STUDENT SUCCESS LEARNING STRATEGIES

Establish Goals

- Set both long-term and short-term goals; think of goals as stepping stones of achievement.
- Write your goals down and post them somewhere you will see them regularly.
- Reward yourself when you do attain your goals.

SMART Goals

Goals drive the planning process. Determining what you want to accomplish is the starting point, but to reach your short- and long-term goals you need to write SMART goals. The mnemonic SMART is an aid for remembering the criteria for writing goals. Effective goals are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and completed within a certain time frame.

Specific

A goal must have one or at the most two intended results. The desired end product or behaviour must be stated and described unequivocally. The goal must be well defined and clear you. For example, “I will finish the assignment by tomorrow night,” or “I am not going to call my friend until I have reviewed today’s lecture notes.”

Measurable

When setting goals, always make sure they are observable and measurable. It is of little value to use such general terms as “I will work hard at the assignment until it gets done.” Be more specific by saying “I am not going out to see the movie until I complete all three assignments.”

In summary, state the goal as a quantity whenever possible. Ideally, there will be an observable change in behaviour that can be measured. Select concrete methods and criteria for assessing progress towards the achievement of the goal. These methods should be reliable, valid, and objective.

Attainable

This criterion dictates that goals be achievable while presenting a realistic challenge. Writing goals with attainability in mind helps you identify barriers and thus focus on overcoming them. To set achievable goals (e.g., completing three assignments in a week), you must first consider all of your responsibilities for the week (e.g., attending lectures, doing household chores, studying for exams, etc.).

Sometimes, with all good intentions, the outlined goals are set too high or unrealistically. When this happens, it is advisable to take another look at the goals you’ve set for the week. If at the midpoint of the week...
progress on the assignments is slower than you anticipated, modify your specific goals, or make the change the next time you face a similar situation.

**Relevant**

Studying for an exam, completing an assignment on time, or attending lectures and labs are relevant goals to set during the school year. These should be your first priority goals.

**Time Frame**

The last element of a goal statement is the time frame for completion. This criterion is obviously stated as a length of time (e.g., days, weeks, months) or a specific completion date. For example, “The assignment must be completed and handed in by next Tuesday so I have time to prepare for the exam on Wednesday.”

### Manage Your Time

- **DON’T WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE!** Keep a calendar of events, assignments, and their due dates.

- Get in a groove by attending class at the same time; make your study times the same.

- Avoid lengthy study times. Occasionally, get up, stretch, get some fresh air, taking short breaks will improve your learning success.

- For every hour you spend in class, try to study two hours away from class.

- Immediately after class take the time to “clean up” any notes you’ve taken. Replace symbols or abbreviations with words. Rewrite incomplete sentences, and be sure to mark any questions you may have for the next session.

- Before class, take the time to read through last session’s notes to refresh your memory and ask any questions you may have.

### Be a Good Time Manager

A person’s ability to effectively allocate his or her time and resources in order to achieve personal objectives is known as time management. This is an important skill every student can use to his or her advantage. The better we are at managing our time, the more we can prioritize and accomplish, ultimately resulting in a greater sense of overall self confidence.

Focus on doing fewer things more effectively rather than many things quite poorly. Time management does not mean filling every hour of every day. In reality, it means allowing some downtime in the day for unexpected circumstances that will invariably arise and allocating time for recreation and leisure activities.

Learn to discipline yourself in order to be more efficient with your time. You can focus on getting your “best work” done – on time – by using all your available resources. The following time management strategies will help you manage your time in a way that will result in your best work as well as give you a healthy balance in your life.

*One of the best ways to save time is to think and plan ahead; five minutes of thinking can often save an hour of work.*

*John C. Maxwell*
Plan and prioritize

There is an old adage that states, “Failing to plan is planning to fail.” Proper planning is absolutely essential for effective time management. The 5 or 10 minutes you spend organizing your schedule can result in a net savings of many hours during your total workweek or the length of an individual project.

