



College Prep

Being in college is a very different experience than being in high school. There are huge adjustments that need to be made socially, emotionally and academically. Many freshmen are unprepared and overwhelmed by this but knowing what to expect when you arrive can make the transition easier.

Here are some of the most common reasons students struggle with the transition to college life.

- 1 Living away from home.** College facilitates independence and responsibility but requires that you make decisions and solve problems on your own. It may be difficult to leave the security of friends and family behind but look at this time as an opportunity for self-discovery and growth. Remember that less is more in regards to packing. You will be moving into a small space with minimal storage areas. Bring items that can be shared with roommates and boxes that you can store under the bed.
- 2 Management of time and new found freedom.** In college, it is your responsibility to go to class, do your homework and pass your tests. You will be tempted to stay out too late, eat differently and party. You will need to figure out how to organize and motivate yourself in order to be successful in college which means balancing school, work, sports, social and religious activities. Use technology to get organized and schedule your time wisely. *Learn how to plan your work and work your plan.*
- 3 Academic changes.** Mastering the habits necessary to succeed in the classroom is critical. College classes require more reading, writing and analysis. They require more papers, have tougher exams and rarely give extra credit. Self-discipline and motivation will help you stay focused on mastering your new academic challenge. Be proactive in the learning process. Map out assignments and start studying for exams and writing papers early so you have plenty of time to go to the help center/study lab or make your own revisions. Set up a meeting with your professor if you are having a difficult time keeping up or learning a concept. Most professors are anxious to help you and want you to be successful in their class, they want you to learn the material and pass the course.
- 4 Lack of balance.** College is a great time to meet new friends, create fantastic memories and have fun. It is important to get out and socialize and develop other interests. Look for a variety of exciting and entertaining things to do on campus...concerts, theater events, church activities, etc. Who knows, you may surprise yourself with new-found talents and interests!
- 5 Feeling overwhelmed.** At times you will feel overwhelmed. Expectations you have of yourself and that others have for you are higher now that you have moved on to this stage of life. The other exciting, but sometimes distressing part is that everything is new and you are basically on your own! New surroundings, new courses, new professors, new roommates, more commitments and more responsibility. The best way to deal with these stressors is to anticipate and recognize them. Sometimes all it takes is a change in attitude to get through this, but don't be afraid to ask for help when necessary. Seek counseling services on campus if you are having a difficult time adjusting to college life, roommates or stress.
- 6 Lack of direction.** It usually takes time to figure out what you want to do with your life and how you plan to make a living. Start with general education courses and a few specialized classes that will help you to decide what field or career may be satisfying to you. Job shadow and talk to people about the things they like and things they don't like about their career. Find out what a typical day is like for them. Make yourself aware of the financial compensation, the type of people who are in that profession and the lifestyle that accompanies that specific career. It should be something you are passionate about but also challenges you to grow. No one expects you to know what you want to do your first semester in college, but starting early to find out about yourself and a suitable career is key. It is helpful to map out your courses the first year (even if it is a temporary plan) to efficiently complete college so you can begin your career and start earning money.

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7 Drastic changes in diet and exercise. Without careful attention to diet, many college students put on the dreaded freshmen 15... or even more! Many students go from being very involved in dance, sports or other activities in high school to sitting longer in class, staying up later to study and eating to stay awake. They don't purposefully include exercise in their new lifestyle. To compound this, quick and easy food (processed...often loaded with calories but may not be nutritious) are eaten more often. If you live in the dorms and purchase a cafeteria plan, new students are faced with a buffet of all you can eat fried foods, sweets and treats. With the lack of activity, increase in calories and decrease in metabolism, gaining weight at college is a common occurrence. Being aware of these potential traps and preparing for a healthier lifestyle are vital to feeling well and being successful in college. The habits you form now will either help or hurt you later in life.

8 Inexperience with a budget. College is different than any kind of learning you have experienced before. You get to pay for the privilege of going to school! Depending on your living circumstance, you may have to purchase everything you need to live....groceries, cooking utensils, cleaning supplies, toiletries as well as textbooks, school supplies and any extra requirements for individual classes or labs. Find cheap textbooks and consider renting books instead exclusively buying them from the school bookstore. Keep a record (and receipts as necessary) of all your expenditures for personal accountability and tax purposes. A record of expenditures will help you become aware of spending habits, identify hidden costs and fees and make you accountable for extracurricular spending.

Graduating from high school and going to college is a great time in life. Make the time to meet new friends, discover who you are, establish a strong foundation for your future career and become a life-long learner. Talk to a trusted friend or adult if you have questions about going to college.

Tips to avoid illness:

- Make sure you are up to date on your vaccines (meningococcal, HPV, Tdap and flu vaccines). Talk to your health care provider or go to:

http://www.vaccines.gov-/who_and_when/college/index.html

- Plan your schedule so you can get at least 6 to 8 hours of sleep each night
- Exercise on a regular basis...most days of the week
- Learn stress reduction or coping techniques (like relaxation, meditation, etc.)
- Make vegetables and fruits the mainstay of your diet. Add lean sources of protein and small amounts of healthy fat. Drink plenty of water. Avoid alcohol and excess amounts of processed food or eating out.
- Wear sunscreen
- Wash your hands
- You are an adult now. Create your own health file and be accountable and proactive in your health and future.