

How To
Have a Successful First
Semester
at Southwestern University



SOUTHWESTERN
UNIVERSITY

Center for Academic Success

Courtesy of:

Your Name: _____

Professor	Course	Office	Extension	Email	Office Hours
	ADVISOR				

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Other Resources

Career Center (CCPD) (Prothro 140)	863-1346	Dean of the Faculty (Cullen-1st floor)	863-1567
Health & Counseling (Prothro 200)	863-1252	Registrar (Prothro 100)	863-1952
Dean of Students (McCombs 340)	863-1582	ResLife (McCombs 3rd floor)	863-1624
Library (Smith Library Center)	863-1563	Debby Ellis Writing Center (Library)	863-1200
ITS Help Desk (Library)	863-7333	Student Activities (McCombs 340)	863-1345

Advising (Prothro-1st floor) advising@southwestern.edu

Welcome to Southwestern New Pirate!

The purpose of this packet is to provide you with information and resources that we, as academic professionals, feel can be helpful to you during your time at Southwestern, and particularly during your first semester.

Some of the information you may already know, but a good portion of it relates primarily to your college experiences, and more specifically to your academic endeavors at Southwestern.

As a general rule, it is better to be proactive than reactive when it comes to academic concerns. And as corny as it sounds, there really is no such thing as a stupid question.

We encourage you to come by and visit us if you have any questions. We are located on the 1st floor of the Prothro Center for Lifelong Learning (Suite 120), or you can make an appointment by calling (512) 863-1286. In addition, please make sure to take advantage of the experience and knowledge of the Peer Academic Mentors. They have been where you are now and can offer you advice and support. You can contact the Mentors via email at supeermentors@southwestern.edu or by reaching out to the Mentor assigned to your first-year or advanced entry seminar.

Good Luck,

The Center for Academic Success Staff

How To Get Off to a Great Start

Avoid Academic Jeopardy

1. Go to class! Attendance is the first step to understand course material and succeed in class.
2. Come to class prepared. Complete the assigned reading beforehand so you can actively participate and ask questions in class.
3. Seek help with study skills, goal setting, time management and note-taking. The Peer Academic Mentors are here for you!
4. Talk to your professors. They are the first and best resource for each of your courses.
5. Get involved. Students who are involved on campus have a better chance of succeeding academically.
6. Stay organized. Great time management skills will help you stay on top of all your assignments, responsibilities, and commitments.
7. Plan ahead. Know which courses you will take so you do not get behind. Read about your major(s)/minor(s) of interest to be prepared.
8. Don't overload your semester. Taking more than 16 credit hours in one semester only increases difficulty and stress levels.

Take Charge of Your Success

College is nothing like high school and the newness of it all can easily become overwhelming. Follow these tips to take charge of your college experience early on:

Your classes...

- No one will force you to attend class or complete assignments, you must hold yourself accountable!
- You alone will be responsible for understanding course material. If you don't understand something, you **MUST** ask questions.
- Your workload will be heavier than in high school. Find a way to stay organized and stick to it!

Your professors...

- Professors want you to succeed. Talk to them.
- You alone will be responsible for understanding course material. If you don't understand something, you **MUST** ask questions.
- Professors have high expectations. Go to class and participate to show them you're invested!

Your study skills...

- Plan to study 2-3 hours for each hour in class.
- Good note-taking is essential.
- Plan out large complex assignments to stay on top of it all.

Calculate Your Grade Point Average

1. Calculate your total grade points using the table
2. Calculate the total number of credit hours you are taking.
3. Divide the Grade Point Total by the Credit Hour Total.
4. **DO NOT** include Pass/Fail courses - those only count if you fail!

5. EXAMPLE:

Grade	Grade Points	Credit Hours
A	12.0	3
B-	10.8	4
TOTAL	22.8	7

/ = **3.26 GPA**

	1 hr	2 hrs	3 hrs	4 hrs
A	4.0	8.0	12.0	16.0
A-	3.7	7.4	11.1	14.8
B+	3.3	6.6	9.9	13.2
B	3.0	6.0	9.0	12.0
B-	2.7	5.4	8.1	10.8
C+	2.3	4.6	6.9	9.2
C	2.0	4.0	6.0	8.0
C-	1.7	3.4	5.1	6.8
D+	1.3	2.6	3.9	5.2
D	1.0	2.0	3.0	4.0
D-	0.7	1.4	2.1	2.8
F	0	0	0	0

How To Maintain Order in Your Life

"By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail." - Benjamin Franklin

Studies show that students who are involved in more activities usually make better grades. How do they find time to do it all? Great time management skills! Follow the steps below to achieve them:

- **ESTABLISH A WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

- Schedule your fixed commitments (class, lab, work, meetings, etc).
- Allow time for fun, exercise, and other self-care activities.
- Be honest. Don't schedule anything at 8am if you know you're going to sleep in.
- Stick to your schedule - it won't help you unless you use it.

