Think about the last time you gave a friend directions to your house. How did you do it?

Most likely, the way you gave those directions affected how easily your friend was able to find his destination. You thought printing out a map would be the best choice, but your friend had a hard time following all of the turns. When he got to your house, he told you that a list of street names would have worked better.

In this example, the map that you gave him wasn’t wrong; it just wasn’t the most helpful. This is because different people understand information in different ways. While you would have been lost without a map, your friend found the map confusing.

The different ways that people learn new information are often called learning styles. You’ve probably heard this term used before, and you might even be familiar with some of the commonly discussed types of learning styles.

This lesson is going to focus on the system developed by researchers Richard Felder and Linda K. Silverman. They organized learning styles into four pairs:

- Visual and Verbal Learning
- Active and Reflective Learning
- Sensing and Intuitive Learning
- Sequential and Global Learning
Here's some more information on each learning style:

- **Visual:** learning information through **pictures, shapes, and colors**
- **Verbal:** learning information through **written and spoken words**
- **Active:** learning information through **participation in activities**
- **Reflective:** learning information through **independent study**
- **Sensing:** learning information through **logical methods and objective facts**
- **Intuitive:** learning information through **creative methods and abstract ideas**
- **Sequential:** learning information through **a step-by-step process**
- **Global:** learning information through **seeing the big picture**

Within each pair of learning styles, Felder and Silverman found that most people lean toward one style over the other. However, learning styles aren't clear-cut. You should think about each pair of learning style preferences as a scale. Some people might be closer to one side or the other, while some people might be closer to the middle.

For example, you may feel equally comfortable learning to change the oil in a car by watching a video or reading a manual, while one of your classmates might feel much more comfortable watching a video. This probably means that you fall closer to the middle of the Visual-Verbal scale, while your classmate falls closer to the Visual side.

Being familiar with learning styles is valuable in every part of your life. At school, you can use the knowledge of your own preferences to become a better student. Tailoring your study habits to fit your learning styles will help you work more efficiently.

You can also use learning styles on the job or in your personal life by adapting your communication to the specific needs of your audience.

**This lesson will help you recognize the characteristics of the eight learning styles.**

You will then apply this knowledge in Lesson 1.2 to identify success strategies that fit your own personal learning preferences.

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**Further Resources**

The learning styles described in this lesson are based on the research of Richard Felder and Linda K. Silverman. To read more about learning styles and strategies, visit Richard Felder’s website: [http://www.ncsu.edu/felder-public/](http://www.ncsu.edu/felder-public/).
Visual and Verbal Learning

When you think of the word visual, you probably think of something that you can see with your vision. Visual learners use images to learn new concepts. Pictures, shapes, and colors are much more memorable to visual learners than words. Because of this, these learners may feel lost or distracted when they aren’t able to see the information.

In contrast, verbal learners understand information from words. While they might find visuals helpful or interesting, they learn more from reading or hearing about a concept than from seeing it. These learners are usually good at remembering what people said, but they may struggle to remember what people look like. Visual and verbal learners usually find different kinds of resources useful.

Visual learners prefer resources like these:
- photos
- videos
- charts
- animations
- maps
- diagrams
- demonstrations
- color-coding

Verbal learners prefer resources like these:
- books
- summaries
- class notes
- audiobooks
- videos
- podcasts
- journals

Reflection Questions

You’ve probably heard the phrase “a picture is worth a thousand words.” How does this phrase fit into your understanding of visual and verbal learning styles? What are some situations where a picture would be more effective than words?

Visual and verbal learning are closely related. Usually, both types of information are necessary to understand something fully.

Imagine that you’re trying to put together a new desk. Inside the package, you find a stack of boards and a bag of hardware: nails, screws, and nuts. If the instruction manual were just text, you might have a hard time understanding the differences between the types of screws. If the manual were just pictures, you might have a hard time knowing which board to use next. In this example, a mix of both text and pictures is necessary to help you understand the instructions completely.

Group Activity

As a group, make a list of at least five learning resources you commonly use at school, at work, or in everyday life. Then, discuss the percentage of visual and verbal learning in each. Be prepared to defend your conclusions to the class.

Students can sometimes feel tempted to use their learning styles as an excuse. For example, a visual learner might think, “Since I’m visual, I won’t learn anything from a class reading. I’m not going to waste my time doing this assignment.”

Remember that people aren’t just visual or just verbal. Almost everyone can benefit from both types of learning. In this case, the student should try reading the assignment first, then looking up a diagram of the topic or drawing a flowchart of the information.
Active and Reflective Learning

Active learners like to be active. These are the kinds of people who enjoy lively class discussions or group projects. They are not afraid to try out new ideas and share what they have learned with others. Because active learners like participating in activities, sitting through a class lecture can be difficult. When active learners are studying on their own, they stay alert by quizzing themselves with flashcards or making up review games.

The following statements best describe an active learner:

- I enjoy getting together with friends to work on projects.
- I pace around when I’m thinking about something important.
- I don’t like wasting time planning out every single detail.
- I consider myself more of a hands-on learner.

Reflective learners, on the other hand, generally like to reflect on new information by themselves. Reflecting simply means thinking about something quietly and calmly.

It can take reflective learners a little longer to get used to new ideas, so they generally prefer to study a topic independently before discussing it with anyone else.

The following statements best describe a reflective learner:

- I like listening to music while I’m reading or studying.
- I sometimes practice important conversations in my head.
- I am good at figuring out things on my own.
- I sometimes find myself procrastinating on big projects.

Although everyone falls at different places on the Active-Reflective scale, finding a balance between both learning styles is important.

Active learners need to slow down and think about what they’re learning. Otherwise, they might miss the “why” behind their work. Reflective learners need to force themselves to take action so that they don’t get stuck in the planning stage.

“If you always act before reflecting you can jump into things prematurely and get into trouble, while if you spend too much time reflecting you may never get anything done.” - Richard Felder and Barbara Soloman

Reflection Questions

Imagine that one of your friends has asked you to tutor her in biology. What are some specific ways that you could use active learning in your tutoring sessions? What are some specific ways that you could use reflective learning?
Lesson 1.1 | Understanding Different Learning Styles

Sensing and Intuitive Learning

The word sensing is related to your five senses. In science, the senses are used to observe nature and establish facts. Sensing learners, therefore, like to solve problems through methods that are logical and scientific. They are the most comfortable with objective facts and don’t like surprises. Because sensing learners are practical, they like to see how their work connects to real life.

The word intuitive comes from the word intuition, which means knowing something by instinct or “gut feeling.” Intuitive learners enjoy exploring all of the possibilities in a situation. They often find new and creative ways to solve a problem and feel comfortable working with abstract ideas and topics. Generally, intuitive learners dislike memorizing facts.

If a sensing learner and an intuitive learner were both shown this photo, they would probably ask different types of questions.

Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensing</th>
<th>Intuitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who is this girl?</td>
<td>What is this girl thinking?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is the photographer who took this photo?</td>
<td>Why does this photo grab our attention?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was happening in the area when this photo was taken?</td>
<td>What is the photographer trying to tell us with this photo?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Richard Felder and Barbara Soloman, “Everybody is sensing sometimes and intuitive sometimes.” If you were a completely sensing person, you would never try new restaurants or enjoy hanging out with friends. If you were a completely intuitive person, you would ignore practical tasks like paying your cell phone bill because your head would always be in the clouds.

Both learning styles are also important in any profession or subject. Think about what this would look like in the medical field. A nurse has to memorize objective facts like the procedure for taking blood pressure or the
potential side effects of a prescription drug. However, all patients are different. Nurses need the ability to find creative solutions in situations that aren’t perfect textbook examples.

Further Resources
Richard Felder and Linda K. Silverman based their idea of sensing and intuitive learning, in part, on an idea proposed by psychologist Carl Jung. One of the most famous applications of Jung’s theory is the Myers-Briggs test, a test that divides personalities into sixteen types.

