THE DARTMOUTH E-GUIDE TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Dartmouth College Academic Skills Center

Dr. Carl P. Thum and Jonathan A. Lu '19

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Table of Contents

Introduction

"So if I read this book then I'll get A's … right?"

– Anonymous College Student

In the spring of 2016, my co-author, <u>Dr. Carl P. Thum</u>, called me to his office to discuss writing a study skills book. At the time, we were producing an online study skills website, and we wanted to develop a text that would accompany the website. After a year of brainstorming, drafting, and revising, we finally published: *The Dartmouth E-Guide to Academic Success.* This book represents the culmination of Dr. Thum's and my efforts to provide science-backed study skills for students. Thanks to the generous support of Dartmouth College, we are able to release this e-book as a free resource to help students succeed in college.

Now before we progress to the following chapters, it's important to answer a few questions: (1) *Who should read this book?* (2) *Why is this book different?* (3) *How can I use this book to get A's in college?*

Who should read this book? On the subject of audience, this book is meant for anyone with a drive and motivation to succeed in college. If you're the type of

person who wants to do better in college than you did in high school, then this book is right for you! Perhaps you're a high school student that wants to prepare for college, or an undergraduate enrolled in a four-year university, or maybe you're a part-time student that commutes to school and works a full-time job, this book can help you achieve your academic goals.

Why is this book different? It's important to address how this book is different from a traditional study skills book. Unlike most college self-help books (which tend to range from 200-300 pages long), this book is less than a 100 pages long. In addition, you'll notice that a great deal of these pages include bullet points, visuals, and hyperlinks. This book is concise *on purpose.* As co-authors, Dr. Thum and I didn't want to write a large tome. We realize that college students are very busy, and we wanted to be respectful of your limited time. That's why we like to use visuals and hyperlinks to communicate our ideas – that way, you won't get inundated in a sea of superfluous text.

We like to use hyperlinks because they give our readers the opportunity to read our book without getting bogged down with definitions and lengthy explanations. For example, in Chapter 1, we introduce the concept of a "Growth Mindset." While we include an explanation about the "Growth Mindset" within

the e-book, we understand that some of our readers may be interested in reading a more in-depth report – for example, some readers might be interested in the scientific research that proves the efficacy of the "Growth Mindset." In such cases, we'd use a hyperlink – it helps to maintain the clean and simple format of our book. For reference, anything underlined and highlighted in green is a hyperlink.

How can I use this book to get A's in college? This question is quite arguably the most important question you should be asking. The truth is, as long as you're motivated to practice the study strategies discussed in this book, you'll most likely succeed. It's a simple equation: this e-book + you = academic success.
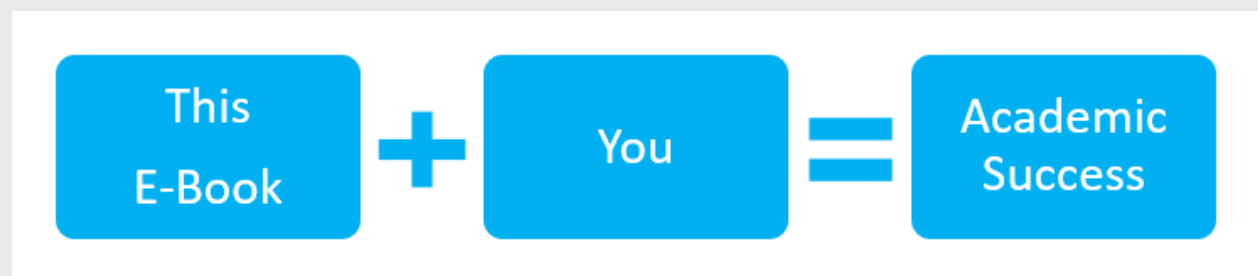
It really doesn't get much more complicated than that. We truly believe that you can achieve A's by practicing the study strategies that we will share with you. To help you practice what you've read, we've organized this e-book into three easy-to-reference parts:

Part 1: Mindset and Goals (Chapters 1-2)

Part 2: Study Skills (Chapters 3-6)

Part 3: Productivity and Wellness (Chapters 7-8)

Essentially, Part 1 helps you adopt the right mindset for college. It will discuss the importance of a Growth Mindset, and will help you define your college goals. In Part 2, we discuss study skills. From exam preparation, to notetaking strategies, to time management skills, we've distilled the essential study strategies that you'll need to succeed in college. After discussing study skills, we'll turn to productivity and wellness in Part 3. We'll talk about strategies for eliminating procrastination and improving productivity.

Remember, success in college is all about *repeating good study habits.* You need to practice and apply this book's study strategies. If you ever need a quick refresher, just open up this e-guide, it's only a click away.

Chapter 1: Developing a Growth Mindset

"Welcome every challenge as an opportunity to grow"

– Trea Branch

The absolute first thing you need to do before you do <u>anything</u> in college is adopt a Growth Mindset. By adopting this mindset, you'll unlock your ability to improve your academic performance.

So what is this Growth Mindset? And why is it so miraculous? Well according to Stanford University Professor of Psychology, Carol Dweck, (whose research pioneered the field of mindset psychology), a "Growth Mindset is the belief that you can cultivate and improve upon your abilities through practice and effort." This differs significantly from a "Fixed Mindset," which dictates that a student's ability is largely predetermined and unchangeable. Intuitively, it seems obvious why a Growth Mindset is more beneficial than a Fixed Mindset. Surely, everyone would want to believe that they can improve and do better. Yet, many students fail to adopt a Growth Mindset.

Think about it. Reflect on the last time you encountered a really difficult challenge and failed. Think about the time you studied for an entire month in preparation for your calculus test, but still received an average grade. Meanwhile, that one math whiz in your class who never had to study, scores an A without even trying. What did you do when you encountered that disappointing situation? Did you view the situation as a growing opportunity? Or did you say: *"I guess I'm not cut out for a math major. After all, I studied an entire month, only to get an average grade. That math genius got an A without even putting in half the effort I put in."*

Sounds familiar? This common response is natural for most of us. When we work hard but receive disappointing results, it's easy to fall into the trap of saying:

An Anecdote from the Authors

Jonathan Remembers:

I remember a time when I struggled to adopt a Growth Mindset. It was during middle school – I was taking an SAT Writing Section Prep course. At the time, I struggled with English grammar. I remember scoring so low on the SAT practice tests that I barely passed the class. Meanwhile, my classmates would make decent scores with ease. It was discouraging. There were many times when I was tempted to believe that I would never score well on the SAT Writing Section. But every time I brought home a low score, my mom would tell me not to worry. She said that I would improve with continued effort. I didn't realize it at the time, but she was telling me to view my challenges with a Growth Mindset. Just because I received disappointing scores, didn't mean that I was hopeless. I could still improve with effort. I started to view my low SAT Writing Section scores in a different light. I let them motivate me to do better. I kept taking practice tests to improve my understanding, and I ended up scoring a perfect 800/800 on the SAT English section. It was during that SAT Writing Section Prep course that I learned how to replace my Fixed Mindset with a Growth Mindset.

"I just don't have the natural talent for it." This response represents a Fixed Mindset. It's the type of mindset that hinders us from achieving our full potential.

As we've discussed, a Fixed Mindset can limit your potential, whereas a Growth Mindset can lead to significant improvements. There are many research studies that are dedicated to finding out how we can overcome a Fixed Mindset and encourage a Growth Mindset in higher education. You can read more about it by clicking here. Essentially, the key to getting rid of a Fixed Mindset and adopting a Growth Mindset is by changing your perception of success. According to Professor Dweck, you can change your mindset by following four easy steps.

We've talked a lot about the benefits of a Growth Mindset, so how do we adopt it? Click here for our guide on how to develop a Growth Mindset in four easy steps.

Four Steps to Developing a Growth Mindset

Step 1: The first step is to hear your Fixed Mindset "voice" – it's the voice inside your head that promotes doubt. When you encounter a challenge, the voice may say: "Are you sure you can do it? Maybe you don't have the talent for it. What if you fail? Then you'll be a failure. If you don't try, you can protect

yourself and keep your dignity." The Fixed Mindset voice tries to make you doubt and second-guess yourself. It will try to scare you from even trying.

Step 2: Once you have identified your Fixed Mindset voice, the second step is to realize that you have a choice. You can either listen to the Fixed Mindset voice, or you can respond with a Growth Mindset voice. You have full autonomy over how you interpret your setbacks and challenges. When you encounter a setback (for example, a disappointing grade on a math test), you can either interpret your grade as a sign of failure, or as an opportunity to grow and improve. It's your choice.

Step 3: After you have recognized that you have a choice, it's time to follow through. Whenever you hear the skeptical Fixed Mindset voice in your head, respond with a Growth Mindset voice. Here are a few examples:

Fixed Mindset Voice: "Are you sure you can do it? Maybe you don't have the talent. If you fail, you'll be a failure."

Growth Mindset Voice Response: "The only failure in life is not trying. It might be challenging, but I know that with time and effort, I will be able to do it."

Fixed Mindset Voice: "Look at your test grade, you're not naturally gifted in math. Calculus would be so much easier if you were meant to major in it."

Growth Mindset Voice Response: "Math may be challenging, but I know that if I apply myself and work at it, I will be able to improve my grades. Nothing worthwhile in life ever came easily – I will keep on persevering.

Step 4: Follow through. Put actions behind your Growth Mindset voice. Take on your challenges with 100% effort. Don't be stymied by setbacks. Interpret them as learning opportunities and continue to persevere. Eventually, you'll overcome that challenge, and you'll be off to greater things.

Now that you've learned how to adopt a Growth Mindset, we believe that it's important to elaborate on why a Growth Mindset is essential to your success in college. It's because college is different from high school. College courses are not only more challenging, but they also place a greater emphasis on individual effort. In high school, you'll have a teacher to keep you accountable. You will most likely have weekly homework assignments and monthly exams. But in college, the only person that can keep you accountable is you. In some college classes, attendance is optional, and homework counts very little to your overall grade. Essentially your entire grade can be based off of two midterms and one final exam. In college, one bad exam grade can significantly decrease your overall grade for the entire class. That's why you'll see so many students drop a class after one bad midterm grade. Sometimes dropping a class is a legitimate decision.

But too often, students let one bad grade discourage them from pursuing a potential major or minor. These students are listening to the Fixed Mindset voice. They believe that one setback, one bad grade, is an indicator that they are not talented, and that they shouldn't pursue that field of study.

In college, you're going to face setbacks, and it's your choice whether to interpret that setback as a failure or a growth opportunity. Don't be afraid to challenge yourself. Don't let one bad grade dissuade you from pursuing a major that you love. Attending college will be one of the most intellectually challenging experiences you will ever have. Make the most of your college experience by pursuing subjects that you're passionate about – don't just take a class for an easy A, take a class because it genuinely interests you. The famous U.S. President, Theodore Roosevelt once said: "Nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty… I have never in my life envied a human being who led an easy life. I have envied a great many people who led difficult lives and led them well." President Roosevelt's wisdom applies to college. Have the courage to face your challenges with a positive attitude and a desire to improve. In the words of President Roosevelt, when you approach college with a Growth Mindset, you will gain a college experience "worth having."

