a study journal. At least once a day write an entry about how you have used your time and whether you succeeded with your schedule for the day. If you struggled to keep your daily schedule, identify what factors kept you from doing your work. This journal will help you see your own habits and distractions so that you can avoid things that lead to procrastination.[19]

Pomodoro Technique

A key aspect of overcoming procrastination is developing strategies to get started. Often, committing to complete one small task can be enough to begin moving ahead. For example, just taking out your laptop, opening a new document, and typing a title can create some forward momentum. A well-known technique for managing time that can help with procrastination is called the Pomodoro Technique.[20] 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 about 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. Setting a timer is a small task that will provide you with the momentum to overcome procrastination.

18. https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/3-3-procrastination-the-enemy-within
19. Student Success by Mary Shier, licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/studentsuccess/chapter/strategies/
20. https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/timemanagement/chapter/use-the-pomodoro-method-to-get-started/

A Pomodoro timer. Image source: https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/3-7-enhanced-strategies-for-time-and-task-management. Attribution: Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Access for free at https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/1-introduction

Follow these six steps to follow the Pomodoro technique:

1. Decide on the task to be done.
2. Set the timer to the desired interval (for example, 25 minutes).
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 checkmarks, take a longer break (15–30 minutes), reset your check mark count to zero, and then go to Step 1 or 2.

This technique is deemed effective for many people because it reduces mental fatigue by encouraging breaks and it tends to encourage people to get started on a task. Also, by breaking tasks down into things that can be completed in 25-minute blocks, more can be completed in one day because it is much easier to squeeze in three 25-minute sessions of work time than it is to set aside a 75-minute block of time.[21]

21. https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/3-7-enhanced-strategies-for-time-and-task-management

What do you know about the Pomodoro Technique? Fill in the blanks below to test your knowledge.[22]

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegesuccessfornewcomers/?p=637#h5p-51*

Reflect on Your Goals

In general, we will always make time for the things that matter. We already discussed the importance of setting goals in the previous chapter, but having clear goals will also help you manage your time and help you learn to balance college, work, and life. Watch Laura Vanderkam's TED Talk "How to gain control of your free time" to hear a new perspective on time management.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*
> *https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegesuccessfornewcomers/?p=637#oembed-2*

Balancing college, work, and life is challenging, but time management strategies can help college students organize their schedule, prioritize, avoid procrastination, and focus on their goals.

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22. https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/timemanagement/chapter/apply-the-pomodoro-technique/

25. Taking Initiative

Taking Initiative

EMILIE JACKSON

Why Is This important?

Students have many daily responsibilities in college. Students must attend class, submit assignments, participate in group projects, and more. However, one responsibility that is just as important as those daily responsibilities is taking initiative. Taking initiative means stepping up to make things happen when you haven't been asked.

People giving thumbs up in front of a chalkboard. Image source: Pexels

Learning Is Your Responsibility

Learning in college is your responsibility. Before you read about the how and why of being responsible for your own learning, complete the reflective exercise below.

> *Exercise*
>
> For each statement, give yourself a score from 1 to 5 that best represents you; 1 indicates that the statement is least like you, and 5 indicates that the statement is most like you.

Let's break down each statement to understand how we can own our learning:

- **Motivation.** Being able to stay motivated while studying and balancing all you have to do in your classes will be important for taking responsibility for your learning.
- **Deliberate, focused effort.** Taking ownership of learning will hinge on the effort that you put into the work. Because most learning in college will take place outside of the classroom, you will need determination to get the work done. There will be times that the work will be challenging and maybe even boring, but finding a way to get through it when it is not exciting will help you succeed in the end.
- **Time and task management.** The ability to control your calendar will allow you to block out the time necessary to study.
- **Progress tracking.** A commitment to learning must include monitoring your learning, knowing not only what you have completed (this is where a good time management strategy can help you track your tasks), but also the quality of the work you have done.

Taking responsibility for your learning will take some time if you are not used to taking control. However, if you have any difficulty making this adjustment, you can and should reach out for help from instructors, tutors, or coaches along the way.

Identifying "Hidden" Responsibilities

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 the academic skills they need to succeed. The term "hidden responsibilities" describes unspoken, unwritten, or unacknowledged rules that students are expected to follow that can affect their learning.

