

COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE

Essential Skills for College Students¹

One of the biggest adjustments for college students is the increase of personal responsibility. New college students find themselves with a tremendous amount of newfound freedom and much less of an externally prescribed structure. Study times, meal times, bed times and wake-up calls are not set for them. An increase in their academic workload, a greater need to multi-task and balance, and a myriad of new social opportunities and challenges await them. The following are skills that will help students develop their own intrinsically motivated structure and be successful in college.

Time Management

One of the keys to success in college is time management. It is important to prepare a weekly schedule that includes time in class, studying, activities, work, meals, study, church, and time with friends. Being a college student is like having a full-time job. Several hours of studying and preparation are expected for each class; typically, for every hour a student spends in class, he or she should expect to spend two hours out of class. For example, if a student has a class that meets for one hour on Monday, Wednesdays, and Fridays, he or she should expect to spend at least six hours outside of class per week studying and preparing for that class, meaning that the student will spend nine hours per week in and on that class.

Stress Management

Regular exercise, adequate rest, good nutrition, prayer, time in the Word, and time with friends and in Christian fellowship are all suggested ways of engaging in self-care that reduces stress. Finding ways to increase coping resources will help students decrease the stressors that college life will throw their way.

Study Skills

Even some of the best high school students have not always developed good independent study skills. Close reading skills (fiction and nonfiction), knowing how to read a textbook, knowing how to take notes in class, using the library effectively, and knowing how to take tests are all areas that will help students be more successful in the classroom.

Money Management

It is important that students have experience in independently handling money, balancing a checkbook, using an ATM, reading a bank statement and learning to make responsible decisions about living on a budget.

Assertiveness Skills

It is important that students be able to speak up for themselves in an assertive manner that is not aggressive or passively allowing others to take advantage of them. Assertiveness skills are helpful in roommate communication, study groups, teams and conflict resolution. They also involve learning and practicing healthy boundaries.

¹ Adapted from Clarke University <http://www.clarke.edu/page.aspx?id=22553>

Well-Developed Self Care Skills

Students need to learn to develop bedtimes based on physical need and health. Adequate sleep and a healthy diet can improve mood, athletic and classroom performance and coping strategies for stress. Exercise, relaxation, and good hygiene are also important aspects of self-care.

Keeping Safe and Avoiding Risky Behaviors

Staying safe means learning to advocate for your well being. It means making smart and low-risk choices and planning for the “what ifs” in life.

Seeking Assistance When Needed

A big part of students advocating for themselves is knowing when to ask for help. The college years are a time for learning new information, new life skills, and a new way of relating with our world. Seeking help when we need it is a sign of strength and integrity, rather than an admission of failure.

Respecting the Rules and Policies

Every community has rules and policies and a college campus is no different. Our rules and policies apply to safety and fostering a positive community where students are respectful of themselves, others and the environment.

Displaying Honesty, Integrity and Perseverance

Learning to incorporate personal values and ethics into every aspect of life is a significant part of personal growth during the college experience. Part of the path of integrity is learning how to hang in there and stay committed to goals even when situations are challenging.

For more information please see Dartmouth Academic Skills Center

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/handouts.html>

Literacy Skills for College Readiness: What Students Should Know and Be Able to Do (Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking)

General Skills:

- Skilled at close reading, annotation, comprehension, and critical analysis of all sorts of texts (fiction and nonfiction)
- Proficient at writing all sorts of essays (and experience with creative pieces)
- Able to actively listen and take notes
- Able to discuss and respectfully debate with those who hold divergent viewpoints
- Able to confidently deliver an engaging presentation

Essays to Master:

Basic Formal Expository Essay format (see Mastery of the Structure and Content of a Formal Expository Essay below); recognition that “good writers are revisers,” but also able to show proficiency on demand (timed essays)

1. Argumentative/Persuasive Essay
2. Literary Analysis
3. Analysis (breaking down any topic assigned into its parts)
4. Multi-source Research Essay
5. Compare and Contrast Essay
6. Review of a book, film, or play
7. Reflection essay (such as on a piece of literature, art, or music)
8. Personal Narrative (tell-us-about-yourself type essays)
9. Descriptive Essay

(Additional Writing: Creative Writing, such as an original short story, poem, play, or screenplay)

Mastery of Standard MLA Formatting Skills (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/> is a good up-to-date online resource for MLA.) Your professors might prefer another style, such as APA, but MLA is most commonly used for the humanities.