We've covered a lot in this chapter. If you ever need a quick refresher on the subject, or if you would like to read more about the Growth Mindset, then please click on the following links.

1. Four Steps to a Growth Mindset

2. Understanding the Growth Mindset

3. How the Growth Mindset helped me make a perfect score on the SAT Writing Section

Chapter 2: Defining Your Goals

"This one step – choosing a goal and sticking to it –

changes everything." – Scott Reed

It's important to enter college with a clear understanding of *what* you want to accomplish, *how* you're going to do it, and *when* you're going to achieve it. Successful students and successful professionals share a common characteristic, they have clear goals that guide their actions. That's why goal setting is the second chapter in this book.

As we begin our chapter on defining goals, let's preface our discussion by asking the following question: *Why are you attending college and what academic/personal goals do you plan to accomplish there?* Maybe you've thought about this question before. You've probably written an essay on this subject for your college applications. From speaking with students, both Dr. Thum and I have noticed that students often respond to this question by saying: *Well, I want to go to college to earn a degree so that I can get a good job.* While this response is a great start, let's look at an example of a more specific response.

To illustrate, we'll ask hypothetical first-year student, Elizabeth Alvarez, what her academic/personal goals are. Now before we discuss Elizabeth's response, it's important to give some background information. Elizabeth is a first-year student at Dartmouth College, and she is very interested in physics. In-fact, she worked in a physics research lab during the summer before her first year. She hopes to one day become a professor in physics. Okay. Now that we've gotten to know Elizabeth a little better, let's ask her: *Why are you attending college and what academic/personal goals do you plan to accomplish there?*

Elizabeth's response: I am attending Dartmouth College because I want to pursue a degree in physics. Dartmouth College has an excellent physics department that will allow me to conduct research while taking classes. I intend to join Dartmouth's Physics Society during my first year, as well as publish two physics research papers with a Dartmouth faculty member by the end of my junior year. By attending Dartmouth College, I will gain an excellent education and extensive research experience, which will allow me to attend graduate school and one day become a physics professor.

From reading Elizabeth's response, you immediately get a clear sense of her goals and purpose. Elizabeth has specified *what* she wants to accomplish (i.e. be
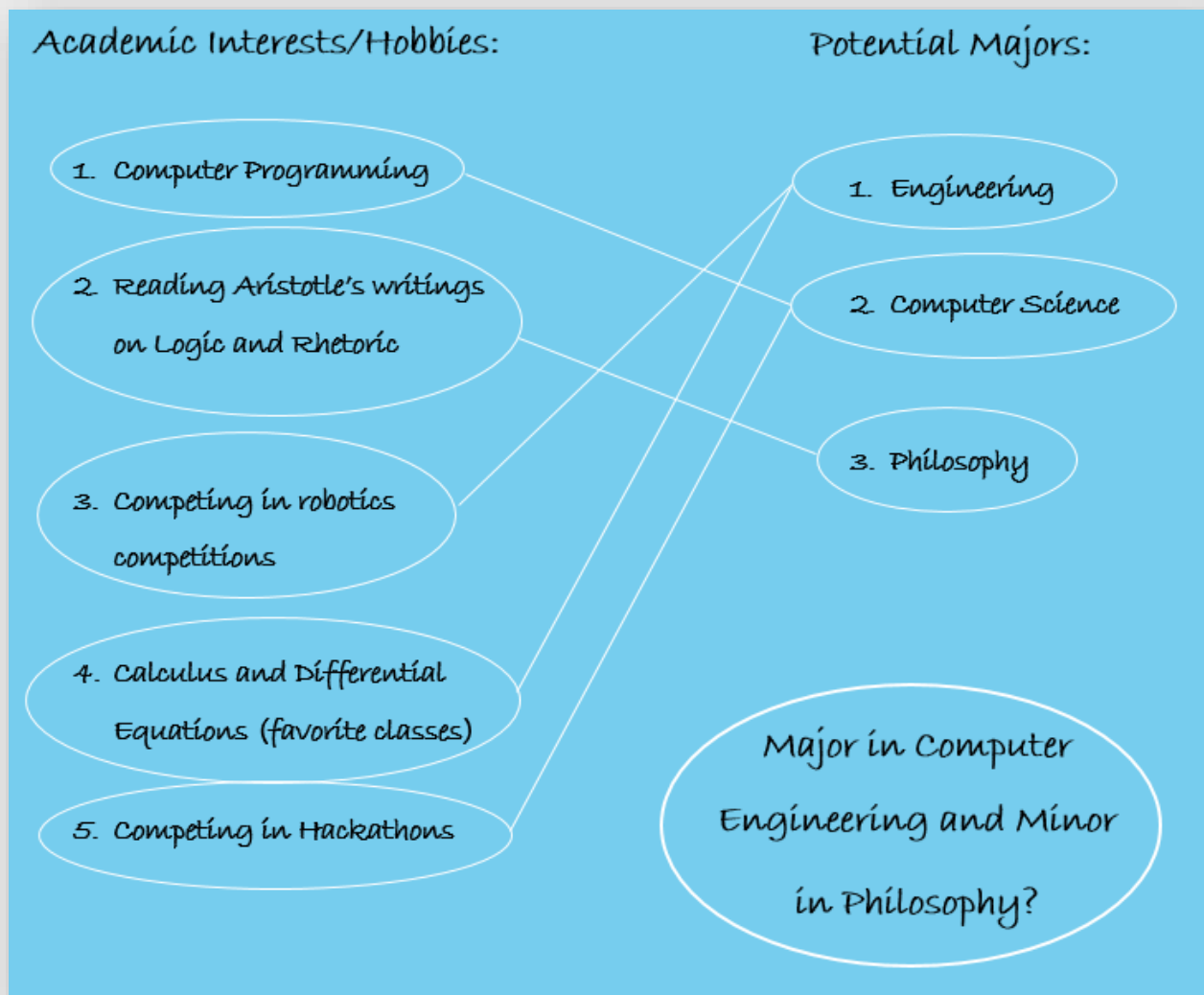
accepted into graduate school and eventually become a physics professor). In addition, she's outlined *how* she will achieve her goal (i.e. she will join Dartmouth's Physics Society and write physics research papers to gain experience in academia). Most importantly, she's specified *when* she's going to accomplish these goals (i.e. she will join Dartmouth's Physics Society during her first year, and she will publish two research papers by the end of her junior year).

After looking at this example, it may seem like goal setting is a simple process. Although this may be true for some people, a majority of college students can find this process challenging. It's challenging to narrow down your diverse interests to a specific major and career. Both Dr. Thum and I recognize this. That's why, to make the goal setting process easier, we've created an exercise that will walk you through the Four Steps to Effective Goal Setting.

The Four Steps to Effective Goal Setting

Step 1: Write down your academic interests. Ask yourself, what fields of study are you interested in? What classes did you take in high school that you would like to explore further in college? Were there any clubs that you participated in that could translate to an academic interest? For example, if you were a part of your high school's robotics team, then maybe you would be interested in pursuing

engineering. Try to connect your interests with possible academic majors. Take a piece of paper and jot down your interests and hobbies on the left side, and write down possible majors on the right side. Then, draw lines to connect your interests with possible majors.

Academic Interests/Hobbies: Potential Majors:

1. Computer Programming

2. Reading Aristotle's writings
   on Logic and Rhetoric

3. Competing in robotics
   competitions

4. Calculus and Differential
   Equations (favorite classes)

5. Competing in Hackathons

1. Engineering

2. Computer Science

3. Philosophy

Major in Computer Engineering and Minor in Philosophy?

If you wrote down multiple potential majors on the right side and are not sure about which one to pick, don't worry! It's okay to be interested in multiple fields of study. You are a unique person with a diverse set of interests. If you did write down multiple fields of study, then try to think about how you can combine these fields of study into a major/minor that combines both of your interests. For example, if you're interested in engineering, computer science, and philosophy, you could major in computer engineering and minor in philosophy, or vice versa. You could even double major!

Step 2: Connect your major with a potential career. It's never too early to start thinking about your potential career. Even if you're a first year student in college, it's good to ask yourself what career you would like to pursue after graduation. Nowadays, in order to be hired by a company, it's recommended that you study something that is related to the field of your intended vocation. For example, if you want to work for a tech company, then it might be beneficial to study computer engineering in college.

Ask yourself, what type of industries are related to your potential major? If you're majoring in computer engineering, then perhaps you might want to work in the tech industry. Research what type of companies exist within your industry

of interest. For example, you might want to look at tech firms like Microsoft,

Facebook, or Google.
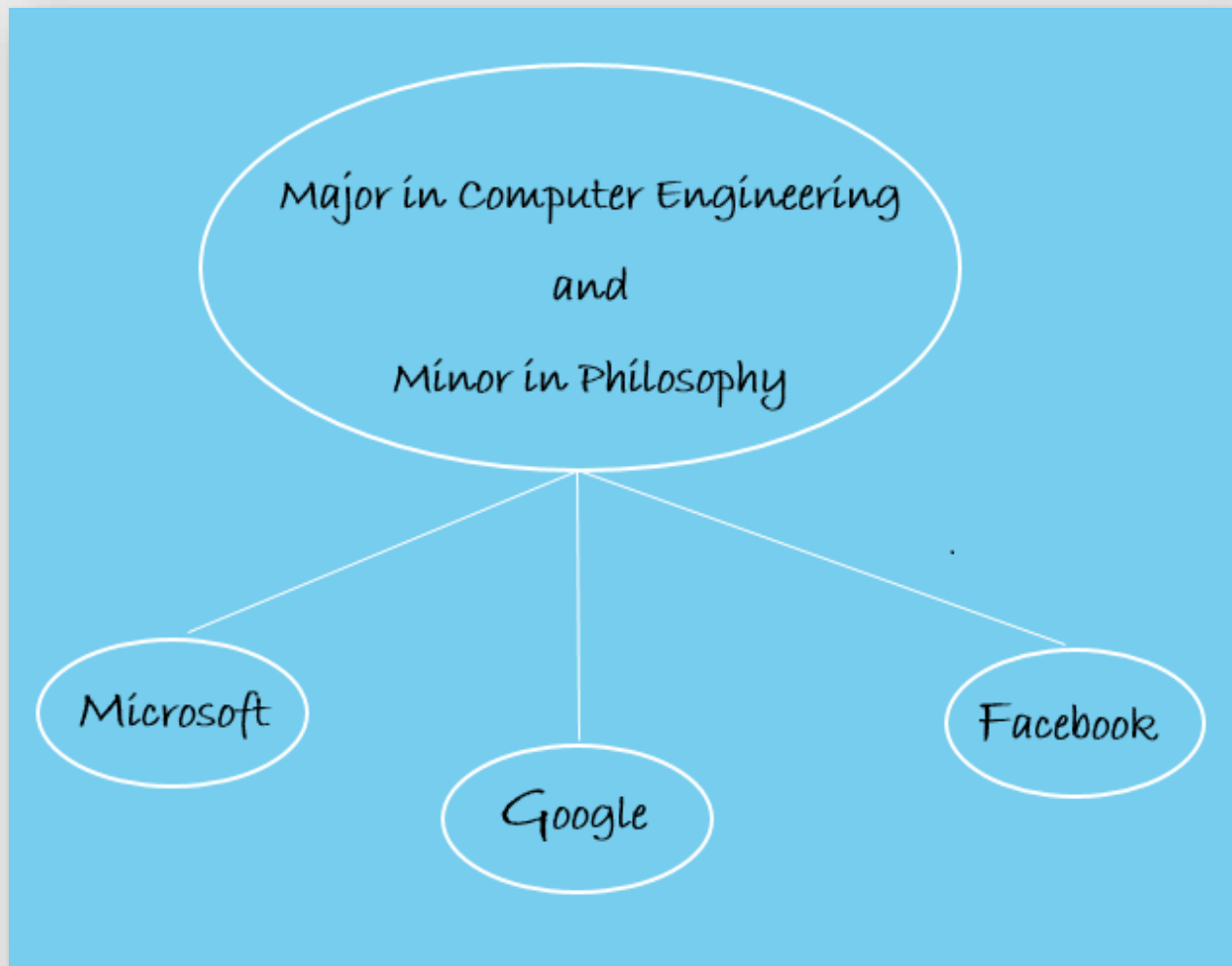
At this point in the exercise, you should have a general idea of *what* you