Imagine that you are taking a marketing class. Your course outline indicates that on Tuesday your instructor is lecturing on the chapter that covers social media marketing. This information sounds pretty straightforward. You plan to attend class and hear the lecture your instructor gives on this topic. However, there are some unwritten rules, or hidden responsibilities, that are not likely to be communicated. Can you guess what they may be? Take a moment to come up with at least one answer to the following questions.

1. What is an unwritten rule about what you should be doing *before* attending class?
2. What is an unwritten rule about what you should be doing *during* class?
3. What is an unwritten rule about what you should be doing *after* class?
4. What is an unwritten rule if you are *not able to attend* that class?

Some of your answers could have included the following:

Before class: Read the assigned chapter, take notes, and record any questions you have about the reading.

During class: Take detailed notes, ask critical-thinking or clarifying questions, avoid distractions, and bring your textbook and your reading notes.

After class: Reorganize your notes in relation to your notes from previous classes, start the studying process by testing yourself on the material, and make an appointment with your instructor if you are not clear on a concept.

Absent from class: Communicate with the instructor, get notes from a classmate, and make sure you did not miss any important details.

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. If you are unfamiliar with these expectations, it is important to ask questions so that you can adjust your habits, behaviours, and strategies to achieve success at college.

Key Takeaway

While students receive instructions and tasks from their instructors, students must show initiative by taking responsibility for their own learning, learning about unspoken tasks, and participating in college.

26. Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity

EMILIE JACKSON

Why Is This Important?

An education that is achieved without compromising your own integrity and simultaneously upholding academic integrity standards means that your knowledge is a true representation of the hard work and dedication you put into your studies. Acting with integrity will also ensure that you will be well prepared for success in your career as you have put the necessary time and effort into your studies, gained much knowledge, and developed many valuable skills, such as research, critical thinking, and writing skills.

Six Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity

As a college student, you are a part of an academic community that is governed by the fundamental principles of academic integrity. It is important for all members of the community, professors and students alike, to uphold these principles for the advancement of academic scholarship and the continued building of knowledge.

The International Center for Academic Integrity (2013) defines academic integrity as a commitment to uphold the six fundamental values in the academic community, even when faced with adversity:

- honesty;
- trust;
- fairness;
- respect;
- responsibility; and
- courage.

Honesty

Honest students respect college policies, follow the instructions of their professors and do their work on their own, without any unauthorized help. Dishonest behaviour, such as lying, cheating, fraud, theft, impersonating another person, and falsification of data are morally and ethically unacceptable to a person of integrity.

Exercise

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 item.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegesuccessfornewcomers/?p=634#h5p-43

Trust

If you are always honest, you will be able to build a relationship of trust with both your peers and your instructors. Trust is established over time and is based mostly on your actions.

Exercise

Your friend Alex is having a difficult time writing their essay. They ask you if they can have a quick look at your essay to see how you went about it. As they are your friend and you want to be helpful, you give them your essay before you leave for your job. Alex is tired and thinks: "I just want to be done with this. I'm going to change a few things in my friend's essay and then hand it in as my own." Why do you think Alex made this choice?

Click on the responses to see the answers to each item.

Fairness

A person of integrity is fair. You are fair to your peers when you do your own work instead of copying theirs, 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 diploma or degree.

Exercise

You are a new student and are struggling 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 to one of your courses. What action would be acceptable?

Click on the responses to see the answers to each item.

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.

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 item.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegesuccessfornewcomers/?p=634#h5p-46

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 doing your work to the best of your abilities.

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

Click on the responses to see the answers to each item.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegesuccessfornewcomers/?p=634#h5p-47

Courage

To uphold academic integrity standards requires courage to resist temptations to take the "easy way out" and to speak up against wrongdoing.

Exercise

You are entering the room to write your final exam. You see a sign that reads "No electronic devices permitted. Please leave them at the front. You may pick them up after you have finished the exam." As you enter, you see your classmates put their phones in their pockets. What might you do?

Click on the responses to see the answers to each item.

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegesuccessfornewcomers/?p=634#h5p-48*

Academic Integrity Violations

Violations of academic integrity are taken very seriously and carry with them severe consequences. If reported, you may get a zero on your assignment, get a failing grade in the course, or even be suspended from the institution. You may face disciplinary action for any academic integrity violation, regardless whether you committed it intentionally or unintentionally.

