



# THE PREP ACADEMY'S

## Tips to be successful in college and university.



### GO TO CLASS

The commute is long, attendance is rarely taken, and lecture recordings or notes may be posted online. **So why go to class?** Because not only is it much easier to keep up with the class material than learning everything on your own, but you are also being charged thousands of dollars to attend these classes.

Unsurprisingly, studies show that students who actually attended class did better on their final exam.

This strategy seems obvious in theory but can be quite challenging in practice. You'll no longer have your absence reported to your parents if you don't show up to class and if participation does not go towards your grades, will more than likely not have attendance taken at all.

Many of your courses will count your attendance and/or participation as a percentage of your final grade. This could range anywhere from 5-30% depending on the course outcome plan set by your facilitator.

- Ex. If you're in a business management class that requires you to create a group business plan throughout the term, your grade could depend on you showing up to class and implementing plans of action with your group.

If you do have to miss class for any reason, your Professors will not have materials ready for you when you return like your High School Teacher does. It will be up to you to get the information you missed. This is where it will come in handy to befriend at least one classmate in each class that you can rely on for missed notes. Word of advice: This works best for emergency situations only. Your classmate won't be too happy if you're never in class but always asking for their notes. No one likes feeling used!

## **BE PREPARED FOR LONGER CLASSES**

- Most lectures are between 1.5–3 hours long
- Don't worry too much about the length, the time will fly by with the mixture of application and lecture content. Go to class ready to learn and pay attention to the content being taught and it won't seem as tiring or long.
- You should also be prepared to spend more time on homework than you did in High school. On average, University students should plan on spending 2–3 hours per course per week on schoolwork, which can be built into your free time scheduled between classes.

## **HOW TO UTILIZE YOUR "FREE TIME"**

- Depending on how you're able to schedule your classes based on availability, there will be times when you have more than an hour before your next class. If you'll be living off-campus and your commute will take longer than you're able to return on time, this is considered open/free time.
- In addition to this, every class doesn't happen everyday which will leave your schedule filled with the perception of ample "free time".
- Open times in your schedules are great for reviewing class notes, visiting office hours, future planning, completing assignments, writing papers, or even taking a walk around campus to help take care of your physical and mental health.

## **HOW TO WRITE IS IMPORTANT**

- Common types of academic writing in post-secondary courses include essays, research papers, business/lab reports. Their writing styles are more formal than in High School and require good academic writing skills. Your facilitator will be expecting papers and assignments to be properly formatted with source and citation notes. Don't stress if writing is not your strong suit, the writing centre is there to help you improve your writing skills to the appropriate academic level.

# BE PREPARED TO ASK FOR WHAT YOU NEED

You will need to be a self-starter as a College or University student. Staff and faculty want their students to succeed which is why campuses are full of resources to help students succeed. The trick is that you have to seek them out. If you need accommodations for your learning, need help with homework, or even just need to set up access to your School's online portal, you will have to set out to find the answers and speak up.

## Who you reach out to would depend on what you need help with:

- **Writing Centres:** great on campus resource to help students develop their writing skills with tutorials, presentations, workshops, tips, essay citations, and so much more. Check out your school's writing centre website for details about specific services available.
- **Your Professor:** Office hours is a scheduled time professors—and Teaching Assistants— will hold during the week. Students can attend to get clarifications, discuss class materials, follow up on interesting/challenging topics, and build relationships with their professors.
- **Academic Advising:** Advisors can help you select courses, plan your degree, and answer your academic related questions. They can coach, support, and guide students to set and meet their educational and career goals.
- **Black Student Advising Centre:** provides advocacy, academic advising, writing/study skills, help with bursaries, scholarships, and mentorship connections primarily for Black students.
- **Counselling Services:** provides free personal and academic counselling to students
- **Health & Wellness Services:** Students have access to on campus health centres, wellness workshops, mental health support, sexual health services, and online resources to help you manage your health while studying.
- **Accessibility support:** Schools will provide accommodations for students with learning disabilities. You will work with them to reduce or remove any barriers to your learning to ensure a fair and equitable learning environment. This includes lectures, labs, co-ops, tests, and exams.
- **Career Counselling:** similar to academic advising, students can work on creating strategies with a career counsellor who'll assist in their career and academic decision-making through your interests, values, skills, and talents.