You can read more about the differences between sensing and intuitive personality types on the Myers-Briggs website: http://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/sensing-or-intuition.htm.

Group Activity
As a group, choose a fictional character from a book or movie. Decide if this character is a sensing or intuitive learner and make a list of specific evidence that supports your conclusion.

Sequential and Global Learning

Sequential learners prefer to learn information in a linear sequence. (Linear means step-by-step in a straight line.) Once they understand one piece of information, they are ready to move on to the next. These types of learners may feel overwhelmed by a project or task unless it has been broken down into orderly steps. While sequential learners will understand the details, they may not fully understand the big picture.

A sequential learner might make one of the following statements:

- I love checking things off my list.
- Tell me what I need to do first.
- Some people call me a perfectionist.

In contrast, global learners like to understand the big-picture global ideas first. They see the learning process as a web of related information. A global learner will store up knowledge until suddenly everything fits together and makes sense. This process is usually disorganized and random. Even after they’ve solved a problem, global learners may have a hard time understanding the details or explaining the solution.

A global learner might make one of the following statements:

- Describe the big picture for me.
- Just do what I did.
- I’ll come back to that later.

Both learning styles have their own strengths and weaknesses. Because sequential learners absorb information at a regular pace, they catch on to new topics quickly. They are also able to work on a task without understanding how that task is related to the whole idea. This ability helps sequential learners perform well on tests or evaluations, but it can also prevent them from fully understanding what they’re doing.
Global learners are very good at understanding the overall purpose and meaning of a project. They see relationships between ideas and events, which helps them apply their knowledge to new situations. However, global learners can take longer to understand a concept and may feel lost up until they do.

In both cases, understanding the challenges of sequential and global learning styles can help prevent frustration for these types of learners.

**Group Activity**

As a group, design two posters. One should represent sequential learning, and the other should represent global learning. Present both posters to your class, making sure to explain the reasons behind your design choices.

**Key Terms**

- **Active Learning**: learning information through participation in activities
- **Global Learning**: learning information through seeing the big picture
- **Intuitive Learning**: learning information through creative methods and abstract ideas
- **Learning Style**: the different ways that people learn new information
- **Reflective Learning**: learning information through independent study
- **Sensing Learning**: learning information through logical methods and objective facts
- **Sequential Learning**: learning information through a step-by-step process
- **Verbal Learning**: learning information through written and spoken words
- **Visual Learning**: learning information through pictures, shapes, and colors

**Learning Style Tip**

If you’re a visual learner and you’re having trouble remembering the eight learning styles, try drawing an icon to represent each one. For example, visual learning could be represented by an eye, while verbal learning could be represented by a speech bubble. Make a list of learning styles and icons to use while you study.

**Lesson 1.2**

**Determining Your Personal Learning Styles**

In the past, you have probably taken a course that didn’t “click” with you. You paid close attention during class time and completed all of your homework, but you still felt like your instructor was speaking a foreign language. This situation was even more frustrating because your best friend took the same exact course and loved it.

At the time, maybe you thought that your teacher didn’t know how to teach or that your friend was just smarter than you. But were these thoughts really accurate?
Part of the problem could have been the way the material was covered. If you’re more of an active learner, but your class involved a lot of lectures, you probably had a hard time paying attention to your instructor. On the other hand, if you’re a reflective learner, a class made up of group activities might have overwhelmed you.

In these situations, knowing your own personal learning styles can help you overcome your frustration. While you can’t change the structure of the course itself, you can change your own study habits to learn more effectively.

Reflection Questions
Do you think it’s possible for a person’s learning styles to change? Why or why not?

In Lesson 1.1, you learned about the eight different types of learning styles:

- **Visual**: learning information through pictures, shapes, and colors
- **Verbal**: learning information through written and spoken words
- **Active**: learning information through participation in activities
- **Reflective**: learning information through independent study
- **Sensing**: learning information through logical methods and objective facts
- **Intuitive**: learning information through creative methods and abstract ideas
- **Sequential**: learning information through a step-by-step process
- **Global**: learning information through seeing the big picture

This lesson will help you identify your own personal learning styles and discuss specific ways you can use this knowledge to be more successful.
Further Resources

The learning styles described in this lesson are based on the research of Richard Felder and Barbara Solomon. Richard Felder’s website has a short quiz to help you determine your learning styles. The results will also show you which of your learning styles seems to be stronger and which seem to be more balanced. You can take the quiz here: http://www.engr.ncsu.edu/learningstyles/ilsweb.html

To find your personal learning styles, you need to think about your past learning experiences and study habits. Read through these student profiles carefully. In each pair, circle the profile that seems to describe you best; if both profiles fit you equally, circle both.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Visual Learner</strong></th>
<th><strong>Verbal Learner</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You learn best when your instructor uses PowerPoints and charts in class. Even when you pay close attention, you feel like long lectures go right over your head. If a friend tries to describe something, you often ask her to draw a picture so that you can visualize the concept or object more clearly. After meeting people for the first time, you can usually picture their faces, but you can’t always remember the details of your conversation.</td>
<td>You take thorough notes during class and save them to study later. Although you might think lectures are a bit boring, you can generally follow everything that your instructor is saying. You find written or verbal instructions helpful when you’re doing something for the first time. If you think about a trip or vacation that you took in the past, it’s difficult for you to picture the places that you visited.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Active Learner</strong></th>
<th><strong>Reflective Learner</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You enjoy working with classmates on group activities and feel confident sharing your opinions and ideas right away. You’re a hands-on learner who doesn’t want to waste too much time talking about a problem. In the past, you’ve had to redo a project at school or work because you didn’t fully understand the guidelines before getting started.</td>
<td>You prefer to work in a quiet place on your own. While you’re not afraid to join class discussions, you feel the most comfortable sharing your thoughts after you’ve had a chance to study the topics first. You enjoy planning parties and other activities almost as much as you enjoy attending them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Sensing Learner</strong></th>
<th><strong>Intuitive Learner</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your friends always tell you that you have a lot of common sense. Because of this, your favorite classes involve skills that apply to the real world. You dislike discussing theories or hypothetical questions. When you make a decision, you carefully weigh the options and make the most practical choice. If a solution has worked for you in the past, you feel comfortable using it again.</td>
<td>You are creative and imaginative. In class, you enjoy discussing theories and making predictions. You find new solutions to tough problems by thinking outside the box. If a job is repetitive or routine, you start to feel frustrated. You sometimes rely on your instincts to make big decisions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You learn best in small steps. On papers, you usually write all of the paragraphs in order, starting with the introduction. You’re very detail-oriented, but you sometimes struggle to understand the big picture.

At home, you always follow recipes or instructions step-by-step.

You like to know the end result of a project before you start working. If an instructor starts with the details, you feel overwhelmed and confused. When you learn something new, you often have a series of sudden "aha!" moments.

You are always finding connections between topics you’re covering in class or events happening in the news.

Learning Style Strategies

Now that you have a better idea of how you learn new information, you can use your learning styles to become a better student. In some cases, you might be able to ask your instructor to explain the information in a different way. Most instructors would be happy to meet with you during their office hours or recommend online resources you can use to review the material.

You can also brainstorm creative study ideas to use on your own. Remember that learning styles are never an excuse for bad study habits. You won’t find success by skipping classes or missing assignments.

Helpful Hint

Students sometimes find themselves struggling in class no matter how hard they work. This could be a sign of an undiagnosed learning disability. If you feel like this might be you, make an appointment to speak with your school’s student disabilities office. They can help you figure out the reasons behind your difficulties and find helpful strategies for managing your work.