Below are the best ways to avoid committing a violation.

1. Be honest.
2. Do your own work.
3. Submit original work.
4. Only work with others if your instructor has permitted it.
5. If permitted to work in groups, acknowledge the contributions of others.
6. Acknowledge all your sources of information by citing them properly.
7. Learn to quote, paraphrase, and summarize properly.
8. Adhere to copyright.
9. Get help if you need it, but only from approved sources.
10. Do not help another person commit a violation.

Understanding Plagiarism

Plagiarism is one of the most frequent academic integrity violations. It ranges in severity from blatant plagiarism, where a student simply submits a whole work that is not their own (for example, a paper they purchased online), to inadvertent plagiarism, where a student tried to do honest work but still accidentally plagiarized (for example, when trying to paraphrase information from an article but using too many of the original author's words). There are many definitions of the word plagiarism, but all have one thing in common: the misrepresentation of someone else's words or ideas as your own. Plagiarism is an academic integrity violation because it is considered ethically wrong to take credit for someone else's intellectual output.

A woman stands in a library holding a stack of books. Image source: Pexels

Why You Should Care

Being honest and maintaining integrity in your academic work is a sign of good character and professionalism. In addition to maximizing your own learning and taking ownership of your academic success, not plagiarizing is important for a number of reasons.

- Your professors assign research projects to help you learn. You cheat yourself when you substitute someone else's work for your own.
- You don't like it when someone else takes credit for your ideas, so don't do it to someone else.
- Plagiarizing comes with consequences. Depending on the offense and the institution, you may be asked to rewrite plagiarized work, receive a failing grade on the assignment, fail the entire course, or be suspended from the college.
- Instructors may use search engines, databases, and specialized software to check suspicious work, so you will eventually get caught.[1]

What Counts as Plagiarism?

Intellectual output includes written and spoken words, music and videos, movies, performances, artwork, photographs, graphs, tables, figures, diagrams, data, computer code, and any other intellectual or creative product. It also extends to ideas. For example, a specific method or model, the plot of a story, the outline of an experiment, and, in your academic writing, even the structure of a paragraph.

Plagiarism can be intentional or unintentional. It often occurs because the process of citation can be confusing, technology makes copy and paste so easy, and knowing exactly what to cite is not always easy. You can avoid unintentional plagiarism by learning how to cite material and keeping track of sources in your notes. Give yourself plenty of time to process sources so you don't plagiarize by mistake. Here are some examples of plagiarism:

- submitting a paper written by someone else;
- using words and phrases from the source text and patching them together in new sentences;
- failing to acknowledge the sources of words or information;
- not providing quotation marks around a direct quotation, which leads to the false assumption that the words are your own;
- borrowing the idea or opinion of someone else without giving the person credit;
- restating or paraphrasing a passage without citing the original author; and
- borrowing facts or statistics that are not common knowledge without proper acknowledgement.[2]

<div style="background-color:#1a5276;color:white;padding:1em;">

Exercise

</div>

1. "Defining Plagiarism" in Introduction to College Composition provided by Lumen Learning, licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. https://quillbot.com/courses/introduction-to-college-composition-b/chapter/text-defining-plagiarism/
2. https://quillbot.com/courses/introduction-to-college-composition-b/chapter/text-defining-plagiarism/

Instructors Can Recognize Plagiarism

Instructors can often recognize plagiarism quickly and easily. Methods that instructors use to identify plagiarism include: spotting differences in writing styles within the assignment or from previous writing tasks; judging if your writing and content exceeds your level of ability; spot-checking your sources for accurate quoting and paraphrasing or for accuracy of the citation (and remember that your instructors can Google, so it easy for them to find copied and pasted material); and using a plagiarism-detection service.

Key Takeaway

College students must apply the six fundamental values of academic integrity to their studies in order to adhere to college policies and learn the information taught in their program.

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27. Seeking Support

Seeking Support

EMILIE JACKSON

Why Is This Important?