## BE PREPARED TO ASK FOR WHAT YOU NEED

- **Reference and Research Services:** Effective use of library resources is essential. To help students with collecting relevant research and cite sources, the libraries have teams of librarians with specialized interest and qualifications to help you research any assignment topic.

**The PREP Academy is here to help connect/refer you to any support services available to you on or off campus. We are however included in the “ask for what you need” group, let us know whenever you feel like you have no clue or need suggestions on where you could go for help.**

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## ATTEND ORIENTATION

- Whether you see the value in orientation or not, it's an important part of the transition from high school into post-secondary life. You will get to know your campus, fellow students and professors, get a look at what to expect from your program, learn about services to ease your transition once you start, and gain knowledge about student societies on campus.
- Orientation week will expose students to a wide range of student societies and groups students can get involved in to help create a sense of community and belonging. Your Student Union will have a presence during orientation and will inform you of all the specific student societies on your campus you could get involved with.

## **PAY ATTENTION AND BE ENGAGED IN CLASS**

- Pay attention, take notes, and don't be afraid to ask a classmate, Teachers Assistant, or professor for help if you're confused.
- The flow of your classes will be very different from what you experienced in high school. The pace is much faster and the material is more complex. If you don't pay attention and stay on top of the assigned readings and tasks, it won't take long to fall behind and get overwhelmed.
- College and University classes typically have no downtime compared to the extra time you may have had in High School. Your professors will teach what they want to teach and that will be it. You may even find that your classes will end early at times because the professors don't have to make sure they fill every minute of the class with content or activities like your teachers did in high school.
- Knowing what your professors are talking about also helps with keeping yourself engaged with the lectures. Be sure to read your assigned readings before class. The professor will discuss the material as if you have already read the readings, this is not something you will do during lectures.

## **PRIORITIZE YOUR SLEEP AND WELLNESS**

Try very hard to not make a habit out of pulling all-nighters to complete assignments, study, party, or even binge watch your favourite show. Aim to get 7-8 hours of sleep during the semester as it has been proven that students who get this amount tend to do better than students who sleep less. Anything less could compromise your ability to solve problems, concentrate, learn, and show up to class. Be sure to drink your water and eat a balanced meal (or as close as you can to a balanced meal) before class to be prepared for your class.

## **CO-OP PRGRAMS**

- Co-op programs integrate academic studies with onsite industry experience allowing students the opportunity to enhance their skills, gain an understanding of their interests and strengths, and create a network in the industry all while exploring potential careers. Some programs have a mandatory co-op requirement for graduation while others are optional.
- Most co-op programs are available to students in their 2nd year or above but it's never too early to speak with an academic advisor about your options and if your program has a co-op component available.

## **HAVE A STUDY STRATEGY**

- After being in school for 12 years, you might have a bit of an idea of what type of studying works best for you—flash cards, rewriting your notes, finding a study group, etc. If you have no idea, use your first term of school as a way to test out different study strategies to help pinpoint your go-to note-taking and study plan.
- Campuses have great study spots, so find the perfect spot for you. Whether it's the library, a quiet campus building, a nice bench, or a comfy seat in the student centre between classes, a great study spot is a must!

## **NOTE TAKING IN COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY**

- Using different note taking strategies is important, especially as you progress through high school and transition to college or university. There are several note taking techniques you can use to start taking better notes in class.
- Students with strong note taking skills have a clear advantage in college. More organized and legible notes can improve test preparation and subject comprehension. Some students struggle in college because they have never learned an effective way to record and organize the large amount of information taught during most lectures.