want to accomplish. Try to write down a rough draft of your long-term goal. You

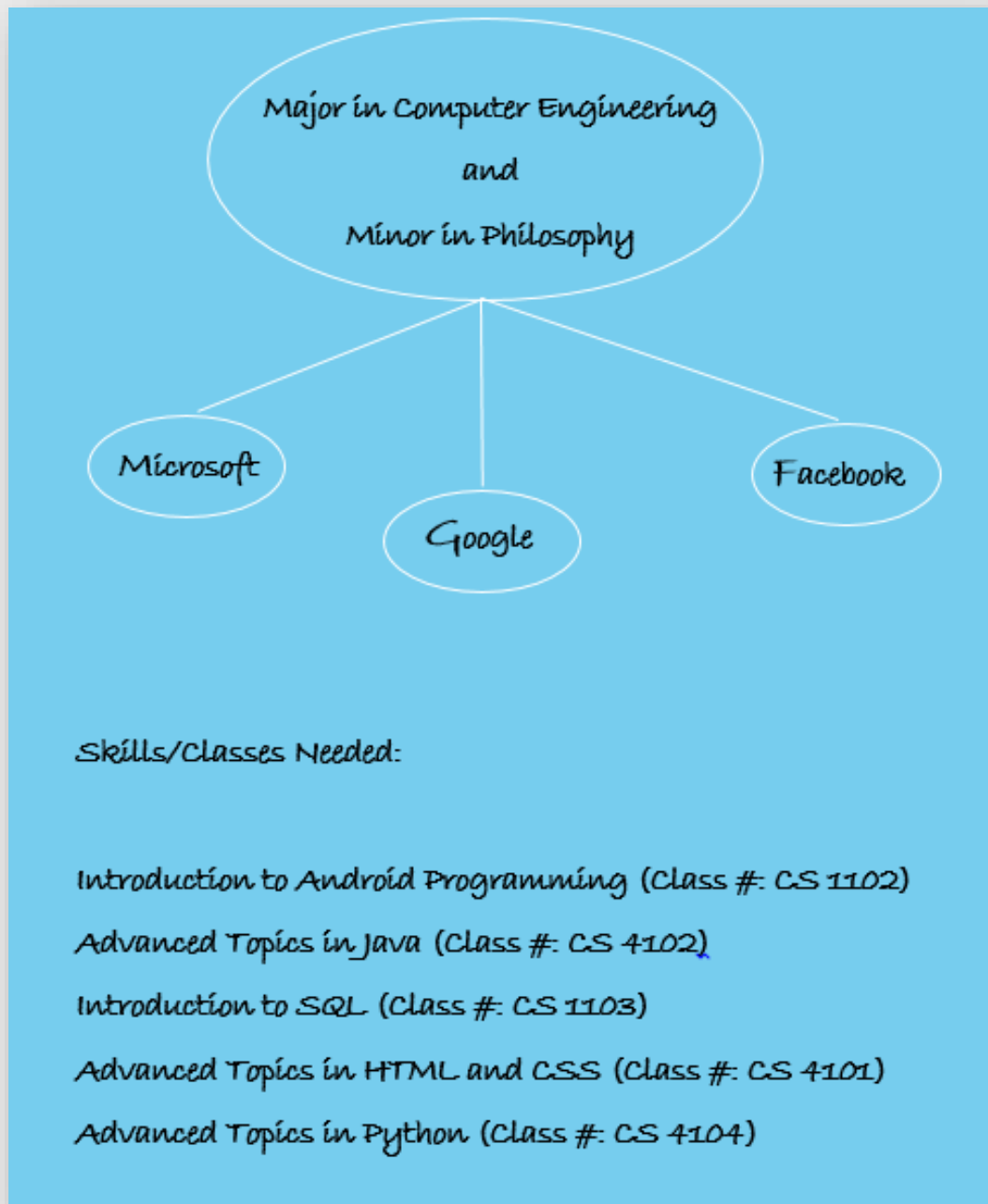can use the following template to help you get started:

I would like to pursue a major in Computer Engineering, with a minor in Philosophy. I believe that these fields of study will prepare me for a career in the tech industry.

Step 3: Identify the skills/classes that you will need to take to accomplish your academic and career goals.

To be successful in your intended career, you need to develop skills that are relevant to your industry. Recall Elizabeth's goal. She wanted to be accepted into graduate school so that she could become a physics professor. In order to achieve her long-term goal, Elizabeth would need to take physics classes to gain an understanding of her intended field. In addition, she planned to conduct academic research and publish physics research papers with her professors. Through these activities, Elizabeth would be able to gain essential research experience, which would prepare her for a future career in academia.

Take a moment to reflect on the skills/classes that you will need to take in order to achieve your academic and vocational goals. For example, if you intend to work for a company like Google, then you will likely need to learn a few computer programming languages. You could list the computer science classes that you plan to take in college. In addition, you might also want to complete

coding projects to gain experience. For example, you might want to create your

own app. Write down these skills and classes on a piece of paper.

Major in Computer Engineering

and

Minor in Philosophy

Microsoft

Google

Facebook

Skills/Classes Needed:

Introduction to Android Programming (Class #: CS 1102)

Advanced Topics in Java (Class #: CS 4102)

Introduction to SQL (Class #: CS 1103)

Advanced Topics in HTML and CSS (Class #: CS 4101)

Advanced Topics in Python (Class #: CS 4104)

By listing the skills and classes that you need to take in order to succeed in your intended career, you've essentially identified *how* you're going to accomplish your goals. Let's build off of the template that we used in the previous page.

I would like to pursue a major in Computer Engineering, with a minor in Philosophy. I believe that these fields of study will prepare me for a career in the tech industry. In order to achieve these goals, I plan to learn four programming languages (Java, C++, Python, and SQL). In addition, I will create my own smartphone app so that I can gain relevant coding experience.

Step 4: Set short-term goals that bring you closer to fulfilling your long-term goal. Thus far, you've listed *what* you want to accomplish, and *how* you're going to accomplish it. Now it's time to add a timeline to our goals. Scientific research has shown that attaching a deadline to our goals helps to increase our productivity. Set up weekly and monthly short-term goals to keep you on track. For example, if you want to learn four new programming languages, then try to master one programming language every three months, you will have learned all four programming language within a year. If you want to create a smartphone app, then try to set a deadline for when you want to complete the app. For example, you might want to finish the app by the end of your sophomore year.

Most importantly, make sure that your short-term goals are S.M.A.R.T. To learn more about S.M.A.R.T. goals, click here. Let's incorporate what we've just discussed into our goal setting template.

I would like to pursue a major in Computer Engineering, with a minor in Philosophy. I believe that these fields of study will prepare me for a career in the tech industry. In order to achieve these goals, I plan to learn four programming languages (Java, C++, Python, and SQL) in one year (i.e. I will learn one new programming language every three months). In addition, I will create my own smartphone app by the end of my sophomore year so that I can gain relevant coding experience.

After completing these four steps, you should have a general sense of *what* your academic and personal goals are, *how* you're going to accomplish them, and *when* you're going to achieve them. It's important to note that your goals may change over the course of your college career – and that's perfectly okay! The purpose of setting goals is to introduce you to the process of thinking ahead. The famous author, Dr. Stephen Covey, wrote that we should "begin with the end in mind." We need to envision our destination before we can get there.

As you contemplate your academic and personal goals, it's important to stay ambitious. Set challenging goals for yourself. While it's important to set

realistic and accomplishable goals, it's equally important to aim high and stretch yourself. Don't be afraid to challenge yourself. That's what college is about – stretching your boundaries and discovering new talents. Think back to our discussion on the Growth Mindset. Remember that challenges are opportunities to grow. It's why the famous artist, Michelangelo Buonarroti (the guy who painted the Sistine Chapel and sculpted the "David") once said: *"The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it."*

We've covered a lot of ground in this chapter, if you ever need a refresher, feel free to check out the following links.

1. Goal Setting Part 1: Setting Effective Goals

2. Goal Setting part 2: The Four Steps to Effective Goal Setting

Chapter 3: Time Management

"Planning is bringing the future into the present so that

you can do something about it now." – Alan Lakein

Time management is about planning. It's about planning your day, your week, your month, and your four-years in college. By carefully planning each day, you'll be able to leverage the time that you have today to accomplish the goals you have for tomorrow.

As you continue reading this chapter, you'll notice that effective time management is intertwined with goal setting. In order to manage your time, you need to have clear goals that guide your use of time. That's why our time management chapter directly follows our discussion on goal setting.

So how do we do it? You can achieve effective time management by implementing: a Four-Year Plan, a term schedule, a weekly planner, and a daily schedule.

Implementing a Four-Year Plan

As its name implies, a Four-Year Plan is your long-term plan for your four years in college. This plan helps you to stay on track with your long-term goals (i.e. completion of your major/minor, internships, study abroad opportunities, and personal projects). To create a Four-Year Plan, try to map out each year that you will spend in college. You can use an Excel sheet, a Word document, or a pencil and a piece of paper. As a suggestion, we recommend that your Four-Year Plan should roughly follow this template (please see Four-Year Plan Template Example). If you would like a copy of the Dartmouth Four Year Plan Template Example, then please click on the link.

| First Year | | | |
Fall	Spring	Summer	Summer
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5

| Sophomore Year | | | |
Fall	Spring	Summer	Summer
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5

| Junior Year | | | |
Fall	Spring	Summer	Summer
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5

| Senior Year | | | |
Fall	Spring	Summer	Summer
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5

(From Step 1 of the Dartmouth Four Year Plan Template Excel Sheet)

Before we start filling out our Four-Year Plan. Let's first write down our long-term goal. As an exercise, let's think about our long-term educational goal. Here's a template to help guide you:

I would like to pursue a major in (insert major), with a minor in (insert minor). I believe that these fields of study will prepare me for a career in the (insert vocation/industry). In order to achieve these goals, I plan to learn (skill one) in one year. In addition, I will also learn (skill two) by the end of my sophomore year.

