

Tips for the First Year Student

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Tip #1: Go To Class

New students often hear that in college, "you can go to class anytime you want." NOT TRUE. Otis has a policy that anyone missing 20% of a particular class, three absences, fails the course. Also, be aware that three tardies equal one absence.

Tip #2: Learn the Campus and Use Its Services

Although Otis College of Art and Design is a compact campus, it is important that you spend time locating where major academic and service departments are located. Don't become a senior who is still trying to find the Student Resources Center (SRC). The college wants you to succeed and will help you by means of all its services. These range from tutoring in the SRC to personal counseling. Let the college serve you. After all, it is your school. You are paying for these services anyway, in the form of tuition and fees.

Tip #3: Know The College Has Academic Rules

No one memorizes all the rules--but have a copy available. Academic policies are found on the web site and in the student handbook. Do not become one of those who says, "But nobody told me..."

Tip #4: Check Out Rumors

Rumors of all types fly across a campus. While almost all do have a particle of truth, most rumors are largely fiction. Check program or academic rumors with professors or advisors before changing anything related to class preparation or scheduling.

Tip #5: Budget Time

Have a social life, but plan your study time properly. Do not begin to study for a test or write a paper the night before either is due. Read syllabi early for dates and note them on a calendar. Remember, sleep is also necessary, so budget for that as well.

Tip #6: Accept Constructive Criticism

Keep in mind that when a professor critiques your work, he or she is doing you a favor. This is not personal; any work can be improved. Appreciate the time the professor takes to point out ways for you to improve. It is very frustrating to see a grade assigned to a paper or test and no comments or feedback as to how that grade was determined or how you can do better next time. In studio, critiques seem harsher, as they are in front of your peers, but the ultimate end is to ensure a good product.

Tip #7: Realize That Being A Student Is A Full-Time Job

You can't work hard only one day a week and earn acceptable grades. Look at collegiate life as a full-time career for the present. Focus on good academic habits, social skills, and balancing priorities. Now is the time to develop skills that will be expected after graduation in your selected career.

Tip #8: Develop An Appreciation For The Mastery Of Language

No matter what your major or discipline of interest, the single most important skill for life success is communication. Understand what language is acceptable and in what situations. How you communicate your skills and thoughts demonstrates the depth of your education. Even if your grades in studio courses get you that first job, it is your communication skills that get you that promotion.

Tip #9: Become Part Of University Life

Becoming part of the campus community is just as important as going to class, creating that masterpiece, writing papers, and taking exams. Don't join every group, but be selective and participate in activities that will offer balance to your life. Take advantage of the variety of university experiences.

Tip #10: Have The Courage Of Your Confusions

In high school, a good student is supposed to know all the answers and get everything right. But in college, you take on more difficult challenges and more demanding material. It is no longer possible to have "all the answers." Beyond college, that kind of high school perfection isn't even remotely possible. Learn to be patient with others and with yourself. Learn to function well in situations where 100% success isn't possible; seek out and value the big questions which are more important than answers.

Tip #11: Be Patient With Yourself

You will make errors or mistakes during your collegiate career. Please be assured that you are not DOOMED. When you realize, or even think, you have goofed, set out to correct it.

Tip #12: Make Your Own Decisions

Seeking advice is always nice. Trying to play it safe and avoid making decisions can lead to as many problems as making uninformed or risky choices. Weigh options and gather as much information as possible. Accept responsibility for your decisions.

Tip #13: You Are In School For Your Education, Not Someone Else's

If you enter college just to please everyone else, or even ANYONE else, you will end up pleasing no one. If you let others decide what you are going to study, where you attend college, and what you are going to be, you have ignored your responsibility to yourself.

Tip #14: Know Your Academic Situation Before The Withdraw Period

If you have a question or concern about how you are doing in a class, go to the

professor and discuss it. Keep yourself informed and record all grades received for each assignment. Read each syllabus carefully, and pay attention to the weight of all assignments as they determine the final grade in each course. Keep all grades updated.

Tip #15: Learn To Communicate In The Classroom

There are no dumb questions concerning subject matter. If you don't know or don't understand something, chances are several of your classmates don't either. Learning to ask questions is a skill. Develop it!

Tip #16: Safeguard Your Physical And Mental Well-Being

When exhausted, rest. Eat proper food and know when to relax. Plan exercise into your schedule. No one is going to thank you for working yourself into a frazzle or getting ill. It is amazing how many students demand their independence and simply do not know how to take care of themselves.

Tip #17: Accept Responsibility For Yourself And Your Behavior

If what you say and do is prompted by others, or if nothing is ever your fault because others "pushed" you, you cannot claim to be an adult.

Tip #18: It Does Not Help To Blame Others For Your Academic Problem

If you are not doing well academically, get help. Very few students get through college without some assistance. It does not matter if it takes you longer to learn material, or even to graduate. Remove distractions when studying. Go to office hours and use tutoring services. GO TO CLASS and participate. Don't blame your professors, your roommate(s), or your teaching assistants. Get their help to eliminate the problems.

Tip #19: Call Home

It may sound silly but parents and family can prove to be the best support service. Families honestly want to know how you are doing. They may not be able to do more than listen, but that act alone is essential to your well-being. Siblings, grandparents, and neighborhood friends are in your corner and want you to succeed. Let them share in your new life.

P.S. E-mail works great!