Visual and Verbal Learning

If you’re a visual learner, you should use more pictures, charts, or graphs during your study time. Try using these strategies to become more successful:

- Create a visual timeline of people or events with photos from Google image search (https://www.google.com/imghp) or Wikimedia Commons. (http://commons.wikimedia.org/). Be sure to include any important names, facts, or dates next to each photo.
- Use highlighters or markers to color-code your class notes. For example, key terms could be highlighted blue, while important names could be highlighted pink.
- Watch a YouTube (http://www.youtube.com/) video about the topic. If you find a helpful video, consider sharing it with the rest of your class.

If you’re a verbal learner, look for opportunities to study with books or audio recordings. You can use these strategies to become more successful:

- Write or type a summary of class lectures and readings. You can use a notebook to keep hand-written notes organized or Google Docs (https://docs.google.com/) to keep digital documents organized and up-to-date.
- Listen to an audiobook while you’re reading. Project Gutenberg (http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Gutenberg:The_Audio_Books_Project) has a collection of free classics, and the local library has modern titles to checkout or download.
- Record class lectures and listen to them at home. If you don’t have an audio recorder, you can usually borrow one from the campus library.
Everyone learns best from a mix of visual and verbal learning. Don't limit yourself to just visuals or just text. Using a balance of both will help you make the most of your study time.

Learning Style Tip
If you are using the Foundations of English courseware, you can view a mini lecture for each lesson by clicking "Watch" in Learn mode. These videos contain audio for verbal learners and visuals for visual learners.

Active and Reflective Learning
If you're an active learner, you like to turn ideas into actions. To become more successful, try these strategies:

- Meet with a group of classmates for a study group. Assign a section of information to each group member, and take turns teaching your topics to the rest of the group.
- Make your own practice quizzes or review games. You can use index cards or a website like Quizlet (http://quizlet.com/) to test yourself.
- Take short breaks while you're studying. Stretching your legs and getting a breath of fresh air can help you stay focused on less active tasks.

Helpful Hint
To create your own practice tests in Hawkes, click on the Tests tab, then Practice Tests, and click the Create Practice Test button. After taking the practice test, you can see a summary of your score and review the correct answers. Use your results to focus your study time on any specific lessons or topics you're struggling to master.

If you're a reflective learner, you usually spend time thinking about an idea before acting on it. Try using these strategies to become a more successful learner:

- Find a quiet workspace that's free from distractions. You can try using a white noise website like RainyMood (www.rainymood.com/) to block out noisy family members or roommates.

To learn more about workspaces, see Lesson 1.4.

- Use a folder to save class notes and returned tests to review later. If you review them during class, don't be afraid to write down any corrected answers or notes.
- Use a notebook or note-taking app like Evernote (https://evernote.com/) to journal your thoughts about what you learned in class and how you can apply this to the world around you. Read back through your journal entries while you're preparing for class.

Only acting or only reflecting can get you into trouble. If you act too quickly, you might not fully understand the information. On the other hand, if you spend too much time reflecting, you might put a task off until the last minute. Knowing your own tendencies can help you watch out for this kind of behavior. Work to find a balance of both learning styles.
Sensing and Intuitive Learning

If you're a sensing learner, you feel the most comfortable learning objective facts and applying those facts to the real world. You can use these strategies to become more successful:

- Research how a topic is used in real-life situations. Don’t be afraid to talk with your instructor about how the information could apply to different professions.
- Use a site like Pinterest (http://www.pinterest.com) to start a collection of helpful study tips or project ideas. Just don’t let yourself get distracted by double-chocolate caramel brownie recipes!
- Meet with a study group to discuss the “why” behind facts. Talking to people with different points of view can help you understand all sides of a topic.

If you’re an intuitive learner, you enjoy thinking creatively. To become more successful, try these strategies:

- Use a variety of study locations. Sometimes a new location can help inspire you with new ideas.
- Listen to music while studying “boring” subjects. You can use an app like Spotify (https://www.spotify.com/) to make yourself a custom study playlist.
- Use a planner to keep assignments organized. An online resource like Google Calendar allows you to plan your schedule and set reminders for important tasks.

To learn more about planners, see Lesson 1.4.

Knowing your personal learning styles can help you recognize your own limitations. For example, if you know that you’re a sensing learner, you may have to schedule yourself extra time to study abstract or theoretical ideas. If you know that you’re an intuitive learner, you may need to spend extra time quizzing yourself over key terms or definitions.

Sequential and Global Learning

If you’re a sequential learner, you learn information in small, linear steps. Try using these strategies to become more successful:

- Write down a list of key ideas from class readings. Then, arrange this information into an outline or bullet list that you can use to study later.
- Find a step-by-step tutorial on a site like WikiHow (http://www.wikihow.com/). You could even consider writing your own step-by-step directions to help you think through the entire process.
- Use checklists or to-do lists for large projects. You can print paper checklists or use an app like Wunderlist to keep a digital list (https://www.wunderlist.com/).

If you’re a global learner, you learn information in random bursts of understanding and like to look at the big picture first. To become more successful:

- Skim through the table of contents or section headings before starting a reading. Use this information to get a better idea of how the different chapters or sections fit together.
- Draw a diagram to show how smaller ideas are connected to the main idea. Programs like Microsoft Word or PowerPoint have built-in tools to create flowcharts, cluster diagrams, and idea trees.
- Research a topic before starting a new reading or project. Even though it’s not a reliable source for academic papers or presentations, Wikipedia (http://wikipedia.org) can be a great place to read through an overview of a topic.

Learning Style Tip

If you’re a global learner, take the time to read through the Objectives at the beginning of each Learn lesson. These will give you a general overview of the information that the lesson is going to cover.
When you feel lost or overwhelmed, it’s frustrating. Use your knowledge of learning styles to help you find the source of this frustration and overcome it.

Sequential learners who are overwhelmed can break up a project or topic into smaller, more manageable tasks. Global learners who are lost or discouraged can use their knowledge of the big picture to help them understand the smaller details.

**Reflection Questions**

Every learning style has unique strengths and weaknesses. What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of your personal learning styles?

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**Learning Styles Outside of School**

When you think about learning styles, you probably automatically think about school. However, your learning doesn’t stop outside of the classroom. You can use the same learning styles strategies to help you find success at work or in your personal life.

![Understanding your personal learning styles can help you succeed in the workplace.](image)

At any job, you receive training. Sometimes you complete a few weeks of formal training, and sometimes you have to learn on the job. Depending on the amount of training that’s available, you may need to spend extra time studying and working on your own. Using your personal learning styles will help you work more efficiently and avoid potential frustrations.

**Learning Style Tip**

If you are an active learner, you may find it difficult to sit through long training sessions. Taking notes will keep you engaged in the material.

To learn more about taking good notes, see Lesson 1.6.

In your personal life, you’re probably always learning new things, whether you realize it or not. Just online, you can find tutorials teaching you to do anything from making a paper airplane to styling your hair like a...
celebrity. Now think about the books, recipes, magazines, manuals, brochures, and videos you encounter every day.

Knowing your learning styles can help you determine exactly which resource or technique is going to make the most sense to you. For a simple task, it may not make a big difference; however, for a more difficult task, like filing a tax return or changing a flat tire, you will be much more successful if your approach fits your personal learning styles.

**Reflection Questions**

How have you seen your learning styles affect the way you work at school, at your job, or in your personal life? Try to think of one specific example for each.

You will also have plenty of opportunities to use your knowledge of learning styles to improve your own communication. Whether you’re with coworkers or family members, you can become a more effective communicator by using a variety of approaches.

Imagine that you’re training a coworker to use the front cash register. While you’ve explained the steps multiple times and even given a short demonstration, he doesn’t seem to be catching on. In this situation, your coworker could be a more active learner. Giving him a hands-on training might help him understand the process better.

**Success Strategies**

In this lesson, you learned that all eight learning styles not only have unique characteristics, but also work best with different types of work and study strategies.