- **PRIORITIZE AND SET GOALS AND DEADLINES**

- Set daily, weekly, and monthly goals. If you accomplish them, reward yourself.
- Rank all the goals in order of importance, and create a to-do list to accomplish them.
- Schedule specifics. Instead of "study", write "Read Latin pages 12-50".
- Set a reasonable deadline and allow yourself enough time to complete each task.

- **PLAN AHEAD**

- Use the first or last few minutes of each day to plan for the next day.
- Keep a monthly calendar so you can see in advance when big tests or projects are coming up.

- **AVOID PROCRASTINATION**

- You will be tempted to procrastinate when you encounter a job too large or overwhelming, so make the task smaller by breaking it down into smaller tasks.
- Visualize yourself doing each task. Think of all the satisfaction you will get from knowing that you're done.
- If you must put off a task, schedule a new time immediately.

- **PLAN A BETTER STUDY SCHEDULE**

- Study throughout the week and the semester. Don't leave studying for the night before an exam.
- Figure out the amount of time you have to study each week by taking the Time Survey below and plan accordingly.
- Time Survey:

Estimate the amount of time you currently spend on each of the items and multiply each one by the number indicated. After each item's weekly time has been calculated, add them up. Then subtract the number from 168, the total possible hours per week to determine time remaining.

The number in the box is the time you have allowed yourself to study!

Hours of sleep each night	_____ x 7 = _____
Hours spent showering/grooming	_____ x 7 = _____
Hours spent eating/making food	_____ x 7 = _____
Hours of travel time (weekday)	_____ x 5 = _____
Hours travel time (weekend)	_____ x 1 = _____
Hours spent in regular functions	_____ x 7 = _____
Hours spent working each week	_____ x 1 = _____
Hours spent in class each week	_____ x 1 = _____
Hours spent socializing/free time	_____ x 7 = _____
	TOTAL = _____
	168 - _____ =
	<input type="text"/>

How To Schedule Your Time

Plan Out Your Schedule

Use the schedule below to create a visual of how you use your time and the time you have left to study.

- Cross out Friday and Saturday 8pm to 2am- everyone needs time to wind down on the weekends.
- Fill in (dark) the times that you will use for absolutes - such as class, work, practice eating, sleeping, etc.
- Fill in (medium) the times you will use for important things such as clubs/organizations, significant others, tv shows, etc.
- Fill in (light) the times you will use for less structured but fun things, such as hanging out with friends, playing video games, etc.
- The empty blocks are what you have left to study!

	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
7 AM							
8 AM							
9 AM							
10 AM							
11 AM							
12 PM							
1 PM							
2 PM							
3 PM							
4 PM							
5 PM							
6 PM							
7 PM							
8 PM							
9 PM							
10 PM							
11 PM							
12 AM							
1 AM							
2 AM							

How To Plan a Better Study Schedule

- Plan a schedule of balanced activities. College life is made up of many different activities, most of which are important for success. Some have fixed time requirements and some are flexible. Some of the most common that you must consider are:
- Balance**
Fixed: eating, organizations, classes, work
Flexible: recreation, study, relaxation, socializing
- Regulate**
Pick a regular time and place to study. Establishing habits of study is extremely important. Knowing when, where, and what you are going to study saves a lot of time in making decisions. Avoid generalizations in your schedule such as “study.” Commit yourself more definitely to “read pages 25-40 of American History” or “complete five chemistry problems.” Be specific and set regular study hours.
- Hurry**
Study as soon after class as possible. One hour spent soon after class will be as effective in developing an understanding of materials as three hours a few days later. Look over lecture notes while they are still fresh in your mind. Start assignments while your memory of the assignment is still accurate.
- Conserve**
Utilize odd hours during the day for studying. The scattered one or two hour free periods between classes are easily wasted. Planning and establishing habits of using these hours to study will result in more free time for recreation or activities at other times in the week.
- Limit**
Limit your blocks of study time to no more than 2 hours on any one course at a time. After 1 ½ to 2 hours of study you begin to tire rapidly and your ability to concentrate decreases significantly. Taking a break and then switching to a different course will provide the change necessary to keep up your efficiency.
- Space**
Allow time for spaced review. Schedule a regular weekly period when you will review the work in each of your courses and be sure you are up to date. This review should cover all the work done in the quarter up to the point of your review.
- Recite**
Practice recitation in order to increase memory. Organize your notes in a question and answer format and think in terms of learning the main ideas about the material as you review weekly. When preparing for exams, try to predict the questions the instructor may ask. Use flashcards to aid your self-recitation.