Notice that we've color coded this example so that blue represents your overarching goal, orange represents the intermediate steps to accomplishing your goal, and purple represents the timeline for accomplishing these intermediate steps.

For our example, we'll talk about a student interested in computer engineering – who aspires to work in the tech industry. It's important to note that this is just one example of the many majors that you can choose at Dartmouth. You could major in Geography, Physics, History, Biology, Economics, Chinese, and much more. To explore these majors, click on their respective links.

I would like to pursue a major in Computer Engineering, with a minor in Philosophy. I believe that these fields of study will prepare me for a career in the tech industry. In order to achieve these goals, I plan to learn four programming languages (Java, C++, Python, and SQL) in one year (i.e. I will learn one new programming language every three months). In addition, I will create my own smartphone app by the end of my sophomore year so that I can gain relevant coding experience. Finally, I'd like to read three classic philosophy texts so that I can complete a research project on philosophy during my junior year.

Example (Computer Engineering Major and Philosophy Minor):

From reading this, we can immediately identify four long-term goals:

- Complete a major in Computer Engineering and a minor in Philosophy

- Obtain a job in the tech industry

- Learn four new programming languages in one year

- Create a smartphone app by the end of sophomore year

- Read three classic philosophy texts: "Letters from a Stoic" by Seneca, "Meditations" by Marcus Aurelius, and "The Essentials Epicurus" by Epicurus

- Complete a research project on philosophy

These long-term goals can be divided into smaller milestones. For example, if your long-term goal is to complete a Computer Engineering major, then you should plan to complete Calculus 3 by the end of your first year. If you want to obtain a job in the tech industry upon graduation, then you may want to intern at a tech company during the summer of your junior year. Try to include these intermediate milestones in your Four-Year Plan (please see Four-Year Plan Template Example).

First Year 2017		
Fall	Spring	Summer
1 Declare Engineering Major and Philosophy Minor	1 Finish Java Programming Course	1 Finish C++ Programming Course
2	2 Take Calculus 3 (Course #: Math 1103)	2 Attend Computer Programming Bootcamp
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	5	5

Sophomore Year 2018		
Fall	Spring	Summer
1 Complete pre-requisites for Computer Engineering Major	1 Finish SQL Programming Course	1 Publish Smartphone App
2 Finish Python Programming Course	2	2
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	5	5

Junior Year 2019		
Fall	Spring	Summer
1 Complete requirements for Philosophy Minor	1 Interview for tech internship	1 Intern at a large tech firm (Google, Microsoft, or Facebook)
2	2	2
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	5	5

Senior Year 2020		
Fall	Spring	Summer
1 Submit Senior Thesis Proposal for Computer Engineering Research Project	1 Graduate w/ Major in Computer Engineering and Minor in Philosophy	1 Begin career at tech company
2	2	2
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	5	5

(From Step 2 of the Dartmouth Four Year Plan Template Excel Sheet)

If you look at Step 2 in the Excel sheet, you'll notice that our Four-Year Plan looks

a bit sparse. Let's add in some additional long-term goals. Remember that these

goals need not be exclusively related to academics, they can cover hobbies and

other passions (please see Step 3 of the Excel sheet).

First Year		
Fall	**Spring**	**Summer**
1 Declare Engineering Major and Philosophy Minor	1 Finish Java Programming Course	1 Finish C++ Programming Course
2 Join Rock Climbing Club and Triathlon Club	2 Take Calculus 3 (Course #: Math 1103)	2 Attend Computer Programming Bootcamp
3	3	3 Rock Climb at Yosemite National Park
4	4	4
5	5	5

Sophomore Year		
Fall	**Spring**	**Summer**
1 Complete pre-requisites for Computer Engineering Major	1 Finish SQL Programming Course	1 Publish Smartphone App
2 Finish Python Programming Course	2 Run a 5 Minute Mile	2 Visit Grand Canyon National Park
3 Study abroad in Hong Kong to study Computer Engineering	3	3
4	4	4
5	5	5

Junior Year		
Fall	**Spring**	**Summer**
1 Complete requirements for Philosophy Minor	1 Interview for tech internship	1 Intern at a large tech firm (Google, Microsoft, or Facebook)
2 Compete in Ultramarathon (50 mile marathon)	2 Go Ice Climbing at Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Park	2 Compete in Disney Marathon in Tokyo
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	5	5

Senior Year		
Fall	**Spring**	**Summer**
1 Submit Senior Thesis Proposal for Computer Engineering Research Project	1 Graduate w/ Major in Computer Engineering and Minor in Philosophy	1 Begin career at tech company
2	2 Compete in Ironman Triathlon	2
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	5	5

(From Step 3 of the Dartmouth Four Year Plan Template Excel Sheet)

There you have it, we've completed making our Four-Year Plan. Take a moment to download the Four-Year Plan template and try filling it out yourself. If you would like additional guidance for creating your Four-Year Plan, please click here.

Creating a Term Schedule

Now it's time to create a term schedule. A term schedule is very similar to a Four-Year Plan, with one key exception: a term schedule helps you to stay on track with your short-term goals. You can download a term schedule template by clicking here. Alternatively, you could use an online calendar app, such as iCal or Outlook.

To start, let's take a second look at our Four-Year Plan, and recall some of the short-term goals that we composed for the spring term of our sophomore year. From looking at our Four-Year Plan, we notice that we've set two short-term goals: (1) complete an SQL programming course and (2) run a five minute mile. In order to successfully accomplish these goals, we need to have an organized plan. A typical spring term runs from January to May. Ideally, you will complete your two goals by the end of May. Let's jot down these goals onto our term schedule.

Spring Term (Sophomore Year)

January
1
2
3

February
1
2
3

March
1
2
3

April
1
2
3

May
1 Complete SQL Programming Course
2 Run a 5 Minute Mile
3

The next step is to set monthly milestones so that you can track your progress towards completing your goals. For example, if you intend to achieve a 5 minute mile by May, you should plan to run a 5:08 mile in January, and cut your time by 2 seconds each month. Additionally, if you want to finish your SQL programming

course by the end of May, you should try to complete your programming course's midterm project by March.

Spring Term (Sophomore Year)

January
1 Begin SQL Programming Course
2 Run a 5:08 Mile
3

February
1 Run a 5:06 Mile
2
3

March
1 Submit SQL Midterm Project
2 Run a 5:04 Mile
3

April
1 Run a 5:02 Mile
2
3

May
1 Complete SQL Programming Course
2 Run a 5 Minute Mile
3

In addition to these milestones, let's also include important due dates (i.e. exam dates, group project deadlines, essay due dates). You might also want to include

important events, such as athletic competitions, academic conferences, or any events related to your extra-curricular activities. After filling out your term schedule, print it out and keep it in a place where you can see it every day.

Spring Term (Sophomore Year)

January

1 Begin SQL Programming Course
2 Run a 5:08 Mile
3 Intercollegiate Triathlon on the 15th

February

1 Run a 5:06 Mile
2 Literature Essay due on the 25th
3 Microeconomics Exam on the 16th

March

1 Submit SQL Midterm Project
2 Run a 5:04 Mile
3 Physics Exam on the 17th

April

1 Run a 5:02 Mile
2 Computer Science Group Project due on the 7th
3 Intercollegiate Hackathon on the 20th

May

1 Complete SQL Programming Course
2 Run a 5 Minute Mile
3 Final Literature Essay due on the 6th

Creating a Weekly Planner

A weekly planner will help you stay on track with your weekly activities. Write down your class schedule, as well as your professors' office hours. Be sure to include any weekly meetings as well. You can download a copy of our weekly planner template by [clicking here](). Alternatively, you can create your own planner, or use a calendar app on your phone. Your weekly planner should look like this:

		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
AM	7:00	Wake up/Breakfast	Wake up/Breakfast	Wake up/Breakfast	Wake up/Breakfast	Wake up/Breakfast	Wake up/Breakfast	Wake up/Breakfast
AM	7:30	Morning Run 5 Miles		Morning Run 5 Miles		Morning Run 5 Miles	Morning Run 10 Miles	
AM	8:00							
AM	8:30							
AM	9:00	Literature Class		Literature Class		Literature Class		
AM	9:30							
AM	10:00							
AM	10:30	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
AM	11:00							
AM	11:30							
PM	12:00	Calculus Class	Physics Class	Calculus Class	Physics Class	Calculus Class		
PM	12:30							
PM	1:00							
PM	1:30		Literature Professor's Office Hours		Literature Professor's Office Hours			
PM	2:00	SQL Programming Class		SQL Programming Class		SQL Programming Class		
PM	2:30							
PM	3:00		Engineering Design Class		Engineering Design Class			
PM	3:30	Math Professor's Office Hours		Math Professor's Office Hours				
PM	4:00					Physics Lab		
PM	4:30							
PM	5:00	Engineering Professor's Office Hours		Physics Professor's Office Hours				Endurance Biking 50 Miles
PM	5:30							
PM	6:00	Computer Programming Professor's Office Hours	Afternoon Run 3 Miles + Strength Training at Gym	Swimming Training at Aquatic Center	Afternoon Run 3 Miles + Strength Training at Gym	Computer Programming Professor's Office Hours	Afternoon Lift at Gym	
PM	6:30							
PM	7:00							
PM	7:30	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner
PM	8:00							
PM	8:30							
PM	9:00							
PM	9:30							
PM	10:00							
PM	10:30							
PM	11:00							

Creating a Daily Schedule

To create a daily schedule, take out a piece of paper and pencil, and draw a line down the middle. On the right side, write down the tasks that you want to accomplish for that day. On the left side, write down your class schedule –also include athletic practices as well as club meetings too.

Daily Schedule: Monday

Appointments

7:00am-8:30am
Breakfast and Workout

9:00am-10:00am
Lit Class

10:00am-11:00am
Lunch

12:00pm-1:30pm
Calculus Class

2:00pm-3:30pm
Computer Science Class

6:00pm-6:30pm
Meet with Computer Science Prof
During Office Hours

7:30pm-8:00pm
Dinner

Tasks

- Finish Literature Reading Assignment

- Write Draft for English Essay

- Review French Vocab Notecards

- Do Laundry

It's important to notice the blocks of time in between your daily meetings. Draw a square around these blocks and make note of how much time is available in each block.

The next step is to draw lines from your tasks on the right side, to your time blocks on the left side. Try to match each task with the appropriate time block. For example, if you know that your English essay draft will take you two hours to write, then you might want to schedule that task between your computer science class and your office hour visit. You have two and a half hours in between those two classes – this gives you ample time to complete your English essay draft, as well as have enough buffer time to walk to and from your classes. As a general rule, it's beneficial to have at least ten minutes of buffer time in between activities.

Daily Schedule: Monday

Appointments

7:00am-8:30am
Breakfast and Workout

Finish Literature Reading
Assignment

9:00am-10:00am
Lit Class

10:00am-11:00am
Lunch

Review French Vocab Notecards

12:00pm-1:30pm
Calculus Class

2:00pm-3:30pm
Computer Science Class

Write Draft for English Essay

6:00pm-6:30pm
Meet with Computer Science Prof
During Office Hours

7:30pm-8:00pm
Dinner

Do Laundry

Tasks

Finish Literature Reading
Assignment

Write Draft for English Essay

Review French Vocab Notecards

Do Laundry

Time management is an important skill that you will develop throughout college.