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 burnout. 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.[1]

Chances are that gaps in the skills needed to be successful in college will show up. Knowing and using the resources available to bridge those gaps will be important to college persistence.[2]

Successful Students Seek Help

Here is a secret about college success that not many people know: successful students seek help. They seek our 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. These are called "help-seeking behaviors," and along with self-advocacy or speaking up for your needs, they are essential to your success. As you get more comfortable adjusting to college life, you will find that asking for help is easier than struggling

1. [College Success](#) by Amy Baldwin, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#). https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/1-3-college-culture-and-expectations
2. [A Different Road to College: A Guide For Transitioning To College For Non-traditional Students](#) by Alise Lamoreaux, licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#). https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/collegetransition/chapter/chapter-10/

on your own. 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![3]

Identifying Biases

Although colleges have an entire system of free resources in place to support students in a variety of ways, students may feel pressure to succeed on their own. As a student, educating yourself about all the resources available at college can help you feel part of a community that wants to see you succeed. Asking for help from appropriate resources is not a sign of failure or lack of independence. Sometimes students have trouble reaching out for help because they often struggle to match their problem to the right support service, are hesitant to ask for help, or wait until the problem is too big to manage. Student persistence and success is the goal for both the students and the college.[4]

Exercise

    You have signed up for a required class in the program you have selected. The instructor of the class requires a graphing calculator along with textbooks for the course. You show up to class with your required materials and the calculator. The instructor starts class by having students get out their calculators. You look down at the device and have no idea how to use it. The instructor says that you are expected to know how to use the calculator since it is commonly used in high school so reviewing its use won't be part of the class. Now what do you do?

- What would your first reaction be to this situation?
- How would you solve this problem?
- What resources can you think of to help you?
- What obstacles for college success might you encounter?
- How do you feel about asking for help when you need it?[5]

3. https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/1-3-college-culture-and-expectations
4. https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/collegetransition/chapter/chapter-10/
5. https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/collegetransition/chapter/chapter-10/

A student works with a tutor at a table. Image source: [Pexels](#)

Tutors as Learning Partners

Past experiences may inhibit students from accessing support services. Asking for help can feel embarrassing. In middle or high school, students primarily use tutors when they are not doing well in a subject. Students sometimes bring that perspective to college with them. However, in college tutors can be a key part of a student success plan. In college settings, free tutors work at a variety of centres designed for student success. Students new to college may not realize that the top students in their classes are likely using college tutoring services. Sometimes it is hard for students new to college to understand the role of tutors and let go of past notions about who uses a tutor and why. The college website is the place to find out about how to connect with a college tutor.[6]

Instructors as Learning Partners

In elementary and high school, the instructor 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, work better when they think of their instructors as respected experts that are partners in their education.

6. https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/collegetransition/chapter/chapter-10/

This change in relationship for you as a learner accomplishes two 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. For the instructor, it gives them the opportunity to help you meet your own needs and expectations in a rich experience, rather than focusing all of their time on trying to get 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 your instructors. 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 about 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 that want to take ownership of their learning, and they will gladly become a resourceful guide for you.[7]

7. https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/2-6-applying-what-you-know-about-learning