Take time to think about the ways that you learn best. Then, make a list of specific strategies that you can use to be successful in school, at work, and in everyday life. Having a solid understanding of your own strengths and weaknesses will help you build confidence in your own abilities.

**Group Activity**

Take ten to fifteen minutes to discuss everyone’s personal learning styles. Then, come up with specific strategies that each group member could use to be more successful in class.
Lesson 1.3 | Understanding and Reducing Stress

Stress is part of life. At some point, everyone has experienced stress in school, at work, or in everyday life. A healthy amount can help you stay focused and motivated. Too much, however, will leave you feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, or physically sick.

School can be an especially stressful commitment, whether you’re returning for the first time in many years or starting right after high school. Not only are you trying to balance a full schedule, but you are also managing a large amount of work and learning new, challenging concepts. If you don’t already have a strategy for dealing with this stress, you may find yourself feeling more and more overwhelmed.

Reflection Questions
Think about the last time you experienced stress. What was the situation? How did you deal with it?

While you’ll never be able to avoid stress completely, you can learn ways to keep it under control. This lesson will help you understand the causes of stress and give you practical strategies for reducing it.

In this lesson, you will learn three ways to manage your stress more effectively:

1. Determine Causes of Stress
2. Put Everything into Perspective
3. Make a Plan to Move Forward

Determine Causes of Stress

The first step in managing stress is to understand what’s causing it. Often, when we think of stress, we think of external, or outside, sources like class projects, job responsibilities, or family commitments. While these situations can be overwhelming, stressful situations usually involve an internal conflict as well.
For example, if you’re feeling stressed out about an upcoming exam, you may also be experiencing fears about your overall class grade or GPA. Being aware of both external and internal reasons for stress will help you deal with your stress more completely.

Read through each of the following scenarios. What external and internal factors might be causing stress in these situations?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Causes</th>
<th>Internal Causes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class registration deadline</td>
<td>I’m worried about balancing my work and school schedules this semester.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research paper for Economics</td>
<td>I’m nervous because it’s 30% of my final grade and there are so many steps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missed call from my brother</td>
<td>He’s failing his classes and I’m upset with him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech class</td>
<td>I hate public speaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asked to plan fundraiser booth</td>
<td>I’m feeling annoyed because I planned the last one.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once you make a list of the situations and responsibilities causing your stress, you will be able to start managing them more effectively. You may even find that your list doesn’t look quite as long as it feels.
Further Resources

A recent study ([https://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-biggest-cause-of-stress-in-america-today/](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-biggest-cause-of-stress-in-america-today/)) found that money is the biggest cause of stress in America. This can be especially true in college, when you have tuition expenses, as well as transportation costs, textbooks, and more.

If you need help with your finances, the US government has a helpful website ([https://www.usa.gov/](https://www.usa.gov/)) with information about jobs, housing, and health care. You can also contact your school’s financial aid office for more information about paying for college.

On Your Own

Think through the causes of your own stress and add them to the table below. Make sure to consider both external and internal sources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Causes</th>
<th>Internal Causes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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Put Everything into Perspective

The next way to manage stress is to put it into perspective. Sometimes when you’re feeling stressed, every task seems equally huge and unmanageable. If you step back and reevaluate, however, you’ll probably find that not everything is as big as you thought. Dealing with five things can be overwhelming, but dealing with one big thing and four small things is much more manageable.

Factors like deadlines or time commitments can affect an item’s importance. An assignment that’s due tomorrow is probably more important than an assignment due next week. Similarly, a large project is generally more time-consuming than a small one. This means that you may need to start working on the larger assignment as soon as possible.

Helpful Hint

Be careful not to fall into the trap of procrastination! Even if an assignment isn’t due immediately, getting a head start will help prevent stress later.

Regardless of deadlines and time commitments, some situations or responsibilities are simply more important than others. For example, registering for classes or resolving an argument with a family member is probably more important than getting a haircut.
Take the time to think through each situation honestly and ask yourself some of the following questions:

- Is this a special circumstance that should take priority over other responsibilities?
- Does this item have a deadline that makes it a priority?
- Will I be able to focus on another item as long as this item is incomplete?

To start putting your stress into perspective, review the list of items causing you stress. Then, determine where each one would rank on a scale of 1-3, with 1 being the least important and 3 being the most important. Here’s an example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class registration deadline</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>I’m worried about balancing my work and school schedules this semester.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research paper for Economics</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>I’m nervous because it’s 30% of my final grade and there are so many steps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missed call from my brother</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>He’s failing his classes and I’m upset with him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech class</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>I hate public speaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asked to plan fundraiser booth</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>I’m feeling annoyed because I planned the last one.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On Your Own

Prioritize your own stress in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gaining perspective on your stress will help you prioritize your time and energy. You can then focus on managing your stress and moving forward.

Learning Style Tip

For a better visual perspective, try converting your list into a cluster of shapes. Instead of a number, use shape size to indicate the importance of each item. The most important items should be largest, while the least important items should be smallest.

Make a Plan to Move Forward

When you are stressed, you feel stuck, unsure how or where to make changes. It’s easy to feel overwhelmed. However, once you’ve identified the causes of your stress and put them into perspective, you can begin finding ways to deal with them.
To manage your stress more effectively, try some of these strategies:

**Take action.** Now that you’ve identified the causes of your stress and decided which tasks and responsibilities are the most important, take action on them. Start at the top of your to-do list and check off each item as you complete it. If situations outside of your control are causing stress, consider asking a trusted friend or counselor for support and advice.

**Keep yourself organized.** One way to manage stress is staying organized. This is especially important for assignments like research papers or presentations. Searching for important documents or files will waste time and add to your stress level. You also need to organize your schedule by setting aside time to complete the most important tasks first, especially if there is a deadline looming.

**Don’t be afraid to ask for help.** Asking for help can be difficult. You may feel embarrassed about needing help or unsure where to find it. While you’re in school, you have a number of resources available. Most colleges and universities provide a student services office that can help you find counseling or tutoring services. For other types of stress, reach out to a trusted friend or a professional counselor.

**Relax and recharge.** Your physical and mental health play a big role in how you respond to stress. If you’re exhausted, even small situations or responsibilities can be overwhelming. Getting enough sleep is one of the best ways to prepare yourself to handle stress. You can also try relaxation techniques or yoga to clear your mind and prepare you for the day ahead.

**Prevent stress before it starts.** One of the best ways to prevent stress is to avoid procrastination. The longer you put off a task, the more stressful it will become. If you’re a person who works better under pressure, try setting mini-deadlines to keep yourself on track.

### Further Resources

Many studies show that dietary habits can impact a person’s mental well-being. To learn more, listen to this discussion (http://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2014/07/14/329529110/food-mood-connection-how-you-eat-can-amp-up-or-tamp-down-stress) of a study conducted by National Public Radio with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Harvard School of Public Health.

### Key Terms

- **External Stress**: outside sources of stress like class projects, job responsibilities, or family commitments
- **Internal Conflict**: fears and anxieties that are not easily recognized as sources of stress

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**Lesson 1.4**

**Keeping Yourself Organized**

Balancing your different roles as a student, employee, parent, sibling, or volunteer can be difficult. Perhaps you’re taking fifteen class hours this semester, working twenty-eight hours a week, and caring for an elderly family member.
In the past, you’ve been able to keep a mental to-do list, but recently, you’ve found yourself struggling to stay on top of your schedule and responsibilities. Not only did you miss an appointment with your advisor, but you also forgot to pay an electric bill and arrived two hours late for your shift at work. What happened?

No one has a perfect memory. The more responsibilities you have, the more likely you are to forget one or two of them. Missing one class or one bill payment may not seem like a big deal, but these situations can quickly snowball into a huge mess. If you’re not careful, you could even end up with a failing grade or an expensive fine.