As always, we highly encourage you to talk to your academic adviser to discuss

developing your own Four-Year Plan, term schedule, weekly planner, and daily

schedule.

Chapter 4: Taking Effective Notes

"The faintest ink is more powerful than the strongest

memory." – Chinese Proverb

Taking notes will be an integral part of your college career. Research

studies have shown that students can forget 50%-80% of their lecture after two

days. That's why note-taking is so important. In this chapter, we'll discuss the

three-step process of effective note-taking, as well as explore four different note-

taking formats that will help you optimize your learning.

For most students, note-taking consists of: showing up to class, listening to

the lecture, and writing down whatever your professor wrote on the board. This

type of note-taking is known as passive learning. It doesn't engage the student,

nor does it challenge the student to make meaningful connections between

lecture topics. Passive learning is one of the reasons why it's so easy to forget

lecture topics a few days after the fact. A better way to take notes, is by engaging

in active learning. As noted by Professors Casey Roehrig and Tom Torello of

Harvard University, active learning engages students by challenging them to apply and recite concepts they learned in class.

You can engage in active learning by following our three-step method for effective note-taking. The three steps are as follows: 1) Preparing Your Notes Before Class, (2) Taking Notes During Class, and (3) Reviewing Your Notes After Class.

Preparing Your Notes Before Class: Effective note-taking requires ample preparation. Before you enter your lecture hall, make sure you complete the pre-readings for your class. Take a look at your syllabus and pre-read the corresponding chapters to your lecture in advance. By pre-reading the lecture material, you'll be able to follow the lecture more easily – because it won't be the first time you're exposed to the material. If you encounter any confusing topics in your pre-readings, make a note of those topics so that you can ask your professor to clarify during lecture or office hours. By identifying challenging lecture topics in advance, you'll be able to listen more attentively to your professor's explanation of those topics during class.

Taking Notes During Class: Studies have shown that the human brain thinks at 400 words per minute, whereas the average lecturer speaks at 150 words per minute. Your thoughts naturally flow at a much quicker rate compared to your

professor's lecture. That's why it's so easy to zone out and daydream in class. But this doesn't have to be the case. Instead of allowing your mind to drift off during class, try to direct your concentration to the lecture topic at hand. Use your quick thinking to reflect on what the professor is saying. Pay attention to verbal and physical cues. If your professor pauses, or repeats something, then it's most likely that whatever your professor just mentioned will be on your test. If your professor takes extra time to write something on the whiteboard, then whatever is on the board is important for your test.

During your professor's lecture, regularly ask yourself the following questions: *"Why is the professor emphasizing this topic and how does it relate to the course's overall focus?" "What type of exam questions could the professor ask about this topic?" "Did the professor spend a lot of time explaining this topic? If so, then it must be important."*

While you're writing your notes, make sure to leave extra room between each line. It will be important to have extra space when you review your notes after class. In addition, try to use abbreviations so that you can save time writing. Don't try to record every word that your professor says. Instead, write down the key words and topics that your professor highlights.

Reviewing Your Notes After Class: Immediately after class, take one to two minutes to highlight key lecture topics in your notes. While your other classmates are getting up to leave, stay in your seat and underline the important topics while they're still fresh in your head. This process may seem tedious at first. But it will yield great benefits when exam period rolls around.

If you don't have an immediate appointment after class, then consider asking your professor a question after the lecture. Identify any challenging or confusing lecture topics in your notes, and ask your professor about them. This is beneficial because your professor has just lectured on that material, and he/she will be able to easily clarify any areas of confusion.

Within 24 hours of your lecture, take ten minutes to review your notes. According to research, this helps you to retain almost 100% of your lecture material. While reviewing your notes, try to condense them into a concise summary. For example, if you have five pages of lecture notes, try to condense them to two pages of summary notes. Additionally, you can rephrase your notes into exam questions. Think about different ways your professor might test you on the material. Ask yourself: *"If I was the professor, would I use a true/false format, a multiple choice format, or a short answer format to test this material?"* Another way to condense your notes is by transferring them to flashcards. This method is

especially helpful for classes that emphasize memorization, such as life science and foreign language courses.

Now that we've discussed the three stages of effective note-taking, let's explore four different note-taking methods that will help you optimize your learning experience.

Note-taking Method 1: The Cornell Note-taking Method

The Cornell Note-taking Method is an effective note-taking system developed by Cornell University Professor Walter Pauk. This note-taking system is applicable to all subjects, and is especially useful for synthesizing lecture material. The Cornell Note-taking Method follows this general format:

CUES

Name, Date, Topic, Class

NOTES

Taken during class

- Main Points
- Bullet Points
- Diagrams / Charts
- Abbreviate
- Paraphrase
- Outlines
- Leave Space Between Topics

Written Soon After Class

Anticipated Exam Questions

Main Ideas or People

Vocabulary Words

Used For Review & Study

CORNELL NOTE-TAKING METHOD

← 2½" →   ← 6" →

SUMMARY

Written after class. Brief summary highlighting the main points in the notes on this page. Used to find info later.

2"

The Note-taking Column should span 6 inches in width, and the Cue Column should span 2.5 inches. The Summary Section should be 2 inches from the bottom

of the page. To take notes using the Cornell Note-taking Method, follow these five steps:

1. **Record:** Write down your lecture notes in the Note-taking Column on the right side. Remember to use abbreviations when applicable.

2. **Question:** After class, try to create possible exam questions based off of your lecture notes. Write these questions on the Cue Column of your paper. In addition, write down key words or phrases that relate to your lectures notes on the Cue Column. For example, if you're taking notes on the definition of Macroeconomics, then you might want to write: *"What is Macro?"* on the Cue Column.

3. **Recite:** The next step is to quiz yourself through recitation. Cover the Note-taking Column with a notecard, and look at the Cue Column. Review the Cue Column line by line, and read the questions and key phrases. Try to answer each question in your own words. Then check your answer with your lecture notes. By repeating this process, you'll be able to reinforce your knowledge of the lecture material.

4. **Reflect:** Look at your notes, and ask yourself: *"How are these topics and facts related as a whole? How can I apply them? How do they fit in with what I already know? Are there areas for additional exploration?"*

5. **Review:** Every week, try to dedicate at least ten minutes to review all of your previous notes. This will help you transfer your knowledge to your long-term memory. The more frequently you review your notes, the easier it is to retain them.

Note-taking Method 2: Mind Mapping

Mind Mapping is a very effective means of summarizing information in a visually appealing format. A mind map is a diagram that links ideas, facts, and concepts to a central topic.
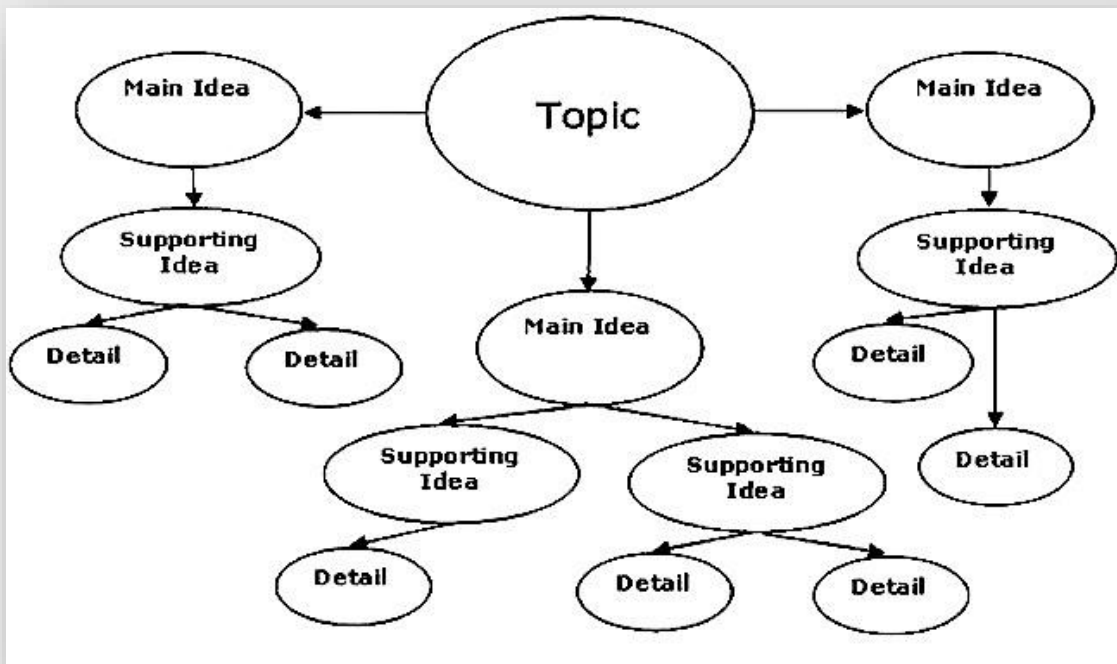
Depending on your professor's lecture style, you may want to consider using mind maps in your own notes. For example, if you're taking an English class and your

professor encourages you to brainstorm essay ideas in class, then mind mapping might benefit you. To create a mind map, follow these three easy steps:

Step 1: Take out a piece of paper, and write down the title of your main subject on the top of your page.

Step 2: Think about different subtopics that are related to your primary topic. Draw arrows to these subtopics. For our example, we would want to have three main ideas that are related to our main message.

Step 3: Continue to draw additional arrows that emanate from your subtopics. Connect these arrows with supporting ideas and key details that support your main ideas.

As you can see in the above example, mind maps are very beneficial for brainstorming. Feel free to use different colored pens to differentiate subtopics and ideas.

Note-taking Method 3: The Outlining Method

The Outlining Method is another effective means of note-taking. It is especially useful when your professor's lectures follow a deductive format (from general to specific). It follows this general format:

<div align="center">

Outline Notes Example
Title of the Reading

First Header
- Main Idea
  - Bolded word or important detail
  - Bolded word or important detail

Second Header
- Main Idea
  - Bolded word or important detail
  - Bolded word or important detail

Third Header
- Main Idea
  - Bolded word or important detail
  - Bolded word or important detail

Fourth Header
- Main Idea
  - Bolded word or important detail
  - Bolded word or important detail

</div>

The Outlining Method can be useful in many contexts – especially when you use a laptop to take notes. Generally speaking, students can type much more quickly than they can handwrite notes. It is very convenient to indent and add spaces between lines on a laptop. If your professor allows laptops in class, then the Outlining Method might be a good option for you to explore.

