

International Conversation Cafe

Lifestyle Topic: How to Thrive Academically at a University

Achieving a university degree is demanding work. There are many sources of stress such as social problems, money issues, roommate issues, and of course academic pressure. Managing all of these issues is not easy.

Read through the list of topics and have each person pick one of the topics they would like to discuss with the group.

- 1. Know your academic strengths and weaknesses.** Plan your course schedule so that you don't have too many courses at once in areas that you are weak in. If you don't do well in math, try to spread your math courses out over your career so you don't have three hard courses in one semester. If you know that you put off doing assignments acknowledge the weakness and make some steps to overcome it.
What are some areas that you need to make stronger academically? What steps can you take to help you to stop procrastinating?
- 2. Establish some academic goals.** A goal can be very basic such as I want to find a major that fits my skills and the job market. The goal can be big such as I want to finish my bachelors in three years and go to graduate school. It can be as small as one course: I want to take the Spanish course I have been putting off.
What is a goal that you have set or need to set?
- 3. Attend class regularly and sit near the front.** Turn your cell phone off and pay attention and participate in class. Don't shop online during the lecture.
Why is it hard for you to attend some classes? What is hard about listening to certain professors and lectures?
- 4. Establish a study routine.** Do you study well with a partner? Find a reliable study partner. Find a location in which to study that fits your personality and study style. Do you like some noise in the background? Try a coffee shop. If you need perfect quiet, locate that perfect place in the university library. Buy some good headphones to keep out irritating sounds. Be careful about studying where friends will come by and interrupt you such as your dorm room.
Where do you do your best studying? Is there a certain time of day or night that is most productive for you? What are some bad study habits that you need to overcome?
- 5. Break your study work into manageable units.** How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time! If you have a paper to write, start right away with such things as topic selection, initial research and reading, and a rough outline of the paper. Then over days add to the paper. Use a reliable backup method so you don't lose everything. Studies show that when you memorize

something 12 hours before the test, your memory will be ineffective. Get the information into longer term memory such as three days before and review the material daily.

Tell your group about a success you had in a big project and how you managed the project? Tell about a project disaster.

6. **Make use of campus resources for help in academics.** Locate the tutors available. Emotional and mental stress may be lessened by seeing a university counsellor. Ask questions of the reference librarian at the university library. Talk to your professor about things you are not understanding. He or she may have suggestions about a website to help you.

How has a friend or professor helped you to overcome an academic hurdle or a personal hurdle?

7. **Nourish your total person.** You won't be effective if all you do is study. Schedule time to work out, jog, go to a concert, play a board game or cards, develop your relationship with God, or take a hike. Remember to celebrate your academic victories and treat yourself when you achieve something. Go out to eat at your favorite restaurant when you get a good grade on a research paper. If one tries to round out one's life with social, spiritual, physical, and academic pursuits, you will maximize what you can do at university and in life. Remember employers also want people who can relate, talk, and partner with their co-workers. If you have perfect grades, but bad social skills you will have to start your own business!

What do you do for exercise?

What kinds of activities do you like to do with your friends on the weekend?

What do you do to manage stress?