Reflection Questions

Make a list of your different roles in school, at work, and in your everyday life. What responsibilities have you taken on as part of these roles? Have you ever felt overwhelmed by these responsibilities?

Staying on top of your responsibilities is much easier when you have a solid plan for keeping everything organized. Some people are natural organizers. They love having a place for everything, and they love keeping everything in its place. Most of us, however, have to work a little harder to stay organized. Even though organization may not come naturally to you, it is an important skill that will prove useful in every aspect of your life.

Learning Style Tip

People with certain learning styles tend to stay more organized than others. If you lean toward active or global learning, you may have to work harder to keep yourself organized. Don’t be discouraged! Anyone can learn better organization skills with the right amount of practice.

This lesson will discuss three helpful ways to keep yourself organized and on track:

Keep a Planner
Use a File System
Create a Workspace

Keep a Planner

A planner is a place for you to organize your schedule and record any important tasks or responsibilities. Keeping all of this information in one place will help make sure that you don’t forget something important.

Helpful Hint

Most stores sell two types of planners: those organized around the calendar year (January-December) and those organized around the academic year (August-July). While you’re in school, it will probably make the most sense to use a planner that covers the academic year.

Most planners include pages for both monthly and weekly calendars. Because monthly planner pages don’t have a lot of space for each individual day, they work best as a broad overview of your schedule. You should use these pages to record important events like work shifts, upcoming due dates, or appointments.
Monthly planners are perfect for keeping track of work shifts, important due dates, or appointments.

In contrast, weekly planner pages include plenty of space for each day. You can use this extra room to record the details of homework assignments and daily to-do items.

Weekly planners are perfect for keeping track of homework assignments and daily to-do items.

Before filling out your planner, gather everything with important dates and deadlines, including any course syllabi. These documents include class policies, major project deadlines, and assignment due dates. You should also gather the following items:

- Your work schedule
- Your class schedule
- Your school’s academic calendar
- The course syllabus for each of your classes
• Billing statements for bank accounts, electricity, utilities, etc.
• Itineraries for any trips you have planned

Use a top-down strategy to fill in your planner. This simply means adding the most important commitments before scheduling any non-essential events or tasks.

Planner Checklist

☐ Start by adding the most important items to your schedule: work shifts, medical appointments, family commitments, homework due dates, or monthly bill payment deadlines.
☐ Next, schedule any items that are important, but flexible, like study sessions or grocery trips.
☐ Finally, reward yourself for a productive week by planning fun, relaxing activities with friends and family.

Learning Style Tip
As an active learner, you prefer learning in a collaborative atmosphere. Since you are building your planner, this is a good time to reach out to some of your classmates and schedule regular study group sessions.

Once you’ve filled out your planner, you need to stay up-to-date by recording any changes or additions as soon as possible. If your instructor pushes back a due date, or if you switch shifts with a coworker, record the change as soon as possible. You should also check your planner before making any new commitments to avoid accidentally over-scheduling yourself.

Helpful Hint
Be sure to use consistent strategies for updating your planner. Choose a specific day and time when you’ll review and update your schedule for the week.

Learning Style Tip
Reflective learners need time to reflect on new material in order to understand it. When you review/update your weekly planner, try to schedule time for summarizing class notes or creating a list of questions about new concepts. If you have a laptop or smartphone, you can use a digital planner to keep yourself organized. An app like Google Calendar allows you to record your schedule, color-code different types of events, and set email or text alerts for upcoming to-do items.

Some people prefer to use digital planners, while others prefer to use hand-written planners. Some people even use both. Based on your own preferences and tendencies, take time to determine what type of planner would fit you best.
Digital planners allow you to keep track of important dates on a computer or phone.

Reflection Questions
Think about the differences between a paper and a digital planner. What are some of the benefits and drawbacks of each?

Use a File System

Saving class papers is a good idea for a variety of reasons. For example, one of the best ways to make the most of your study time is to use quizzes and worksheets from class. You can review the topics and look up answers for the questions you got wrong.

Keeping track of class handouts is also beneficial for reviewing class policies and assignment guidelines. Many instructors include overall guidelines for all major assignments in the course syllabus. Before turning in an assignment, you’ll want to have these guidelines handy so that you can make sure you have followed the directions exactly.

If you don’t have a system for filing your important documents, they will end up in a disorganized pile.

It’s important not only to save your papers, but also to keep them organized, otherwise, they may end up in a crumpled mess at the bottom of a backpack or lost in a junk drawer. Use the following suggestions to create a system for organizing your papers.

The first step in staying organized is knowing what to save. If you save everything, the sheer amount of documents or files can be overwhelming.

While you’re in school, a good rule of thumb is to save any papers from your current classes. Once the semester is over, you can throw away any old tests or handouts you won’t need anymore. You should consider
keeping copies of important papers or projects to include in your portfolio. These documents may be helpful for future classes or jobs.

**Helpful Hint**
One way to reduce clutter is to save electronic copies of important items and recycle old paper copies.

The second step in staying organized is deciding where to save everything. File folders or notebooks hold groups of documents or papers together. You should keep a separate folder for each of your classes and responsibilities. Labeling and color-coding the items in your folders will help you quickly find the information you need. For example, in your *Math 098* folder, you might group the documents into *Handouts*, *Returned Tests*, and *Class Notes*.

At home, you can use a similar system for bills, receipts, or other important papers. Keeping a copy of these documents can be helpful in case of a lost check or misunderstanding. Even bills you pay online will send you a confirmation number. You should print or save this number in case a company ever loses track of your payment. Bills older than one year can be thrown away.

Electronic documents should also be organized into files. Keeping everything saved on your desktop is overwhelming and confusing. Follow the same guidelines on your computer or flash drive and create a folder for each class or responsibility. Put any documents or emails into the correct folder. If you have a number of papers or projects for the same class, you should create subfolders for each one.

A disorganized computer is overwhelming and confusing.

**Reflection Questions**
Think about the way you usually organize important papers. Do you have a system? Are there any aspects of your current system that could be improved?

**Create a Workspace**
An organized *workspace* is essential for working efficiently. You should find a place that is comfortable and free from clutter. Some potential workspaces could be a desk or a kitchen table. You also need space for any
tools such as textbooks, calculators, or computers. It’s much easier to work when you have plenty of space to spread out.

Finding a good workspace often requires planning, especially if your assignment involves special equipment or collaboration with classmates. Even when working on your own, planning ahead can ensure that you are able to find the ideal workspace to fit your needs.

A good workspace should have plenty of space for your computer, textbooks, and supplies.

On Your Own

To think through your own study preferences and habits, check the box in each pair that best fits your studying preferences.

Do you prefer studying in the morning or evening?

☐ Morning
☐ Evening

When you study, do you prefer silence or noise?

☐ Silence
☐ Noise

Would you rather study inside or outside?

☐ Inside
☐ Outside

Do you prefer studying alone or in a group?

☐ Alone
☐ Group
Depending on the way you study and the type of work you need to do, you may need to wake up at an earlier time or reserve a room in the library. Taking the time to plan a good workspace will help you be as productive during your study and work times as possible.

In a crowded house or dorm room, finding a workspace can be tricky. You may need to get a little creative. It might not be practical for you to work at the table while everyone else is talking/eating. Consider setting up a quiet space for yourself in your bedroom.

If you don’t have a room to yourself, ask your roommates if you can establish a “quiet hour” when you all agree to dedicate the room to studying only. If this doesn’t work, you may have to get really creative by hanging up a curtain around your bed and buying a pair of cheap earplugs.

Reflection Questions
Think about your personal learning styles. How are your workspace preferences related to the way you learn? What types of environments should certain types of learners use or avoid?

If you don’t have space to work at home, you can consider creating a mobile workspace at a local library or coffee shop. Use a pencil pouch to hold all of the pens, calculators, and smaller items that you will need, and use a backpack for books and other heavy items. Making a checklist will help you remember everything you need.