Note-taking Method 4: The Charting Method

The Charting Method is a great way to distill key facts into an easy to read format. This note-taking method is especially helpful for classes that emphasize memorization (i.e. history and biology courses). Start with a piece of paper, and draw columns. Write a category heading for each column. The general format for the Charting Method looks like this:

Page #   Today's Date

Heading One	Heading Two	Heading Three	Heading Four
Information relevant to column one	Information relevant to column two	Information relevant to column three	Information relevant to column four
Information relevant to column one	Information relevant to column two	Information relevant to column three	Information relevant to column four
Information relevant to column one	Information relevant to column two	Information relevant to column three	Information relevant to column four

As you can see, the

Charting Method provides

a very convenient means of

recording key facts. It is

especially helpful for when

you need to review your

Pro-Tip:

We've talked about a lot of different types of note-taking strategies. But even the best notetaking strategy might not be able to capture everything your professor says. That's why it's a good idea to invest in a voice recorder. With your professor's permission, you can voice record your lectures. That way, you can re-listen to them while you're reviewing your notes. It's like attending class a second time!

notes to prepare for your tests. As you develop your study skills in college,

consider exploring the above note-taking strategies.

Chapter 5: Reading Skills

"To read without reflecting is like eating without digesting" – Edmund Burke

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During your college career, you're going to read … a lot. From science textbooks to literary tomes, to famous autobiographies and technical research journals, you will encounter a great deal of reading material in college. Effectively interpreting and understanding these texts will be integral to your success in the classroom. Many times in college, you will be asked to write papers that express your interpretations of a particular literary work. You may even have essay-based examinations, which will challenge you to compare and contrast different texts discussed in your courses.

In order to do well on your essay-based examinations, you'll need to be able to recall the main arguments and supporting details of each reading that you are assigned. However, with so many assigned readings, it can be challenging for students to remember multiple authors and arguments at once. To help you retain your readings and score well on your essay-based exams, we will introduce

you to the SQ3R Method, which is an effective reading strategy that helps you remember your readings.

The SQ3R Method

The SQ3R Method can be simplified into five easy to follow steps: (1) Survey, (2) Question, (3) Read, (4) Recall, and (5) Review.

Step 1: Survey

Before you start analyzing your reading assignment, take a moment to survey the text. Ask yourself the following questions:

- o Who is the author – what was the author's purpose for writing this text?

- o When and where was this text published? What was the environmental/social context for this publication?

- o What is the main message of this text?

- o Who was the intended audience? Was this text meant to accomplish a certain goal (i.e. influence/change peoples' views)?

- o What type of impact did this text have on society?

To answer these questions, you might want to look at your syllabus/reading assignment prompt – sometimes your professor might include some background information on the text. In addition, your professor might provide hints on what

he/she wants you to focus on for a given reading. Spend some time to skim the introduction and conclusion of your reading assignment. Oftentimes, the introduction and conclusion provide a nice summary of the overall message of the reading.

Online resources are also helpful for answering the aforementioned questions. You can find an author's biography online. In addition, you can find many useful book summaries on

websites like SparkNotes.com. Generally speaking, it's more efficient to read a book's summary before you read the actual book. This is because the summary will make you aware of key ideas that you should pay attention to. Therefore, when you actually read the book, you'll be more prepared to identify these ideas/themes.

If you're reading a chapter in your textbook (i.e. a Chemistry or Calculus textbook), take a moment to survey the summary page at the end of the chapter. Oftentimes, textbook authors distill key formulas/concepts at the end of each chapter. These chapter summary pages are very useful, as they highlight key information that your professor will likely test you on.

Step 2: Question

- o Try to develop questions based on your initial survey of the text. Ask yourself:

- o How does the author support his/her thesis? What evidence does the author cite?

- o How does this chapter fit within this book? How does this chapter support the book's message?

- o How does this reading relate to other readings that I have read in this class? Can I draw any connections between these readings?

- o How does this reading fit within the overall context of my class?

- o What type of arguments are made in this text? Are these arguments challenged by other readings in this class?

Write down these questions on a piece of paper and keep them handy while you read your assignment. By developing questions, you are maintaining an active learning approach to your reading assignments, which will help keep you engaged with your reading assignment.

Step 3: Read

Now it's time to read your assignment. Take an active approach to your reading by asking yourself the questions you developed in Step 2. As you progress through

your reading assignment, take notes on your readings – highlight main ideas, key arguments, and supporting evidence. Continue to refer to online book/chapter summaries to help guide your reading. In addition, write down answers to the questions you developed in Step 2 in your notebook. These notes will be an invaluable reference when you need to remember your reading assignment in the future.

Step 4: Recall

After you've completed your reading assignment, it's important to reinforce the reading's main ideas through active recall. Without looking at your notes, try to answer the questions that you outlined in Step 2. Try to summarize (in your own words) the main ideas of each reading. Then check yourself with the notes you took in Step 3. This type of self-testing is known as active learning, and it is scientifically proven to help you remember your readings.

Step 5: Review

The final step is to review your notes each week. By doing so, you'll be able to store this information in your long-term memory. Just like it's important to review your lectures notes (as discussed in the previous chapter), it's also important to review your readings' notes. As you accumulate notes on multiple readings, try to think about how your readings relate to each other as a whole. Draw connections

between readings – are there similar themes, ideas, or arguments made in two or more of your readings? In addition, continue to engage in active recall testing, as this will help you solidify your understanding. If you apply the SQ3R to all of your readings, you will have a solid understanding of all of your readings by the time midterms come around.

The Half-Hour Before Class Method

Without a doubt, the SQ3R Method is by far the most effective reading strategy. Both Dr. Thum and I hope that you will use this reading strategy often. However, we recognize that sometimes students may need a quicker strategy. For example, you may find yourself in a situation where you only have 30 minutes to prepare for an English class discussion on a book that you *forgot* to read. *Let's not kid ourselves, we've all been there.* What do you do in that case? What if the reading assignment is 100+ pages long? When there's too much to read and too little time, you need to read smarter, not faster. Follow these three simple steps to understand any reading in under 30 minutes.

Step 1: Read the questions, not the book (estimated time = 3 minutes)

The first thing that you should read is the discussion questions. Oftentimes, professors will share discussion questions in advance – they might post them on your class website or include them in a handout. Take some time to skim the

discussion questions. Make a note of any chapter or page references – these are great clues for where you should focus your reading. If the majority of the discussion questions refer to a single chapter or page, then focus on reading that chapter/page first.

Step 2: Read the chapter summaries (estimated time = 12 minutes)

Most of the readings that your professor assigns will have online summaries. You can find a book review for almost any work of literature. Read the plot summaries for books that your professor assigns to you. Oftentimes, plot summaries will point out key themes and insights about the book. After gaining these insights, you'll be more prepared to identify important details when you actually read the text.

Step 3: Skim the actual reading (15 minutes)

After reading the discussion questions and the plot summary, you should have a pretty good idea of what your assigned reading is about – even though you haven't read it yet! You may be wondering if it's even worth it to actually read the text, especially since there are online plot summaries. While plot summaries are helpful, they are not comprehensive. You should use plot summaries to point yourself in the right direction, but you need to read the original text to understand why the plot summary is saying what it is saying. Skim the pages that

your discussion questions and plot summary refer to. Highlight important quotes,

bookmark important pages, and save them for your discussion. By the time your

English class discussion rolls around, you'll be well prepared to answer your

professor's questions intelligently and thoughtfully.

Chapter 6: Writing College Essays

"I think the hardest part of writing is revising. And by that I mean the following: A novelist has to create the piece of marble and then chip away to find the figure in it."

– Chaim Potok

Writing essays can be tough, especially when you're battling writer's block. To make matters worse, you're going to write <u>a lot</u> of essays in college, especially if you attend a liberal arts college.

So what is a college student to do? How do you avoid the dreaded late nights and blank word documents? After extensive research on this topic, Dr. Thum and I have composed a 7 step guide for writing A+ essays. Let's dive right in!

The 7 Step Guide for Writing A+ Essays

Step 1: Pick the right topic.

Choose a topic that you can write about at length, preferably something that is *debatable* and *adds perspective*. What do we mean by that? Well, let's say you're

taking a political science course on U.S. defense policy. Instead of writing a paper on the general field of U.S. defense policy, be more specific. Why not compare and contrast two opposing schools of thought on U.S. defense policy? For example, you could write an essay on whether retrenchment strategy vs. engagement strategy is the better policy for the United States.

By comparing two opposing defense policies, you *add perspective.* Additionally, retrenchment vs. engagement strategy is a good topic because it is *debatable.* There are many scholars who favor retrenchment strategy because it would reduce military spending. On the flipside, there are equally as many scholars who believe that engagement strategy yields U.S. national security benefits that outweigh the fiscal costs. Remember, your English professors are evaluating you on how well you can defend your beliefs. Therefore, the more debatable your topic, the more convincing your defense should be.

Step 2: Define your thesis.

A great essay needs a great thesis. Your thesis statement should be a single sentence (although it can be longer in some cases), that serves as the roadmap for your paper. Generally speaking, a good thesis will include your argument, as well as two to three supporting examples. At this point, it would be beneficial to do some research on your topic. That way, you'll be able to take an informed

stance in your argument. Also, you'll be able to cite some strong examples to support your thesis.

Let's take a look at a good thesis statement to get the picture. The following is a thesis statement on U.S. retrenchment strategy vs. engagement strategy:

> *While advocates of retrenchment strategy argue that retrenchment would reduce U.S. military spending, policymakers would be better advised to pursue an engagement strategy that benefits from the United States' role in preserving Asian regional stability, favorable trade agreements gained from U.S. security alliances, and NATO's role in maintaining U.S. national security.*

There are a few things to note about this thesis statement. First of all, this thesis statement takes a *definitive stance.* From the outset, you can tell which policy the author of this thesis statement favors: engagement strategy. Secondly, this thesis statement outlines three reasons why engagement strategy is more beneficial

than retrenchment strategy. This thesis outlines the three main topics that you will use to support your argument. As you can see in the following figure, a well-written thesis statement has the following form:

> *"I believe ABC" because of "X," "Y," and "Z."*

Step 3: Compose your outline.

Now it's time to write your essay's outline. Take the argument and the three supporting examples outlined in your thesis statement, and jot them down on your essay outline worksheet.

Essay Outline
Introduction
Introduce argument
State thesis statement
Main Argument #1: U.S. benefits from engagement strategy in Asia
Main Argument #2: Security alliances lead to favorable trade
Main Argument #3: NATO has benefited U.S. national security
Conclusion
Summarize main arguments
Finish with strong conclusion

The next step is to research supporting evidence for your main arguments. If you would like some advice on conducting research for college level essays, please click here. For our example, we will be looking for specific trade agreements that have occurred because of U.S. security alliances. In addition, we want to look for examples where NATO has benefited U.S. national security. After you've conducted sufficient research, you can complete your essay outline:

Essay Outline

Introduction

	Introduce argument
	State thesis statement

Main Argument #1:	U.S. benefits from engagement strategy in Asia
	The U.S. has a unique advantage in diffusing regional tensions (i.e. Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands)
	Regional stability in Asia promotes economic activity
Main Argument #2:	Security alliances lead to favorable trade
	Asian nations are more willing to enter trade agreements that benefit the U.S. because of security alliances
	Leads to trade volume worth $565.7 billion
Main Argument #3:	NATO has benefited U.S. national security
	Article 5 of NATO's Washington Treaty has prevented numerous terrorist attacks on the U.S. (i.e. prevented attack on New York Stock Exchange in 2004)

Conclusion

	Summarize main arguments
	Finish with strong conclusion

Step 4: Freewriting.