1. Correct MLA heading
2. Correct MLA header
3. One-inch margins all around
4. Entire document is double-spaced; no extra spaces
5. Centered, original title
6. Correct parenthetical citations
7. Correct Works Cited page

Mastery of the Structure and Content of a Formal Expository Essay

Students are adept at articulating and employing a writing vocabulary (as listed below). Students are able to:

1. Write an effective INTRODUCTION
 - a. Write an effective GRABBER
 - b. Provide ELABORATION to sufficiently explain the grabber
 - c. Create a coherent (smooth and logical) BRIDGE from the grabber to the thesis
 - d. Write an effective THESIS: one statement (never a question) at the end of the introductory paragraph that tells the reader what the writer intends to explain or defend in the body paragraphs.
2. Write unified and coherent BODY PARAGRAPHS
 - a. Write an effective TOPIC SENTENCE (T.S.), clarifying *ONE* topic that will explain or defend some aspect of the Thesis; T.S.s must clearly “fit” the thesis.
 - b. Make a CLAIM about that topic
 - c. Provide effective SUPPORT for that claim, using Supporting Sentences (S.S.) made up of Facts, Examples, Reasons, Details, or Quotes (if quotes are used, they are cited correctly)
 - d. ANALYZE that support, interpreting or explaining the supporting detail
 - e. Create UNITY: all T.S.s “fit” the thesis; all S.S.s “fit” the T.S. of that paragraph

- f. Create COHERENCE: writer uses effective TRANSITIONS between and within paragraphs; one sentence logically and smoothly connects to the one next to it.
 - g. Explain quotes fully, integrate them smoothly, and cite them correctly; writer knows when to use direct quotes, paraphrases, and summaries.
 - h. End paragraphs with a CLINCHER, a sentence that reinforces the T.S. without repeating it, addresses the “So What” question, and sums up the ideas of the paragraph.
 - i. Maintain an appropriate point of view
3. Write an effective, congruent CONCLUSION
 - a. Clarify what they have “concluded” about the topic—without merely summarizing the arguments or repeating the thesis; it may encourage the reader to think differently about or respond in some way to the topic.
 - b. Introduce no new information.
 - c. Give the reader a clear sense of reaching the end.
 4. Independently revise and edit their own work and provide helpful responses to their peers.

Skills Proficiency

Proficiency in the Following Technical and Stylistic Writing Skills

Students are able to:

1. Write complete sentences
2. Identify and correct fragments
3. Identify and correct run-ons and comma splices
4. Employ proper capitalization
5. Use proper spelling
6. Identify and properly use the following comma rules:
 - a. Commas in a series
 - b. Commas with coordinating conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)
 - c. Commas after introductory phrases, clauses, or words
 - d. Commas around interrupters and non-essentials
 - e. Commas between coordinate adjectives
 - f. Commas with adjective clauses
 - g. Commas around appositives and parentheticals
 - h. Commas with dates, places, and addresses
7. Employ proper use of commas and semi-colons with correlative conjunctions
8. Employ proper use of semi-colons, colons, dashes, and hyphens; no exclamations
9. Employ proper use of parallel structure
10. Avoid unnecessarily ending sentences with prepositions
11. Avoid “dead” or clutter words
12. Employ proper verb usage—make vivid verb choices (avoiding forms of “to be,” “to have,” “to get,” and “to do”); avoid tense shifts
13. Write in active voice instead of passive voice
14. Keep subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement
15. Eliminate use of “you,” its forms, and understood “you”
16. Employ sentence opening variety and sentence length variety

17. Make good word choices
18. Properly capitalize and punctuate titles of various types of works

Proficiency in the Following Reading, Speaking, and Listening Skills

Students are able to:

1. Read and comprehend a grade-level text
2. Demonstrate stamina during a lengthy grade-level appropriate text
3. Go beyond decoding grade-level vocabulary to comprehending nuances of word usage and the overall intention of a text; demonstrate the ability to make inferences about the writer's intention
4. Engage in class discussions, with the ability to interpret, analyze, and think critically about grade-level texts
5. Discuss these texts and topics, but also listen to divergent opinions about the same texts or topics, demonstrating the ability to engage in thoughtful and respectful classroom debate
6. Build and make engaging and effective presentations, both individually and as part of a group; understand and demonstrate the importance of audience, content, organization, visual aids, personal appearance, poise, voice, life or expression, eye contact, gestures, and speed or pace