How To Take Better Notes

Mark pages with class, date, and page numbers of relevant text (include title/author if more than one).

Before class...

- Read assignments and/or notes of the previous lecture so you will be able to have a starting point or base of reference for your next set of notes.

During class...

- Listen for points the professor stresses.
- Look for patterns and begin to decipher what types of information the professor will ask for on the test.
- Keep a list in the left margin of any abbreviations you use, definitions of words, etc.
- If you miss some information, leave a blank space in your notes so you know to go back and fill in the information later.

After class...

- Skim notes to be sure that they are complete, legible, and understandable.
- When reviewing, ask yourself “what did I learn and how does it relate to the other material of the course?”

Studies show that rereading notes immediately after class improves the ability to retain information tremendously. Without review, 80% of the information will be lost within 24 hours.

Mark Your Text More Effectively

- Highlight or underline only after you have read the entire paragraph.
- Highlight only the main points.
- Highlight key phrases or words that make a complete thought.
- As a rule of thumb, you should never highlight more than one-third of a paragraph.
- Make notes in the margin summarizing the main points of the paragraph for easier access to the information.
- Make notes in the margin like “important”, “supporting evidence”, or “?” to call attention to that area if you need to ask the professor about it.

****Using these hints will help you get more actively involved in reading. You will find yourself remembering more, learning more, and studying more efficiently for your tests.**

Read More Effectively (SQ3R)

Survey

Survey or pre-read the assignment. Look at the title, introduction, section headings, summaries, and study questions.

Question

Use who/what/when/where/why/how to turn each heading into a question. Try to think of questions that relate the material to other material from the course. Jot the questions in the margin to try to answer them as you read.

Read

Be active- highlight or underline key terms and ideas. Summarize important points in the margins. Read faster - it engages you more to keep you on task.

Recite

Close your book and recite the main points of the section. Answer the section questions and the questions you wrote in the margins.

Review

Go back and review the questions and answers and highlighted ideas. Review your notes/margin summaries within 24 hours after you read.

How To Study for Tests

Study Strategies for the Three Learning Modes

	Visual Learner (Learns best by seeing)	Auditory Learner (Learns best by hearing)	Kinesthetic Learner (Learns best by doing/moving)
Note Taking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sit in front of room. - Use pictures, symbols, & visual maps in notes. - Use graphics & drawings to help remember main concepts - Request written instructions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sit close to the speaker. - Repeat important points quietly. - Listen for specifics. - Listen for key words. - Ask permission to record lecture and listen to recording and update notes after class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Move to remember! Write copious notes. If allowed, stand during lecture. - Volunteer: answer questions, participate in discussions. - Recopy notes and vocabulary
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survey by looking at visual aids (pictures, graphs & charts before you start to read the chapter). - As you read, make a visual map of key headings and concepts. - Make charts & schematics of difficult concepts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survey by reading chapter headings and asking survey questions out loud. - Try reading difficult sections out loud and summarize out loud immediately after reading a graph or section. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survey by writing preview questions and answers. Write as you review. - Use workbooks and computer to learn material. - Try to write a summary immediately after reading a section.
Exam Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use visual images to remember main points. - Use visual maps to help understand and remember difficult concepts. - Use pictures and symbols in your text for emphasis and memory. Use flash cards. - Check YouTube and the library for visual aids/videos pertaining to your subject matter. - Reread highlighted/underlined material. - Type notes. - Memorize chunks of the material. - Put sticky notes in common places. - Look at soothing works of art to relax your mind during study breaks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read important material from notes or reading out loud. - Record and listen to vocabulary for each day's lesson. - Talk about what you have learned. Participate in study groups. - Give oral presentations. - Teach someone or a wall - Record your own notes and actively listen to the recordings. - Use slow Baroque music to enhance your concentration while studying. - Use special relaxation music for periodic study breaks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Memorize key words and concepts by learning to finger spell them. - Seek experiences that will teach you main concepts: Labs, discussions, field work, etc. - Use equipment (tools, models, etc.) as frequently as possible. - Try moving about while memorizing material (walk, use arm gestures, etc.) - Doodle while studying. - Make notecards. - Redraw graphs and charts. - Create a hierarchical study guide of text/class notes. - Use physical exercise for study breaks.
Taking Tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Request written instructions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Request that instructions be read out loud. - Repeat instructions (quietly) to yourself (Check with your instructor ahead of time). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Position yourself where you have plenty of room to move - To aid recall during the exam try moving in your chair or imagine yourself doing a lab or procedure or other experience that is relevant.