## **COURSE SYLLABUS**

- Prior to the start of the first class of each course, your professor or facilitator will provide a copy of the course syllabus.
- A syllabus is a document that outlines essential information about your course. It lists the course description, class schedule, course objectives, reading materials (textbooks), topics you'll cover weekly, grading scale, office hours, and due dates for any coursework, assignments, tests/exams.
- Take some time to read through all of your course syllabi and use this as an early opportunity to plug in some due dates into your calendars.
- Print each syllabus out and keep them in your binder and/or download and save them in a dedicated course folder on your computer for easy access and reference. This will help you know exactly where to look when you have questions or need a memory refresh of a due date/class topic.

## **USING YOUR CALENDAR**

- Don't go into your First Year thinking you won't have to use your calendar for anything. There will be plenty of assignments, tests, and exams due on various dates throughout the term which will be hard to remember if they aren't captured on your calendar.
- You can use whichever type of calendar you believe will work best for your daily life. Whether that be desk or wall calendars, daily planners, digital planners, laptop or cellphone calendars, find what works for you.
- Using your calendar will also help you better visualise the general flow of your term. Identify any months or weeks that you can see may be more heavy than others and use the weeks with less due dates to plan and work on those assignments.

## **TEXTBOOKS: NEW VS USED**

- Compared to just signing out your textbooks in Elementary and High School, another major difference you'll find is that College and University students have to purchase their own textbooks. At the start of each year, your facilitator will provide you with a copy of the course syllabus which will list all required course textbooks and readings.
- Depending on the program/course, your assigned readings could be a compilation of online articles/readings accessible by a provided link or all readings could be found in an assigned textbook
- Don't be alarmed but textbooks—especially if buying new—are expensive. College and University level content is built on teaching students the most relevant and up to date material which typically results in facilitators assigning the newest edition of the textbook they use. This makes it a bit harder to purchase used books if the students who took the same course last year were assigned the textbook edition prior to yours.
- Take advantage when you are assigned a textbook that was published a few years ago in knowing someone from previous years may be looking to sell their used books for a discounted price. Used books can be found online using Facebook Marketplace, or google searches.
- Stop by your School's Student Union on-campus location the first week of school or before classes start, they'll either have a used bookstore of their own or have the inside scoop on where students are buying used books at your school.

# MAKING AND FOLLOWING A BUDGET

- For many of you this will be your first time managing your own money. Whether you'll be using scholarships/bursaries, student loans, savings, working part-time, or a combination of these to pay for your living expenses while in school; making and following a realistic budget will save you from spending more than you have and sustaining your income for expenses throughout the school year.
- You may find the large lump sum of student loan or scholarship money very appealing when it hits your bank account. Remember this will have to last at minimum the entire school year and in some cases, for your entire program duration.
- Lenders rarely track how you spend your money once you receive it. Many students see this as flexibility in what you can use student loans for. However, even though you could spend your student loan money on non-school related purchases doesn't mean you should. Don't look at it as free money to buy whatever you want. Keep your purchases for required school expenses like tuition, books, safety equipment, room & board, essential transportation.
- Most tuition fees will include the cost of public transportation for students but for those that either don't attend a school with reliable transportation or have to pay for their own fare; take serious time to overview how you'll travel to and from school.
- For example, buying a new car with student loan money makes it hard for you to keep up with ongoing car expenses like car payments, maintenance, and gas.
- While your school fees are non-negotiable, your living expenses are more within your control. Budgeting will help you be more mindful where your money is going to ensure it doesn't run out prematurely





## ASK FOR HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT!!!!

- Don't be afraid to ask for help, whether it's from your family, professors, academic advisor, friends, PREP Academy success coach, or the mental health centre on campus. There will be a number of new things you'll be dealing with and no one (I mean NO ONE) is expecting you to have to figure it out on your own.
- Life after High School is not like they portray in the movies where you magically become a mature adult with your future perfectly set as soon as you turn 18. However, as long as you are applying yourself, setting realistic goals, and utilizing the resources/tools available to help support you, you are doing exactly what is needed to take the steps towards the life you've always wanted for yourself.