Many campus buildings have study rooms available. Take advantage of these spaces and don’t be afraid to get creative. You may even find that you’re more productive in a new kind of environment.

Regardless of where you work, a workspace should be free from distractions. Some people find complete silence distracting, while others can’t work without it. If you’re easily sidetracked by the television, don’t sit near one. If you get caught up talking to friends or family, stay away from a local hangout. On the other hand, if music or noise help you concentrate, make sure to have access to those in your workspace.

Helpful Hint
A website or app like Google Play Music (https://play.google.com/music/listen?szsbn=1) can help you find the perfect study soundtrack. In addition to music, you can also listen to background sounds like ocean waves or white noise.

You need to create a clear computer workspace as well. If you’ve been keeping your documents organized, you should already be halfway there. Because an important aspect of a workspace is removing distractions, make sure you don’t have social media sites like Facebook or Twitter open while working.

Group Activity
Draw a picture of your ideal workspace. As a group, share your drawings and discuss similarities and differences.
Lesson 1.5 | Managing Your Time Effectively

Have you ever made it to the end of a day and wondered where all of your time went? Sometimes it feels like there aren’t enough hours in the day. When you think back through your schedule, though, you realize that you spent a couple hours on Twitter and an hour or so watching TV, and by the time you sat down to work on your homework, you were already exhausted.

It’s easy to lose track of time when you’re watching TV or playing video games.

Finding time to work can be difficult. Some interruptions, like unexpected traffic or family emergencies, are simply outside of your control. Other distractions, however, are inside your control: hanging out with friends, watching TV, spending time on hobbies, etc. While you should allow time for these activities, you need to make sure that they don’t fill up all of your time, especially if you have an upcoming deadline for a school project or a work assignment.

Managing your time is important because you can never get that time back. Once it’s gone, you either have to rush yourself or cram the work into your schedule. Not only will you start feeling stressed out, but you may also find yourself turning in late or incomplete work.

This lesson will discuss three strategies for managing your time more effectively:

- Use a Time Budget
- Take Breaks
- Avoid Multitasking
Use a Time Budget

Time budgets help you find the time you need to complete necessary projects and tasks. Just like a financial budget shows you how you spend your money, a time budget shows you how you spend your time. You can then identify "wasted" time that could be used more productively.

To begin budgeting your time, you first need to get an idea of how you usually spend it. For one week, keep track of everything you do in fifteen-minute time blocks. To be as accurate as possible, you should write everything down as it happens. Don’t wait until the end of the week to add your activities, as you probably won’t remember everything accurately.

Here’s an example of what your record of activities might look like:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12:00am – 7:30am</td>
<td>Sleeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30am – 8:15am</td>
<td>Getting ready for class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:15am – 8:45am</td>
<td>Driving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:45am – 9:00am</td>
<td>Walking to class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00am – 10:30am</td>
<td>Speech class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30am – 10:45am</td>
<td>Getting to next class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45am – 11:30am</td>
<td>English class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once you’ve recorded your entire week in fifteen-minute time blocks, you can calculate how much time you spend on different types of activities. First, review the activities you entered and assign each of them to one of the following categories:

- **Sleep** – Time spent sleeping
- **Meal** – Time spent preparing food and eating meals
- **Work** – Time spent at work and any travel time to work
- **Class** – Time spent in class and any travel time to class
- **Study** – Time spent studying and working on class assignments
- **Extracurricular** – Time spent on activities like club meetings, volunteer work, and sports practice
- **Exercise** – Time spent exercising
- **Personal** – Time spent on personal care, laundry, appointments, etc.
- **Family** – Time spent on family commitments
- **Entertainment** – Time spent on hobbies, TV, movies, and the internet
- **Social** – Time spent at parties or with friends
- **Other** – Time that doesn’t fit into another category

Now, use the table below to add up how many hours you spent on each category. These calculations will help you determine what changes you need to make to budget your time more effectively.
On Your Own

Time Budget Calculator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hour</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Category</th>
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</table>

Total:  

Look back at your week of activities and think through the following questions:

1. Do you feel like you had enough time to fulfill all of your responsibilities?
2. Were you surprised by how much time was spent on any particular activity?
3. What are some important activities you should have spent more time doing?
4. What are some activities you’d like to spend more time doing in the future?
5. What are some activities you’d like to spend less time doing in the future?

Based on your answers to the questions above, create a new weekly time budget. One week contains only 168 hours. If you want to spend more time on a particular activity, you’ll need to find that time somewhere. Be sure to include an appropriate length of time for each of your activities, including sleep and travel time.
Further Resources

Insufficient sleep can keep you from doing your best in school and at work. This page (http://www.cdc.gov/Features/Sleep/) on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website explains how to improve your chances of getting quality rest and how many hours of sleep you should be getting based on your age.

Try using your time budget to help you plan out all 168 hours in the upcoming week. Your planner should already include important items like classes, work shifts, and appointments. Use the same top-down strategy you used for your planner to add study sessions, meals, travel times, and morning/evening routines to your schedule. Finally, add any remaining activities, making sure to stay within your budgeted hours.

Helpful Hint

As a general rule, you should set aside at least two hours of study time for every one hour of class time. That means that a three-credit course would require at least six hours of outside work per week.

Once you have the week completely scheduled, compare it with last week’s time blocks. How different do they look?

While you probably won’t plan all 168 hours every week, you can use your time budget to keep yourself focused and on track. Keep a copy of your budget in your planner and use it to prioritize the time you spend on important tasks like school work and limit the time you spend on extra activities like Instagram.

Take Breaks

When you are working on an important project or studying for a big exam, you can feel tempted to go as long as possible without taking a break. This is especially true when you’re working or studying at the last minute. While staying focused is important, working yourself until you’re mentally drained will lower the quality of your work and force you to take even more time recovering.

Working without any breaks can lead to exhaustion and even injury.

Think about the way that overworking can affect your body physically. If you’re weight-training, you have to take frequent breaks both between individual sets and entire workout sessions. If you don’t let your muscles
recover, you will feel exhausted, start using bad form, and probably injure yourself. A pulled muscle or back sprain could leave you laid up for weeks.

Just like taking breaks helps your physical body recover, it will also help your brain reenergize and refocus. During study sessions, you should plan to take a **study break** at least once an hour. If you usually work indoors, take this time to get a breath of fresh air and clear your head.

Study and work breaks should usually last around five minutes. The longer the break, the harder it is to start working again. Instead of stopping for half an hour, take a five-minute break and reward yourself with some downtime when the task is complete.

### Helpful Hint

If you find your breaks getting longer and longer, try setting a phone alarm or kitchen timer to remind yourself when it’s time to start working again. You can also use an online timer like Timer-Tab (http://www.timer-tab.com/).

Some courses have a built-in break during the middle of the class period. Stand up and move around, even if you don’t feel tired. Even this little bit of physical movement can help you think more clearly.

### Further Resources

Whether you’re writing a paper or working on a home project, taking regular breaks can help you work better. To learn more, read this article (http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/17/jobs/take-breaks-regularly-to-stay-on-schedule-workstation.html) from the *New York Times*.

### Avoid Multitasking

**Multitasking** is working on more than one task at a time. When you have several assignments that need to be completed, you may be tempted to save time by working on two or three of them at once. While this strategy might seem like a time-saver, you will probably end up using more time than if you had done each task individually. Not only will you have to switch your focus from one task to the next, but you will also make more mistakes that will need to be corrected later.

Multitasking can often become an excuse for distractions, especially electronic ones. Have you ever tried to write a paper, watch TV, and Snapchat friends all at the same time? You probably did one of these things well and two of these things badly. That’s because your brain can’t give its full attention to three tasks at once. To
stay focused in class or while studying, try stashing your phone in your backpack or purse and staying logged out of your computer until you need it.