Places to Study

For those who need background noise...

- The Cove
- McCombs Commons
- Alumni Office lounge - 2nd floor of Cullen
- 2nd floor of Prothro
- Bishop's Lounge
- Coffee shops - Starbucks, 309 Coffee
- Residence hall commons
- Gym or park

For those who need quiet...

- Library - alcoves, study rooms, couches, large tables, media room
- Classroom
- Georgetown Library
- Chapel lounge
- Private residence hall room

How To Take an Exam

Predicting Test Questions

- Watch for clues from instructors during class.
 - Repeating certain points, writing information on board, making gestures, posing questions to students, extensively covering some material from readings
- Save and review all quizzes, papers, lab sheets, and graded work.
- Practice working problems using different variables.
- Brainstorm test questions with other students.

True/False Questions

- Answer quickly.
- Read carefully.
- Look for qualifiers (absolute qualifiers often indicate false statements):
 - All
 - Always
 - Most
 - Sometimes
 - Never
 - Rarely

Essay Questions

Essay exams evaluate your understanding of concepts and your ability to think critically. Don't study for total recall of names, dates, facts and figures as you would for an objective test. Study for main ideas and look for relationships between ideas.

- Jot some ideas down to get your mind going.
- Make a quick outline.
- Think before writing.
- Start with what you know.
- Write legibly. Professors will grade only what they can read.
- Watch the time so you are able to address each main point.
- Pay attention to key terms in the question. Make sure you are answering the question asked.
- Include an introduction and conclusion to help ensure a logical order to your essay.
- In your introduction clearly state your thesis statement, which should directly address the question.
- By the time you write your conclusion, you want to be sure that you have answered the question addressed in your thesis. Don't leave any idea hanging.
- Support general statements with specific examples.
- Use the technical vocabulary of the course.
- Include additional material from class not covered on the test as much as possible
- Use relevant comparisons and/or contrasts from other courses, readings, or your own experiences.

Multiple Choice Questions

On objective tests, teachers provide answers from which you choose the correct one. Test-wise principles help you make an educated guess among distractors when you are not sure of the answer. The following information contains such tips for objective tests:

- Read all choices before answering a multiple choice question.
- If you don't know an answer, skip it and go on.
- When you return to skipped questions, try to figure out what is NOT the answer.
- Eliminate distractors that do not match grammatically with the question.
- Responses that look like the word to be defined are usually incorrect.
- Watch for distractors that mean the same thing.
- Use what you know to analyze and make decisions about information.
- Watch your time closely.
- Watch for double negatives. Ex: Something that is "not unimportant" means something is important.
- The longest choice is often the right one.
- A middle choice (B or C) is often the correct one.
- Read carefully and look for give-away clues.
- Cross out choices that you know are incorrect.
- When all else fails, make an educated guess.
- Answer all the questions. Don't leave any blank.
- Review your exam before turning it in.

For additional help with study and test taking skills, schedule an appointment with a Peer Mentor