Prepare “to-do” lists

Following from the preceding point, it is a good idea to make a list of short-term goals you wish to accomplish each day. Prioritize the list according to the importance of completing each task. Include goals that absolutely must be done; goals that should be done, time permitting; and tasks that can wait until tomorrow. Break especially complex goals into manageable steps, and specify a time frame for completing each step.

Draw up a schedule

Schedule your daily activities according to the priorities you have set. Attack those projects that are absolutely critical first, then distribute your time over the other items on your list in order of priority and flexibility. For example, doing your homework before calling your friend about an outing tomorrow is prioritizing your activities.

Plan some “downtime”

Don’t forget to incorporate downtime in your daily schedule. We all need a break every now and then to rest up and recharge our internal batteries. Ironically, research in the area of organizational behaviour has repeatedly shown that you can actually get more work done if you take several short breaks than if you choose to work straight through the day.

Identify your optimal working time

This concept has also been referred to as your biological “prime time.” Each one of us has a time of the day when we are most effective in our work efforts. It is therefore a good idea to schedule the most urgent and critical tasks during this optimal time, then plan the less demanding and less important tasks for other periods of your day.

Minimize distractions

Organize your work environment in a manner that will increase your chances of completing the planned task. Sometimes it is necessary to go to your room instead of sitting on the couch in front of the TV. Make sure you have a comfortable work area or desk. Turn off your phone, your iPod, and your computer, or at least avoid responding to MSN messages or checking your Face book account when you need to be focused on a task. If these steps fail, then it would be wise to simply go somewhere you can complete your project without distractions, such as the library.

Don't procrastinate

Procrastination is one of the biggest time wasters for many students. If a task absolutely must be performed, then there is no time like the present to complete it. After all, your responsibility will not simply go away by putting the task off until tomorrow. Another problem with procrastination is that it leaves you with little or no time to review your work, incorporate feedback, and ensure that the final product is accurate and of sufficient quality to reflect well on your efforts.
Focus In Class

Be alert! It is always important to eat a well balanced meal and be rested before attending class, studying, or taking tests.

Skim through the text about to be covered. Familiarize yourself with a table of contents, major headings or “In This Chapter” headings.

Take methodical notes. Try not to write every spoken word but listen for key phrases such as, “an important point...,” “remember that...” Also be sure to write or copy down anything the instructor deems important enough to write on a chalkboard, dry erase board, or overhead projector.

Leave space in your notebook for later re-writing and expanding upon what you’ve written.

Read and Reflect

Starting at the end of the chapter may be helpful, locate key words or phrases for recognition purposes. It may also be helpful to read discussion/end of chapter questions before reading the chapter itself. This will aid in recognition of main points as you read.

After reading each section of the chapter, review key terms or highlight points of importance.

When you have completed the chapter, try to voice aloud the main points of what you’ve just read. Be interactive with the text.

Use the questions at the end of the chapter to rate your understanding. If you don’t understand, ASK! Ask any questions you may have in your next classroom session.

Follow the SMART principle: goals must be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and completed in a certain amount of Time.

Write the Exam with Confidence

In most cases this is your opportunity to make the most of all your hard work.

Anxiety is normal, don’t be afraid of it. Be confident that you are prepared and trust what you know.

Read all instructions closely and carefully.
Quickly decide upon the amount of time you can allot to each question.

Don’t waste time on a single question.

Mark questions you are unsure of, and return to them later.

View Multiple Choice questions as a form of True and False. Read each choice as True or False.

Read all answers before choosing what you believe to be correct.

Watch for specific wording (“always”, “never”).

Mark important wording in the questions (underline or circle).

Also mark the answers which you are sure are incorrect (cross or “x” out).

Go with your instincts; do not change an answer unless you are absolutely sure.

For essay questions be sure to read the instructions closely and carefully.

Immediately identify key words to use in your answer.

Use the question to determine how to answer (e.g., compare and contrast, define, diagram). Then answer the question using that direction.

Making a simple outline will help organize ideas and thoughts.

Always use complete sentences and form paragraphs whenever possible.