

Sometimes students get so caught up in the details of studying, they forget the obvious. Here, thanks to Claude W. Olney, J.D.'s "Where There's A Will, There's An A" seminar, are twenty suggestions to help you improve your college performance.

1. Go to class. Do some fast math. Figure out how much each lab or lecture costs you-or your parents. The price, alone, should inspire you to get up for that 8am class. Need more incentive? Olney says that college graduates make over \$600,000 more in their lifetime on the average than do high school graduates: Does that get you moving?
2. Take subjects you enjoy. Believe it or not, college should be fun-your classes as well as your social life. If you look carefully, you can find interesting required or "core" courses, even during your first year.
3. Preview instructors. Students who have been there before you know the good teachers. Ask and you shall find. Try to sit in on classes and check out instructors for yourself before signing up.
4. Register on time. Those who wait until the last minute may lose out on the classes they want.
5. Buy the textbook before class begins. Get a jump start by getting the text and reading the first fifty pages or so before the first class. You'll understand those first few weeks better and may discover you really like reading about the subject once the onus of "assigned" work is lifted.
6. Pour it on the first two weeks. Overstudy to get off to a great start. When you begin with As on quizzes or assignments, you get a taste of success. This builds confidence and keeps you pumping through the semester.
7. Never miss a class. Good attendance pays! Olney observed that, of his students, A students, on the average, missed less than one class per forty-five-class semester, while C students were out more than four classes in the same semester.
8. Never miss extra credit work. It's not "extra" if everyone can do it. Do extra credit routinely. This often means the difference between an A and a B.
9. Practice taking tests to improve your performance. Check out the school book store or internet. You'll find lots of books and articles on this subject. Take tests in magazines and anywhere else you find them. The more you practice, the better you'll do.
10. Turn in your homework on time, neatly done and edited. Make every page perfect. This tip also improves your typing skills.
11. Practice memory strategies.
12. If money is a problem, obtain student loans so you can study more and work at outside jobs less.
13. Present a self-addressed postcard to each professor after taking the final exam in each course with the course name noted and a blank space left for your grade. Why? The postcard strategy has some definite psychological benefits. A professor is more likely to give an "interested" student an A if you're between an A and a B. And if your grade is close, this way you can discuss it with the professor before he or she turns it in to the registrar's office. Once grades reach the registrar's office, it's much tougher to persuade a professor to go through the trouble of changing a grade. Does this system work? Yes! Olney says, "There are no ironclad rules on where a B ends and an A begins."
14. Drop a course if it is not working out after the first week or so. Familiarize yourself with your school policy on this, but don't be afraid what people will say if you drop a course. Dropping gives you the option to start that course again later when you are better prepared for it or add a different course right then. Don't get penalized with a poor grade for a poor class choice.
15. Buy a pen with an eraser on it and use this for exams. Your exam will be neater, and you won't feel as pressured to get it all down "right" as you write.
16. Mark what you don't know instead of what you do know when you study chapters in your textbooks.
17. Stay fit and eliminate bad habits. You'll get more out of your college experience if you feel good.
18. Check with your professor during the semester concerning your grade. Asking shows interest. If you are only getting a C, Olney suggests you switch to pass/fail. "If you are getting a D," he says, "get out fast."
19. When taking exams, write as much as you know for an essay exam because volume does pay. In a multiple choice test, "All of the Above" can be a good guess.
20. Don't take that lower-than-hoped-for grade at face value. Fight for the close ones.