How To Manage Test Anxiety

- Recognition** Listen to your body to figure out what is making you anxious. If your anxiety is a result of lack of preparation, then that is a rational response. If, however, you have adequately prepared for your exam and still feel anxious, your response may stem from something other than the testing situation itself.
- Preparation** The best tool in test anxiety management is preparation. Try to avoid last minute studying for an exam. It will be impossible to master a great deal of material immediately before a test. Review lecture notes, texts, and any study guides.
- Study consistently and effectively. Always use the study skills that work for you. If what you're doing is not currently working, try different strategies.
 - Outline essays before in-class essay exams.
 - Try to predict questions and answers.
 - Create your own Mnemonics.
 - Associate concepts with examples from real life.
- Attitude** Your frame of mind concerning an exam can have an effect on how well you do. For instance, self-defeating thoughts (I can't do this) will likely impair your performance and lead to even more feelings of anxiety. Remember that a test is only that - ONE test. There will be others on which to base your final grade.
- Physical Needs** Students sometimes neglect their physical needs when preparing for an exam. Remember to maintain good eating and sleeping habits (*sleep eight hours, eat a light breakfast*). A hungry, tired student will not do as well as a rested, well fed one. Also get plenty of exercise, and once you have adequately prepared for your exam, do something relaxing.
- Test Day**
- Drink water. Avoid caffeine, sugar and nicotine - an excess of any of these stimulants sets off a process that can result in rapid fluctuations of sugar levels, which in turn can produce symptoms of anxiety and panic (rapid pulse, sweaty palms, etc.).
 - Allow enough time to get to the test location early. This will give you a chance to pick a seat location away from distractions and where you feel most comfortable.
 - When you get the test, immediately jot down key words and phrases. Then review the entire test. Read the directions twice.
 - Do not rush through the exam. Bring a watch to keep track of the time. Plan how you will use your time and pace yourself.
 - Answer the questions you know first and mark those you don't know so you can come back to them later. You may pick up answers in other parts of the test.
 - Take your time, but answer all the questions. Always look over your test before handing it in.
 - Do relaxation exercises anytime you need during the test. Breathe deeply and talk to yourself in a very supportive way. If you feel yourself becoming anxious, take a slow deep breath. If you begin to have negative thoughts about your ability to handle the exam, stop and control your thoughts. Replace negative statements with positive ones.

How To Understand and Manage Stress

Stress is a given.

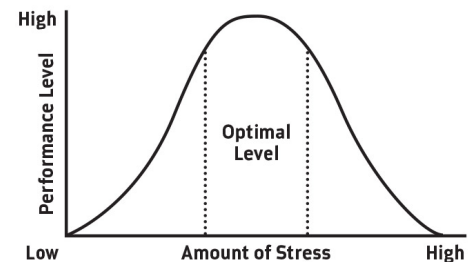
Classes, tests, pressure to make good grades, relationships, career plans, homework, leadership responsibilities, parents, money, jobs, roommates, bills, family problems, the frustrations of daily life - all are stressors that most students know quite well. Stress is a fact of life, and it's unrealistic to think you can totally eliminate it.

Stress is good AND bad.

At low to moderate levels, stress helps us get motivated and moving. This is the stress you feel when you realize you haven't started the calculus homework that is due tomorrow. This stress is what you need to get focused and started. As stress increases, however, most people's performance tends to become impaired. This is the stress you feel when you realize at the beginning of class that there's a test TODAY and you didn't study for it. Your heart beats faster, you start to feel anxious, and you can't even think straight enough to answer the questions you would otherwise know.

The key is to keep an optimal stress level.

Stress is like a wave in the ocean. It can't be eliminated, and at times it can become overwhelming. What to do? Learn to surf by staying on top of the stress curve rather than being buried beneath it. Keep breathing.



STEPS TO ACHIEVE OPTIMAL STRESS:

1. Recognize your stress signs.

Not everyone reacts to stress in the same way, and not all signs of stress are obvious. Tune into your own signs of stress so that you'll know when your stress level is starting to rise. Shallow breathing, tight muscles, extra perspiration, headaches, difficulty concentrating, irritability, anger, eating too much or too little, avoiding things, smoking more, drinking more alcohol, problems sleeping, dry mouth, upset stomach, staying mindlessly online, withdrawing from people, moodiness, worrying, indecision, forgetfulness, rapid heartbeat, low motivation. These, and others, can be signs of stress..

2. Breathe.

Practice breathing lower and slower.

3. Get adequate sleep, nutrition, and exercise.

4. Set priorities and manage tasks.

Learn time management skills in order to stay on top of your work.

5. Eliminate self-talk that is self-defeating.

Be kind and realistic with yourself and avoid unnecessarily harsh or critical self-talk.

6. Reach out.

Talking to friends and family can help you when you are stressed. If you want to talk to someone who can be totally objective you can also talk with a professional counselor. At SU, counselors are available for individual, **confidential** conversations. Call 512-863-1252 to schedule an appointment.