Student Support Services

Accessibility Services	Accessibility coordinators support students with a variety of disabilities including physical, psychological, and learning disabilities. Accessibility services aim to maximize success and reduce barriers so that students have equal opportunities and equal access to information. They can provide exam accommodations, access to funding for equipment, adaptive software, and other services.
Campus Library	Educational libraries not only have invaluable research material for assignments, but they have helpful librarians who can assist you in many ways. They can help you learn how to access academic journals, discern whether a source is suitable for a research paper, find online journals, assist with research, assist with inter-library loans, do effective online searches, and cite sources correctly using appropriate style guides. Libraries are also an effective place to use as a study area. Often, they have study rooms you can book to use for group work.
Counselling Services	Counselling services provide a safe, confidential, and supportive environment to discuss personal and educational concerns impacting your life. Counselling services help provide tools to manage your stressors and challenges so that you can become successful and work toward wellness.
Education Advising Services	Education advisors are available to meet with students or potential students privately to discuss any issues which could impact learning. This can include: course planning; career planning; learning issues; academic issues; financial issues; study skills; grade appeals; navigating the post-secondary system; transferring between institutions; personal issues with instructors or fellow students; and referrals to other support services.
Financial Aid	Financial aid officers are available to give you the tools to plan and budget your finances while in school and apply for student loans, awards such as bursaries (based on financial need), and scholarships (based on merit). They help students navigate the process and provide viable options to finance students' education.
International Student Services	An international coordinator specifically serves the unique needs of international students. Along with the regular needs of students, international students also need support with issues such as: student visas; housing; adapting to and learning about Canadian culture; culture shock; home sickness; out-of-country insurance; learning in a language that is not their first language; and unfamiliarity with the Canadian post-secondary system. Studying in another country can be a very exciting adventure. International coordinators help to make the transition as smooth and as pleasant as possible.
Peer Tutors	Peer tutors are students in your class who have been identified as strong students who are willing to help other students in the class. They are paid through the college and provide classmates with relevant support. The peer tutor program matches students who have identified a need for extra help in specific subjects with students who have a good background in the subject area and an interest in tutoring.
Services for Indigenous Students	Often there is a coordinator who specifically serves the unique needs of Indigenous students. This can include: education advising services; applying for funding, scholarships or bursaries; connections with other Indigenous students; learning supports; personal supports; and increasing Indigenous knowledge in the community.
Career Services	Career Services usually offer workshops on employability skills such as resume writing, cover letter writing, and interview skills. They offer a range of services, including practicum placements, individual consultations, and job preparation information. They also post internal on-campus job opportunities and also keep both an online and on-campus job board for external postings from employers who are looking for college students and alumni as potential employees.[8]
Student Help Desk	Information Technology (IT) support services are available for students who are experiencing technical difficulties. This is especially important for online students who may be struggling to upload an assignment or access the online course portal. They can help with connection problems, college email accounts, accessing course software, or other computer issues related to your courses.[9]
Student Union	The student union or student association is a group made up of students to enrich campus life. They exist to protect the rights of students and to voice the interests of the student body at large. They promote and represent student issues as well as develop a sense of community among students through communication and events.

8. Student Success by Mary Shier, licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/studentsuccess/chapter/student-support-services/
9. https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/studentsuccess/chapter/course-supports/

28. Equity and Inclusion

Equity and Inclusion

REBECCA HIEBERT

Learning Objectives

After reading this page, you will be able to:

- understand the importance of equity;
- understand the importance of creating an environment of inclusivity;
- understand how making assumptions and using microaggressions can create feelings of exclusion.

Why Is This important?

We all come to college with our own past experiences. Sometimes these experiences can create additional barriers for people. Equity means providing supports for the people who need them so that they can overcome barriers and experience success. When we provide a environment of equity, we create a place where others feel included and can grow their confidence and contribute fully.
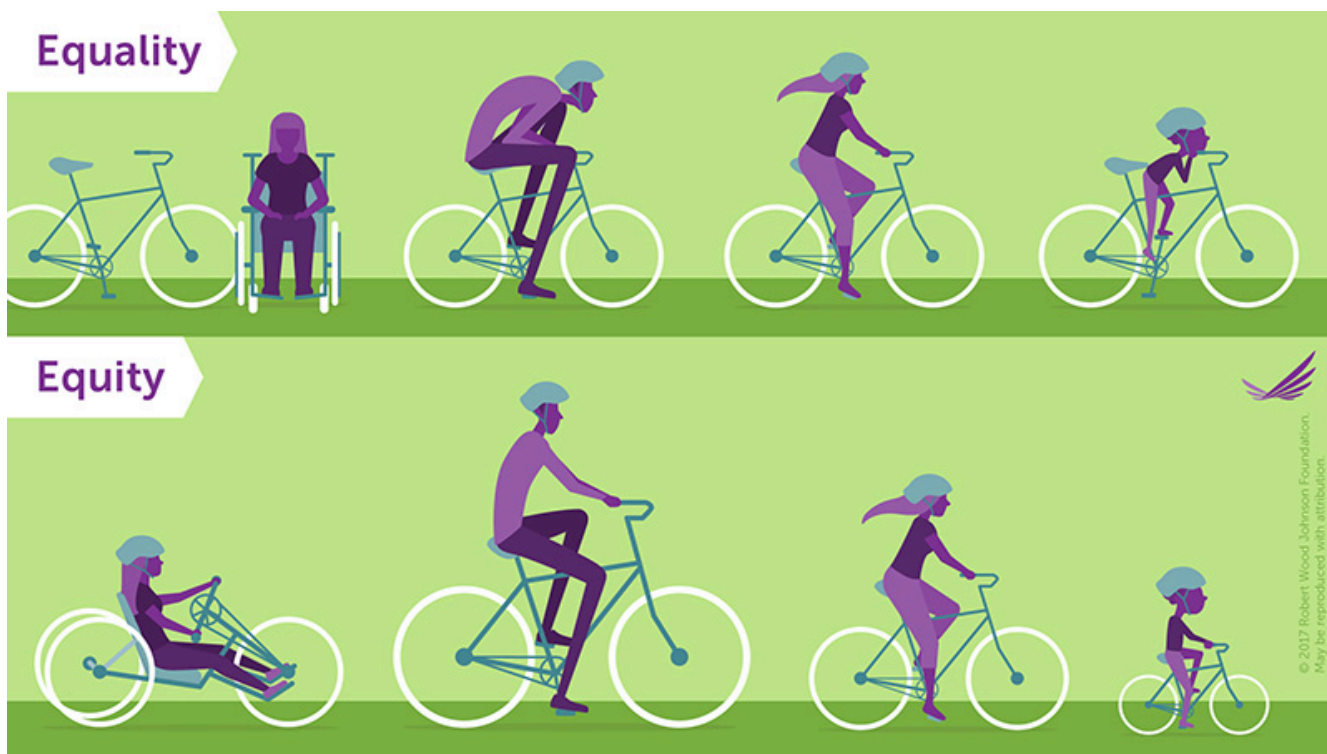
Equity