Group Activity
As a group, come up with ten to fifteen potential distractions. Then, have each group member rank the items as high, medium, or low, depending on how distracting they are. Compare your answers.

People don’t multitask nearly as well as they think they do. One of the most dangerous examples of this is texting while driving. Research studies have shown that multitasking while driving is similar to or even worse than driving while drunk.

While multitasking on a project for school or work may not be dangerous, it can lead to wasted time and silly mistakes. Instead of trying to do two things at once, schedule yourself time to work on one task at a time. To-do lists can be helpful tools for keeping yourself focused on finishing one item before moving on to another. You’ll do better work and save yourself time.

Further Resources
To learn more about why multitasking doesn’t work at school or at work, check out this brief video (http://youtu.be/p-20BrxlB80) that summarizes some of the recent research on multitasking.

Key Terms
Multitasking: working on more than one task at a time
Planner: a place for you to organize your schedule and record any important tasks or responsibilities
Study Break: a time, usually about five minutes long, to help you reenergize and refocus
Time Budget: a tool to plan the amount of time you want to spend on certain activities

Lesson 1.6
Taking Notes and Annotating Texts

Have you ever found yourself in one of these situations?

You’re sitting in class, keeping detailed notes about the lecture. As your instructor continues, you find yourself falling further behind. You just can’t write fast enough to keep up with the discussion. Later that night, you try reviewing your notes and realize that you missed most of the material from the second half of class.

According to your class syllabus, you have a three-page personal reflection paper due tomorrow. You completely forgot to work on your paper earlier this week, so you stay up all night finishing it. When you get to class the next day, you find out that your instructor had postponed the reflection paper due date until next week.

At the beginning of class, your instructor announces a quiz over last night’s reading assignment. You feel confident because you know that you spent extra time carefully reading the assignment. As you take the quiz, however, you struggle to remember the details of the reading. When your class grades the quizzes together, you can’t believe that you failed.
If you've ever experienced a similar situation, you know how frustrating it felt. You fulfilled all of the requirements of the course, yet you continued to struggle.

While attending class and doing your homework are important, your work doesn't stop there. Good listening and note-taking skills are essential for getting the most out of your class and study times. Developing these abilities takes a bit of practice, but as you continue getting better, you will find yourself becoming more and more successful.

Listening and note-taking are important both inside and outside of the classroom. Throughout your week, you participate in training demonstrations, job interviews, medical appointments, and personal conversations. Just like in class, your success in these activities relies on your ability to pay close attention and keep track of key details.

In this lesson, you will learn about the following:

Building Skills in Active Listening
Effective Note-Taking Methods
Annotating Texts for Active Reading

You can then use these strategies to find success in school, at work, and in everyday life.

Listening Skills

During class, you are presented with a large amount of information in a short amount of time. To make sure that you don’t miss important concepts or instructions, you need to practice active listening. Active listening involves actively paying attention to the speaker, asking questions about confusing concepts, and making connections to your prior knowledge.

Preparation is a key step in active listening. Without any background knowledge, you will have a hard time following the class lecture. Be sure to complete any reading assignments, even if you won’t be quizzed on the information. You will learn more in class if you are already familiar with the major topics.

Come to class prepared with all of your materials: paper, pens, highlighters, and textbooks. If you are required to bring a laptop or tablet, make sure you have a charger as well. Electronic devices can easily be a source of
distractions. To keep yourself focused, keep your phone stored in your backpack and your laptop closed until you need it.

Further Resources

While computers can be useful tools, they can also become major distractions. Companies have started developing apps to keep you focused while you study or work. To learn more, check out this article (http://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2013/07/23/204848805/distractions-in-the-digital-age-call-for-apps-to-block-sites) from National Public Radio's technology blog, All Tech Considered.

Before class starts, think about the best place to sit. You'll want to stay away from potential distractions like noisy equipment, open windows, or talkative classmates. Generally, sitting near the front of the room is a better idea than sitting in the back. Not only will you be able to see any visual aids better, but you will also be less distracted by the movements of other people.

As you listen to your instructor, write down any questions that come to mind so that you don't forget them later. If you have a question about a topic, chances are some of your classmates are probably wondering the same thing. Don't be afraid to ask, but be sure to wait for an appropriate time to bring up your questions. You don't want to interrupt your instructor in the middle of an important example or explanation.

Active listening also involves making connections to your prior knowledge. Prior knowledge is what you already know about a topic from previous class discussions or reading assignments. As you learn new material, think about how this information fits into what you've already learned as a class. If you are having a hard time making connections, ask your instructor for help.

Note-Taking

Note-taking is a skill that goes hand-in-hand with effective listening. When you are listening in class, writing down important information will help you pay attention to the lecture and understand the material more effectively.

Learning Style Tip

If you are an active learner, organize a weekly study group with your classmates to review and discuss your notes.

Regardless of the type of notes you take, you should follow a few important guidelines:

- **Use neat handwriting.** You can't study from notes that you can't read. If you know that you make a lot of mistakes when writing, consider using a pencil instead of a pen.

- **Use abbreviations and phrases.** If you take word-for-word notes, you won't be able to keep up with the information being presented.

- **Use your own words.** Remember that class notes are your own personal study resources. You must be able to understand the information when you review it later.

There are a number of well-known ways to structure class notes. Some of the most popular are outlines, the Cornell Method, and graphic organizers like mindmaps. Don't be afraid to try all three until you find a system that works the best for you.
Reflection Questions

What has been your process for taking notes in the past? How do you think you could improve in your note-taking abilities?

Outlines

Outlining class lectures helps you understand the way a topic is structured by grouping all of the information into topics and subtopics. Look at the following example:

Floor Support

1. Joists - beams that support a floor
   a. Potential problems
      i. Rotten beams - water damage
      ii. Squeaking boards - boards rubbing together
   b. Types
      i. Solid lumber - cheaper, but limited size
      ii. Open - less wood, can't be changed on-site
2. Subflooring - support floor covering, even surface
   a. Potential problems
      i. Sinking floors - water damage, wrong installation
      ii. Creaking floors - wrong thickness?
   b. Types
      i. Plywood - cheap, common
      ii. Concrete slab - must be completely dry

In an outline, subtopics are indented under main topics. For example, plywood and concrete slab are both types of subflooring. Joists and subflooring are both floor supports. Seeing all of this information clearly laid out in an outline helps you quickly identify the relationships between each topic.

Outlines also make good study resources because you can easily read through all of the topics, rather than trying to scan an entire page of notes.

If you have a hard time following the organization of a topic during class, try writing down all of your notes during class, then rewriting them in outline form later. The more you practice making outlines, the better you will get at it.

Learning Style Tip

Outlines are useful tools for global learners. If you are a global learner, you can use an outline to see the relationships between ideas and understand how those ideas connect to the big picture.
Cornell Notes
Another method for taking notes is the Cornell Method, a strategy first created by Dr. Walter Pauk at Cornell University.

To take Cornell notes, divide your paper into four sections:

- Section 1 is the top of the page. Use this space to list the class information, date, and lecture topic.

- Section 2 is for taking notes during class. Instead of complete sentences, use lists or clusters of words, phrases, or even abbreviations. Feel free to color-code your notes or highlight important terms.

- Section 3 is for after class. Make a list of new or important terms from the session. Then, come up with questions. Some of these questions can be reflective, helping you think more about what you learned in class. Others should be questions that you still have about what was covered. Consider these action items for preparing for your next class or your next test.

Here are some questions you might want to include:

- How is this related to other topics?
- Why is this important?
- Do I have any follow-up questions about these concepts?
- Do I understand what the instructor emphasized most?
- What exam questions might I anticipate based on what we learned today?
Finally, when you finish reviewing your notes, write a brief summary of the topic in Section 4. This summary should boil down the main point of the lecture in fewer than five sentences.