Once you've filled out your outline, it's time to begin freewriting. Set a timer for 30 minutes (or for however long you want to write). Open up a blank word document, and just type. Write as much as you can – it doesn't matter if you make grammar mistakes or misspell words. Just keep the thoughts flowing. Think of freewriting like writing a Twitter post – just type it and post it. The reason why freewriting is so effective is because you don't get caught up in making each sentence "perfect." Oftentimes, students will write a few sentences, and then immediately go back to edit those sentences for grammar. The problem is students often lose their train of thought when they go back to edit each sentence. Freewriting avoids this problem. As noted by Allen Campbell from Lynchburg College, freewriting allows a writer's ideas to "flow from the mind to the pen." After completing your freewriting session, take a moment to read over your work slowly. Try to circle any ideas that were generated from your freewriting session. Additionally, you can highlight any sentences or paragraphs from your freewriting draft that you would like to include in your first draft.

#ProTip

Some people find it challenging to freewrite – it's challenging to resist the urge of editing your sentences. Here's the solution: use a voice recorder. Just speak your mind, let your words flow – soon enough, you'll have your essay on an audio file.

Step 5: Focus on your first draft.

Now it's time to take a more linear approach to writing your essay. Try to piece together the ideas, sentences, and paragraphs from your freewriting session into a coherent first draft. Use your outline as a guide, but don't be afraid to deviate from it – especially if you find a better way of presenting your argument.

#ProTip

It's okay to go back and change/reorder your outline. It's not set in stone! Even though you may have a strong outline, sometimes, when you start writing your essay, you realize that there's a better way of organizing your argument.

Experiment with different ways of organizing your examples. Sometimes, by reordering your examples, you can make a more compelling argument. When you are finished writing your first draft, take a step back. Wait a day or two before returning to it. This will help you stay sharp during the editing process. When you return to your first draft, read it over to check for grammatical errors. Pay attention to the logical flow of your essay. Make sure you are presenting your evidence in the most compelling way possible. If there are any weak areas in your essay, make a note of them.

Step 6: Composing your second draft

Your second draft should improve upon your first draft both grammatically and structurally. Make improvements to the weak areas in your essay that you identified in Step 5. In addition, consider strengthening your essay by adding additional references and quotations. Continue improving your second draft until you feel ready to seek external feedback. Send an email to your professor or teaching assistant, and ask him/her for their feedback on your second draft.

Oftentimes, teaching assistants and professors will provide very helpful feedback for improving your essay. They may point out an additional source, or perhaps advise you on strengthening a particular paragraph. Either way, seeking the guidance of your professor and/or teaching assistant is highly recommended.

Starting to feel writer's block?

By the second draft, you might start experiencing writer's block. Click here to read our post on how to overcome writer's block.

Step 7: Finishing your final draft

Make improvements to your essay based on your professor's/teaching assistant's feedback. Give your final draft a thorough proofread, and continue to make sure that you're presenting your argument in a clear and logical way. When

you're satisfied with your paper, print it out and hand it in. And there you are!

You're all done!

Chapter 7: Tackling Procrastination

"Never put off for tomorrow, what you can do today."

– Thomas Jefferson

To begin this chapter, let's take a moment to imagine the following scenario:

Your professor assigns an essay. You procrastinate until the day before it's due. You pull an all-nighter to finish it. You come to class the next day delirious from sleep deprivation. As you hand in a coffee stained research paper, you sleepily daydream about how much better your life would be if you procrastinated less.

Does this situation sound familiar? Procrastination is a vicious cycle. It's the #1 cause for sleep deprived college students. But why do we do it so often? The reason why many of us procrastinate is because we dread starting a new project. According to Dr. Jane Burka, author of *Procrastination: Why You Do It, What to Do About It*, we tend to procrastinate because we dread the work and effort associated with starting a new task. When we think about starting a new project, we tend to imagine the hours spent hunched over our computer. We think about

all of the free time we'll lose in order to accomplish that task. For example, when we think about writing an essay, we tend to think about all of the time-consuming tasks associated with it: brainstorming a topic, composing an outline, writing a draft, editing that draft, and completing a final draft. Just thinking about these tasks can be overwhelming and mentally draining. It's the reason why so many people procrastinate on starting their projects. In the wise words of the famous martial artist, Bruce Lee: "*If you spend too much time thinking about a thing, you'll never get it done.*"

As noted by University of Calgary Professor, Piers Steel, the

> ### Are you a perfectionist?
>
> Research has shown that perfectionists tend to be the most likely candidates to procrastinate. Sometimes, the desire to want to do everything perfectly can inhibit you from starting a new project. Click here for our post on how to overcome procrastination for perfectionists.

dread of starting a challenging project causes many of us to fall into the trap of "productive procrastination." Think about a time when you had a really important essay or assignment due. Did you actually do that assignment? Or did you do laundry, tidy your desk, and check emails instead? We all tend to procrastinate on doing challenging and important tasks by doing easier and less important tasks. The science behind this is simple. When we accomplish a task, regardless of how small it is (like doing laundry or tidying our desk), our body releases a chemical called dopamine. This chemical makes us feel good. When we accomplish big and

challenging tasks, we release even more dopamine. But there is a caveat. This sort of gratification is delayed, because it usually takes weeks and even months to accomplish a large task. That's why we procrastinate, because we prefer instant gratification (completing small tasks that can be finished in a day) as opposed to delayed gratification (completing large tasks that can take months to finish).

Strategies for Overcoming Procrastination

Now that we've explained the science behind why we procrastinate, let's discuss a few strategies on how to stop procrastinating. The first strategy is the "Two-Minute Rule." As noted by bestselling productivity author, David Allen, the Two-Minute Rule is the key to overcoming procrastination. If you're struggling to start that literature essay, just dedicate two minutes to writing the first sentence. Are you dreading that calculus problem set? Just commit two minutes to solving the first problem.

Essentially, you're breaking down your big and intimidating project into a much more approachable two-minute task. This helps you overcome the dread associated with starting a new assignment. After the two minutes are up, you'll find yourself wanting to keep working at your task. You've overcome the inertia of starting your project.

Now that you've got the ball rolling, you'll want to keep going. But how do we consistently keep working at our projects? It's challenging to be consistent. It's why so many people give up on their diets and exercise routines a few weeks after New Year's Day. So how do we develop the willpower to make the daily decision to commit to our projects? The truth is, being consistent is not a matter of willpower, but of habit. As noted by Wall Street Journal's Bestsellers List author, Eric Barker, willpower is a limited resource – we only have enough will power to force ourselves to complete 3 – 4 tasks a day. When we have ten different tasks on our to-do list, it's hard to muster the willpower to do the other 6 – 7 tasks.

Instead of focusing on willpower, Barker notes that we're better off turning our tasks into habits. As noted by Barker, 40% of the things we do every day are habitual. Eating breakfast, going to class, taking notes – we do all of these tasks habitually. Most of us don't have to force ourselves to eat breakfast on Wednesday mornings, we just eat out of habit. The key is to make the tasks that we dread (i.e. completing a math problem set) habitual – that way, we won't have to use up all of our willpower to do these tasks. The best way to do that is by creating a routine. For example, you could create a morning routine where you dedicate one hour to working on your math problem set after breakfast. If you

stay committed to this daily routine, you'll find that working on your math problem set will be just as automatic as showering and eating breakfast.

The final strategy for overcoming procrastination comes from an unlikely source: *social media*. Although social media is often perceived as a procrastination outlet, it can actually help you avoid procrastination. It accomplishes this feat by *keeping you accountable*. To understand how social media keeps us accountable, consider the following example. Let's say you want to get in better shape. You're not an avid gym goer, but you want to get ready for beach season. How can you stay accountable with your fitness goals?

Every time you go to the gym, send a Snapchat selfie of yourself to your close friends. The nice thing about Snapchat is that it tallies your daily responses and keeps track of your "Snapstreak." As a result, you're kept accountable for sending daily gym selfies to your friends. You can use any social media app to accomplish this task, but Snapchat is especially useful since it specifically tracks your Snapstreak. This strategy works because we're much more likely to do something when we're held accountable. Your friends will be expecting you to send a gym selfie, so you'll have to stay on track with your fitness goals.

Chapter 8: Enhancing Your Productivity

"By working only when you are most effective, life is both

more productive and more enjoyable. It's the perfect

example of having your cake and eating it."

– Tim Ferriss

Have you ever wished that you could achieve more in less time? Do you

find it challenging to keep up with your myriad of activities? Do you ever wish that

there were more hours in the day? College students tend to lead busy lives. In

addition to educational commitments, you probably have extra-curricular

activities and clubs. In this chapter, we'll discuss strategies for maximizing your

productivity. There are three main strategies for improving your productivity. The

first strategy has to do with *biology.* It focuses on how certain chemicals in your

body affect your productivity. The second strategy has to do with your

environment. We'll talk about how changing your surroundings can improve your

productivity. The third strategy focuses on your *approach.* The way you approach

your tasks greatly affects how efficiently you complete them. To begin, let's start talking about biology.

How Biology Affects Your Productivity

Have you ever noticed that you're most productive when you're in a good mood? It's a scientific fact. People are more effective when their morale is high. It's why army officers are so focused on keeping soldiers' morale high during times of conflict. But how does science explain this cause and effect relationship? As noted by *Entrepreneur Magazine* Editor Thai Nguyen, serotonin is a bodily chemical that significantly affects your mood. When your serotonin levels are low, you tend to feel lonely and depressed. When your serotonin levels are high, your morale is high. There's a few ways to boost serotonin levels. The first way is to engage in *gratitude.* If we take time to reflect on our experiences and remember the things we're grateful for, we automatically boost our serotonin levels. That's why many successful people tend to have gratitude journals. So if you're feeling down, take a moment to think about what you're grateful for in life – maybe even write a thank you card!

The second way to boost serotonin levels is to get enough sunlight during the day and to get enough sleep at night. Exposure to sunlight increases serotonin production – it's why people tend to be happier when it's sunny outside. In

addition, as noted by a research paper published by the U.S. National Library of Medicine, sleep can significantly affect serotonin levels. In a research study, scientists found that sleep deprivation was linked with lower levels of serotonin. Since serotonin is integral to improving your morale, sleep deprivation can cause you to feel more lonely and depressed. In order to avoid this negative outcome, you need to get a full night's rest (approximately 7.5-8 hours for the average adult).

In addition to boosting your morale, sleep can also improve how quickly you solve problems. According to the American Psychological Association, maintaining a consistent sleep pattern can improve your cognitive function in the long-run. Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. Maintain your sleep pattern and do your best to ensure that you're getting the same amount of sleep every night (especially during finals week). We understand that you may be tempted to sacrifice sleep for extra time studying. But the truth is, when you sacrifice your sleep, you may not recall the material you spent extra time studying. In many cases, you're better off going to bed earlier and waking up earlier so that you can take advantage of studying during daylight hours.