Equity plays a major part in achieving fairness in a diverse setting. Equity gives everyone equal access to opportunity and success. For example, sign language interpreters can help Deaf people, or people who are hard of hearing, to communicate with hearing individuals. Providing immediate translation into sign language, for those that use it, means that there is no gap between what each person is saying and when all people receive the information. Similarly, many students have learning differences that require accommodations in the classroom. For example, a student with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) might be given more time to complete tests or writing assignments. The extra time granted takes into account that students with ADHD process information differently.

If a student with a learning difference is given more time than other students to complete a test, that is a matter of equity. The student is not being given an advantage; the extra time gives them an equal chance at success.

Without the above accommodations, those with a disability may justly feel excluded and unable to participate because their needs were not anticipated. It is important for the college to provide these necessary supports because paying for private tutoring can be expensive and unattainable for many people.

Equity levels the playing field so that everyone's needs are anticipated and everyone has an equal starting point.

In the Equality portion of the graphic, people of all sizes use the same size bike and therefore, the person in the wheelchair can't participate. In the Equity portion of the graphic, each person uses a unique bike that allows them each to participate. Image source: https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/9-1-what-is-diversity-and-why-is-everybody-talking-about-it#ch09rfin-2 Attribution: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation / Custom License: "May be Produced with Attribution"

Exercise

Look carefully at the image above. How does the top image represent equality? How does the bottom image represent equity? Think of an experience in college where applying equity would help students fully participate.

Inclusion

Inclusion means that people with different voices, skills, and interests, in any given situation, feel welcomed and able to participate fully. In an inclusive class, students with diverse abilities work together and those that need them receive additional supports to allow them to achieve success. In an inclusive curriculum, a course includes content and perspectives from underrepresented groups such as Indigenous or racialized peoples. For example, a college course in psychology might include consideration of different contexts such as immigration, incarceration, or unemployment in addition to addressing societal norms.

Inclusion means that voices of varied background and experience are integrated into discussions, research, and assignments rather than ignored.

Avoiding Making Assumptions

When we meet someone, we may be able to approximate the person's age, weight, and perhaps their geographical origin, but even with those observable characteristics, we cannot be sure about how the individual defines 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 use stereotypes, we project a profile onto someone that probably is 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. Sometimes experiences in our past have introduced us to assumptions about certain groups of people. For example, maybe something in your past has indicated that people from a certain country are always good at math, so you ask your group member from that country to look after the accounting part of your project. It is unfair to assume that this classmate has certain skills just because they are from a particular place. When we prejudge someone and use a stereotype to assume their identity, we are unable to recognize the person as their unique self.

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. For example, a team leader may ask particular classmates to join their group because the team leader assumes that people from their culture are hard workers. In this scenario, individuals of other backgrounds, with similar abilities, may have been overlooked because they do not fit the stereotype of who others expect them to be.

Equity and inclusion are needed as guiding principles when working with diverse groups of people at college. Equity might be achieved by meeting with a classmate outside of class to provide assistance with a skill needed for an assignment. Inclusion might be achieved by inviting classmates to speak who don't usually get a chance to voice their opinions.

