



Quick Start Guide to Academic Success at USD

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Read Me First

To have a successful first semester at USD, follow these simple steps:

Go to class. Experience has taught us that students who go to class mostly pass their courses and students who do not go to class mostly do fail their courses.

Going to class every day is the single most important step in academic success.

Several years ago I was the Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. One of my responsibilities was to counsel students on academic probation. Overwhelmingly, these students were capable of doing the work; in fact some of them were among our best-prepared students and on academic scholarships. So why were they failing their courses? The answers were many and varied—personal problems, health issues, challenges with addictions and obsessions. But the common thread in almost every case was more basic. These students were simply not going to class. Woody Allen once quipped, “Eighty percent of success is showing up.” Go to class.

Schedule study time. Students who succeed in the classroom read their assignments before going to class, start their papers early, and study for exams well in advance of the test. Students who fail often do not read the assigned material, hurriedly write their papers the just before they are due, and try to cram for exams the night before the test.

As you block off your classes, schedule a time each day to do homework. In college there is always homework to do. We expect that you will study 2 hours for each hour you are in class. If you have load of 15 units that means you should do 30 hours of homework a week! Find a quiet place to study in your residence hall or in the library and make studying an everyday habit.

Go to your professor’s office hours. By visiting your professors, you will better understand their expectations and goals for the course and they will better understand you and your educational aspirations.

Your professor’s office hours will be listed on the class syllabus. Make it a point to talk to each of your professors even if you are doing well in the class. Be courteous of their time and make your visits brief and during their listed time. If you struggle on a test or paper, visit with your professor and seek their advice on how to improve.

Don’t Cheat. No ill-gotten grade can compensate for a missed educational opportunity.

We have seen a rise in plagiarism in recent years. The amount of information on the web has made it easy to cut and paste copied material into your papers. Cheating robs you of an educational opportunity. Much of your learning comes from expressing new information and thoughts in your own words. Plagiarism short-circuits that learning process.

Professors at college take plagiarism more seriously than most of your high school teachers. While the internet makes it easier to cheat it also makes it easier to catch plagiarists. Many professors use computer programs, such as turnitin.com, to identify plagiarists or they simply type in a few unique words from your paper into Google and almost instantly discover your source. Complete your education with integrity—live up to the pledge you made and avoid cheating.

Read Me Last

Embrace the intellectual lifestyle. Seek out programs and enrich your education by going to them.

Enjoy your homework, look forward to your reading assignments, and discuss with each other what you have learned in your courses. Each semester departments and student groups sponsor a wide variety of intellectual programs ranging from fine arts performances to academic lectures by visiting professors.

Enjoy your general education courses that we call our core curriculum. The core curriculum helps you develop indispensable skills such as writing and language; it explores a wide variety of traditions of thought and belief, and probes the horizons of the liberal arts. They can be some of your most interesting and rewarding courses if you simply put as much effort into them as you do your major course.

**Follow these simple steps to have a
successful first semester and beyond at USD!**

FOR MORE FYE ONLINE RESOURCES VISIT: <http://www.sandiego.edu/sli/FYEOnlineResources.php>