Another chemical that boosts your productivity are endorphins. It's the chemical that provides you with the "second wind" that you need to get things

done. Have you ever experienced a "mental fog" after studying for a long time? Well, endorphins are the key to helping you overcome that fog and to keep working. The next time you experience a "mental fog," go for a run. Research has shown that daily exercise increases your level of endorphins and improves your mental alertness. That's why it's beneficial to engage in cardiovascular exercise daily. In addition, your body also releases endorphins when you laugh. So the next time you're feeling slow and unproductive, take a moment to watch a funny video on YouTube. Which leads us to our next productivity tip.

Do you get stressed out before taking tests? It happens to all of us. Unfortunately, stress is linked to cortisol production, which is a bodily chemical that inhibits memory – not good for when you're taking a test. In order to avoid producing cortisol, you need to de-stress. A good way to do that is by watching a cute animal video. Research has shown that watching cute animal videos has been linked with higher levels of endorphins and less cortisol. In fact, you can watch one right now by clicking here.

The last chemical that you want to boost in order to be more productive is dopamine. As discussed in the previous chapter, dopamine is released when we accomplish tasks. It's the chemical that makes you feel happy and satisfied after you've finished a challenging project. Dopamine rewards you for staying on track

and motivates you to keep going. In order to increase your dopamine levels, you need to celebrate after you've completed a task. Right after you've finished writing an essay, take a moment to celebrate with a tasty treat or fun activity. It doesn't have to be an elaborate celebration, it could be as simple as eating a donut or going for a jog. Make sure your celebrations don't take too long – or else they'll get in the way of getting real work done! By celebrating and rewarding yourself after completing a task, you reinforce the positive effects of dopamine.

How Your Environment Affects Your Productivity

Environmental factors can also influence your productivity. Studying in areas with good lighting, especially sunlight, can significantly improve your productivity. Scholarly research from University of Illinois Professor Mohamed Boubekri confirms that sunlight exposure improves people's physical and mental productivity. The reasoning behind this has to do with serotonin production. As previously discussed, when you're exposed to sunlight, your body produces serotonin, which boosts your morale and makes you more productive. When it's sunny outside, you're more able to complete difficult tasks. Your cognitive ability is enhanced and it takes less time for you to process new information.

Related to the subject of studying in the sun, you can also boost your productivity by studying in the morning. According to Duke University Professor

Dan Ariely, we're most productive in the mornings, specifically between 8:00am-

10:30am. During this two and a half-hour time slot, we reach our peak

productivity. Ariely recommends that we use a morning ritual to make the most

of this productivity timeslot.

If you have assignments that are due (i.e. an English essay and a chemistry

problem set), then consider creating the following morning ritual.

<u>Morning Ritual</u>

7:00am

    -Wakeup/Shower/Eat Breakfast

8:00am-9:30am

    -Work on English Paper

9:30am-10:30am

    -Work on Chemistry Problem Set

By adopting a morning ritual, you can knock out your assignments when you are most productive.

We can also improve our productivity by changing where we study. It's important to get in the zone while you're studying. So pick a study spot that you like and stick with it. Plug in your earbuds and listen to your favorite music. As noted by Chris Brewer (a respected authority on music integration in the classroom), listening to music can help you focus while studying. The following locations are great for studying: **Baker Tower Room** (it's so quiet you can hear a needle drop), **Sanborn Library** (a really nice library with classic English architecture), **First Floor Berry** (for group projects where you can talk), **Second Floor Berry/Jones Media Center** (for semi-quiet study spots), **Third Floor Berry** (for semi-quieter study spots), **Fourth Floor Berry** (for a very quiet study spot with lots of natural sunlight), **The Stacks** (for when you need to focus and you need to "hide" from distractions), **Feldberg Library** (a great place if you're willing to trek all the way to the River Cluster), **Rauner Special Collections Library** (a quiet place to study with lots of natural sunlight – added bonus: you can find really old *and* famous documents here, for example, Rauner has a +200 year old copy of Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations), and **The Green** (an awesome study spot during the fall and spring terms). If you're preparing for a test, then consider studying in the

same room as your examination room. There have been many studies that show that studying in the room that you will take your exam in can improve your testing performance.

Another way your environment affects your productivity is through your friends. Your friends will have a significant impact on your emotional well-being and productivity. When you're with friends who are optimistic, kind, energetic, and motivated, you'll display those same traits too! Hang out with people who will inspire you to be your best. Likewise, be an inspiration to the people around you too! By doing so, you'll be happier and automatically see an increase in your productivity.

How Your Approach To Work Affects Your Productivity

The way you approach your tasks can affect how quickly you get them done. By making a few changes to the way you work, you can significantly improve your productivity. Here is a list of 8 quick and easy ways you can change your study routine to make yourself more productive.

1. **Team Up:** During your college career, you'll have many opportunities to work in a group. Whether it's a group presentation, an engineering project, or a coding assignment, you're going to have a chance to work in a team (as long as the professor authorizes peer collaboration). Be willing to seek help

and collaborate with your peers. When you encounter a challenging math problem set, consider creating a study group with your classmates. Your peers may be able to help you understand a certain problem set, and you might be able to help your peers on a different problem set. Each member of a study group offers a unique perspective that can help the entire group improve their collective understanding of the subject.

2. **Engage In Active Recall Testing:** Active recall testing is a learning strategy that derives from a simple truth about the human brain: "you use it or you lose it." When you engage in active recall testing, you give yourself mini quizzes to activate your brain and enhance your memory of the material. Active recall testing can be especially advantageous when learning a foreign language. For example, if you were learning French for the first time and your professor gave you a 50 word list of new vocab, then you would read the vocab list and give yourself mini quizzes throughout your study session. For every 5 new vocab words you read, you would give yourself a mini quiz to test your recall of the words' definition and pronunciation. Active recall testing can also be applied to biology, chemistry, mathematics, geography, and many other subjects. If you are looking for a great active recall testing

app, try "Anki." It's a great software program that allows you to use online flashcards to test yourself on facts and vocab phrases.

3. **Take Advantage Of Small Time Chunks:** Take a look at your daily schedule. Notice any 10 or 15 minute blocks in between classes and club meetings? These are golden opportunities for increasing your productivity. Instead of playing Candy Crush, Pokemon Go, or checking social media, why not take out your flash cards/crib sheet and review some facts for a test! A lot can be accomplished in a small amount of time.

4. **Schedule 90 Minute Study Periods:** According to a scientific study conducted by Florida State University Professor of Psychology Anders Ericsson, people are most efficient when they engage in uninterrupted work sessions that last up to 90 minutes. The maximum amount of time you should devote to an activity while still maintaining efficiency is 90 minutes. It might be tempting to work overtime and exceed the 90 minute limit; however, after 90 minutes of uninterrupted focus, the brain will experience fatigue and your studying will be less productive. So the next time your professor assigns you a hard math problem set, devote 90 minutes to solving your homework, take a 20 minute break, and then start another 90 minute study session.

5. **Save Emails For The Evening:** While it's important to respond to urgent emails as soon as possible, non-urgent emails can wait for the evening. If you reply to non-urgent emails as soon as you receive them, then you're decreasing your productivity. Oftentimes, emails interrupt your important tasks. When you're on a roll with writing an important paper, the last thing you want to do is disrupt your momentum by replying to an email. It is okay to check your email periodically throughout the day (to check for urgent emails), but it's recommended that you save all non-urgent emails for the evening.

6. **Recognize When Something Is Not Clicking:** Have you ever found yourself studying a challenging concept and your brain and the textbook were just not clicking? What did you do? Did you force yourself to look at the book and continue struggling? Or did you take a step back, take a deep breath, and go for a jog? While it may seem counterintuitive, the latter option is the best course of action when dealing with a frustrating task. If you're writing a paper and you've spent the past 2 hours staring blankly at the screen, then it's time for a change of scenery. It's counterproductive to force yourself to stare at a blank screen. In order to avoid frustration, you need to be able to recognize when to take breaks. The next time you

encounter writer's block, just go for a jog, clear your head, and return to your essay after a half hour break. By doing so, you'll put yourself in a better position to complete your assignment.

7. **Stay 3 Minutes After Class:** By following this tip, you'll save hours of time spent being confused over lecture notes. After every class, spend 3 minutes to briefly ask your professor a question about a confusing lecture topic. The logic to this tip is simple: the best time to ask your professor about lecture related questions is right after the lecture. It may seem like a drag to stay later after class, but trust us, it's worth it. As long as you can afford 3 minutes to do this, you'll save yourself from inefficiently trying to decipher lecture notes on your own. Of course, you could ask your professor the lecture related question during office hours – but here is no guarantee that you'll be the only student with questions. Sometimes, especially for challenging classes, a professor's office hours can be jam packed with students. It's hard to ask your question when there are 10 other students trying to get their questions answered too. In addition, your schedule may conflict with a professor's office hours – thus forcing you to email your professor to schedule an appointment. Given these facts, it's a good idea to ask your professor a question right after the lecture. If you're reluctant to

ask a question because you're concerned about arriving on time for your next class, just sit in the front – you'll be the quickest student to reach your professor.

8. **Prepare For The Next Day:** Have you ever experienced the "early morning scramble?" It's when you wake up at 7:50am and your class starts at 8:00am. It's when you're scrambling to find clean socks while you pack your backpack. The early morning scramble has caused many college students stress and grief. But we have a solution for it. All you have to do is take 10 minutes before going to bed to organize yourself for the next day. Pack your backpack in advance. Lay out the clothes that you intend to wear the next day. Compose your to-do list for the tasks that you intend to complete the next day. Most importantly, set multiple alarms on your phone to ensure that you wake up on time. If you follow these tips, you'll never have to deal with the early morning scramble again.

Conclusion

"Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself."

-John Dewey

Congratulations on finishing this book! We hope that you enjoyed reading it. In the past 8 chapters, we've covered a lot of ground. In chapters 1 and 2, we learned how to approach college with a growth mindset, and how to define college goals. In chapters 3 through 6, we discussed a number of study skills including time management, note-taking, reading skills, and writing college essays. We wrapped up our book by discussing how to tackle procrastination and how to increase your productivity.

So what's the next step? As you reflect on the skills you have learned from this book, we hope that you will apply these skills to your own studies. The next time you find yourself procrastinating on an important project, use the two-minute rule to help yourself get started. If you're tasked with a challenging reading, consider using the SQ3R method to help distill key information.

Remember the Four Steps to Effective Goal Setting when you're defining your college goals.

The famous psychologist and philosopher, John Dewey once said:

"Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself." Both Dr. Thum and I really like this quote, because it summarizes a very important fact: *learning is a lifelong process.* We never stop learning. Even when we graduate from college, we'll still be constantly learning new things. That's why it's so important to develop a "toolbox" of study skills so that you can learn efficiently and productively.

We hope that reading this book has helped you develop your toolbox for learning. We wish you the very best in your academic endeavors and beyond! If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Dr. Thum, Jonathan Lu, and the Academic Skills Center team through the following email:

Academic.Skills.Center@dartmouth.edu

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"All of us, at certain moments of our lives, need to take advice and to receive help from other people."

-Alexis Carrel

This book was written with the goal of being grounded in scientific research. Both Dr. Thum and I are happy to recognize the following scholars. Without their research, we would have not been able to write this book.

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