Exercise

Often, our assumptions and their impacts are not life changing, but they can be damaging to others and limiting to our own understanding. Consider the following scenario, and answer the questions that follow.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegesuccessfornewcomers/?p=975#h5p-63

Being civil and inclusive does not require a deep-seated knowledge of the backgrounds and perspectives of everyone you meet. That would be impossible. 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. If we have less experience interacting with people from a particular group, we may hold a single story in our head about people from that group. This means we may make assumptions about people from this group due to our lack of knowledge. These assumptions may lead us to accidentally say hurtful comments to people from this group. These comments are called microaggressions. The term *microaggression* refers to acts of insensitivity that reveal our inherent biases, cultural incompetency, and hostility toward 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 fact they are not truly welcomed and included.

Exercise

Microaggressions may be comments that, by themselves, may not seem consequential; however, over time an individual that experiences many microaggressions begins to feel excluded and rejected. Consider the following scenario, and answer the questions that follow.

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://pressbooks.openedmb.ca/collegesuccessfornewcomers/?p=975#h5p-64*

One reaction to this interaction might be to say, "So what? Why let other people determine how you feel? Ignore them." While that is certainly reasonable, it may ignore the pain and invalidation of the experience. And even if you could simply ignore some of these comments, there is a compounding effect of being frequently, if not constantly, barraged by such experiences.

Examples of Microaggressions

Consider the table below, which highlights common examples of microaggressions. In many cases, the person speaking these phrases may not mean to be offensive. In fact, in some cases the speaker might think they are being *nice*. However, appropriate terminology or acceptable descriptions change all the time. Before saying something, consider how a person could take the words differently than you meant them.

Category	Microaggression	Why It's Offensive
	"You're an athlete; you don't need to study."	Stereotypes athletes and ignores their hard work.
Status or Situation	"You don't get financial aid; you must be rich."	Even an assumption of privilege can be invalidating.
	"You speak so well for someone like you."	Implies that people of a certain race/ethnicity can't speak well.
	"My people had it so much worse than yours did."	Makes assumptions and diminishes suffering/difficulty.
Race, Ethnicity, National Origin	"I'm not even going to try your name. It looks too difficult."	Dismisses a person's culture and heritage.
	"I guess you can't meet tonight because you have to take care of your son?"	Assumes a parent (of any gender) cannot participate.
	"They're so emotional."	Assumes a person cannot be emotional and rational.
	"I don't get all this pronoun stuff, so I'm just gonna call you what I call you."	Diminishes the importance of gender identity; indicates a lack of empathy.
	"I can't even tell you used to be a woman."	Conflates identity with appearance, and assumes a person needs someone else's validation.
Gender and Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation	"You're too good-looking to be so smart."	Connects outward appearance to ability.
	"You seem so rugged for a gay guy."	Stereotypes all gay people as being "not rugged," and could likely offend the recipient.
	"I can't even keep track of all these new categories." "You can't just love whomever you want; pick one."	Bisexual, pansexual, asexual, and other sexual orientations are just as valid and deserving of respect as binary orientations.
	"I might try being a lesbian."	May imply that sexual orientation is a choice.
Age	"Young people have it so easy nowadays."	Makes a false comparison between age and experience.
	"I bet no one messes with you."	Projects a tendency to be aggressive onto a person of large stature.
Size	"You are so cute and tiny."	Condescending to a person of small stature.
	"I wish I was thin and perfect like you."	Equates a person's size with character.
	(To a person using a wheelchair) "I wish I could sit down wherever I went."	Falsely assumes a wheelchair is a luxury; minimizes disabilities.
Ability	"You don't have to complete the whole test. Just do your best."	Assumes that a disability means limited intellectual potential.
	"I'm blind without my glasses."	Equating diminished capacity with a true disability.

Have you made statements like these, perhaps without realizing the offense they might cause? Some of these could be intended as compliments, but they could have the unintended effect of diminishing or invalidating someone. When considering microaggressions, it is important to consider the impact of your statement instead of the intent. Maybe you have intended to say something kind or funny but in reality the receiver felt hurt or diminished. It is how the receiver feels that we need to focus on. When we realize the impact our comments have on other people, we can adapt our communication to create an environment of inclusion for others.