**Graphic Organizers**

A graphic organizer is a note-taking template for visually demonstrating relationships between ideas. The layout of a graphic organizer could include shapes, charts, timelines, diagrams, or drawings. Filling out a graphic organizer can be a very useful method for not only reviewing notes, but also summarizing texts and brainstorming for writing assignments.

One popular type of graphic organizer is a mind map. Mind maps organize the main points of a topic visually. They are similar to outlining because all of the related ideas are grouped together.

The main concept goes in the center of the mind map. Any important topics are connected to the main concept by lines. These topics can then be connected to subtopics that are even more specific.

This format is a visual representation of the material that allows you to quickly see connections between ideas. Just like with outlining, you may not be able to group everything together perfectly the first time. Don't be afraid to take down regular notes during class, then create a graphic organizer when you review your notes later.

**Further Resources**

If you’re looking for resources for creating your own graphic organizer, try out Coggle (https://coggle.it/), Mindmeister (https://www.mindmeister.com/), or drawing tools in PowerPoint.

**On Your Own**

In addition to mind mapping, try out some other types of graphic organizers to prepare for an upcoming class or assignment. Use the following examples as worksheets or as ideas for your own creations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideas &amp; Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic/Text:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Idea:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Idea:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annotating

Annotating involves marking a text and taking notes in the margin. An annotated reading looks like this:

Definitions - If you come across any difficult words or terms, look them up and write the definition in the margin of the page.

Important ideas - Mark the most important ideas by highlighting, underlining, or circling the important words or phrases. Try to mark only the most important information. If everything is important, nothing is important.

Prior knowledge - Your prior knowledge is what you already know about a topic. If something you read reminds you of another topic you've experienced or discussed, write a short note to yourself in the margin of the page.

Annotating is a specific type of note-taking that can be used for reading assignments outside of class. As a college student, you read a large amount of information for all of your classes. Annotating helps you stay focused while reading and remember important details later.

Helpful Hint

Annotating works best with printed materials. If your reading assignment is a website or PDF, print out the assignment first.

Before annotating a reading assignment, carefully read through the entire text once. This will give you a chance to focus on the information without any extra distractions.

Once you've finished, review the material again, this time adding notes and marking important information:
Questions - As you read, write down questions you have about unclear or confusing information so that you can look up the answers or ask your instructor later.

Summaries - You may need to re-read a confusing section multiple times before you understand it completely. Once you figure out the meaning, write a short summary in the margin of the page. This will help you understand the passage when you're studying later.

Finally, scan through the text one last time, and add the following information:

Answers - Look for any questions that you wrote down as you read. If you found the answer later in the reading, write it down next to the question. Any information that you still don't know should be marked so that you can ask your instructor later.

Connections - As you read, you probably noticed that certain ideas in the text were connected to other ideas. Write down a brief note about this relationship next to both ideas.

Structure - Go back through and mark the structure of the text by labelling the introduction, each of the main points, and the conclusion. Use large brackets or a highlighter to show which paragraphs belong to which section.

You can use sticky notes, pens, and highlighters to annotate a text. Try adding special colors or symbols for different types of information. For example, questions could be in blue with a question mark, and important ideas could be in red with a star.

The process of annotating a text will help you read an assignment more thoroughly. Just like note-taking keeps you focused in class, annotating keeps you focused while reading.

Additionally, an annotated text is a valuable study resource. When you are reviewing the information for a test or a project, you can use your notes to locate and understand important information quickly.

Key Terms

- **Active Listening**: listening that involves paying attention, asking questions, and making connections
- **Annotating**: a strategy for taking notes while reading
- **The Cornell Method**: a strategy that divides a page of notes into four sections
- **Graphic Organizer**: a note-taking template for visually demonstrating relationships between ideas
- **Mind-Mapping**: a method for making visual connections between topics
- **Outlining**: grouping information into topics and subtopics
- **Paragraph**: a short piece of writing that focuses on one main idea
- **Prior Knowledge**: what you already know about a topic

Lesson 1.7

Using Effective Study Strategies

Your life is busier than ever before. You have work commitments, family responsibilities, and extracurricular activities, in addition to all of your classes and projects. Without good study habits, you will find yourself falling behind.

You may have been able to get through some of your previous classes without studying. As you continue working on your degree, however, your courses will become more and more difficult. Practicing good study habits now will help you develop the skills you need to excel in later courses.
This lesson will teach you three ways to improve your study habits:

- Make Studying Part of Your Routine
- Use Creative Study Strategies
- Avoid Procrastination

**Make Studying Part of Your Routine**

To get the most out of your classes, add daily study times to your routine. This will keep your mind active and ready to receive new information. Learning is like caring for a houseplant. The best way to keep a plant healthy is to water it a little bit each day. You can't just dump in a gallon of water once a month and expect it to thrive.

In a similar way, cramming for a test dumps gallons of information into your memory. Your brain isn't ready to learn that much material at once, so some of it is lost. By studying daily, you will absorb a greater amount of information over time than you would in one emergency study session.

To make studying part of your daily routine, try using the following strategies:

- **Find a study time that works for you.** Everyone feels alert and focused at different times during the day. If you're a morning person, wake up early for a brief study session each morning. If you struggle to stay awake after eating lunch, don't plan to study in the early afternoon.

- **Schedule study times in your planner.** Adding study sessions to your planner makes them harder to skip. It's all too easy to put off studying until later. Unfortunately, *later* can quickly turn into tomorrow or the next day. Make studying a required event, just like work shifts or family commitments.

- **Be flexible when necessary.** Unexpected events are bound to happen once in a while. Don't feel guilty about rescheduling your study time around these disruptions. If you know that you'll have some downtime during your other commitments, you might also consider bringing your notes to study when possible.

- **Keep study times separate.** When you have multiple assignments due for class, you may find yourself spending all of your study time working on projects. Even if you only have fifteen minutes to spare, reserve time for studying your class notes.
Use Creative Study Strategies

An important part of studying is reading back through your class notes and handouts. Some students, however, limit all of their study time to these activities. While reviewing class materials is important, it’s not enough. You need to use additional strategies to identify and remember important concepts. Everyone has different learning styles and study preferences. Using a variety of creative study strategies will help you find the ones that work best for you. To make the most of your study time, try some of the following ideas:

Creative Study Strategies

- **Meet with your instructor.** At the beginning of the semester, schedule a short meeting with your instructor to discuss the course material and class expectations. This is the perfect opportunity to ask for tips on how to be successful in the course.

- **Read your notes out loud.** When you read silently, you may start skimming through the material without even realizing it. Reading out loud forces you to slow down and carefully read through every word.

- **Use colorful highlighters and pens.** Color-coding information will help you quickly identify the most important concepts as you study. Use colors carefully. If everything on a page is highlighted, you will have a hard time finding the information that you need.

- **Quiz yourself using flashcards.** To quiz yourself on key terms, events, or people, create a set of flashcards using index cards. If you have a laptop or smartphone, a website like Quizlet (http://quizlet.com) will allow you to create digital flashcards that you can study anywhere.

- **Use an acronym.** Acronyms are abbreviations that help you remember important terms. For example, in the acronym FANBOYS, each letter represents one of the coordinating conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).

- **Create a memorable sentence.** Memorable sentences are similar to acronyms. In the sentence "Please excuse my dear Aunt Sally," the first letter of each word helps you remember the order of mathematical operations (parentheses, exponents, multiplication, division, addition, subtraction).

- **Make up a rhyme or a song.** Songs and rhymes are incredibly memorable. You probably already know this one: "In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue." Try looking up others or even creating your own.

Avoid Procrastination

The most common study pitfall that causes students to struggle is procrastination: putting work off until the last minute. Procrastination is a bad idea. Not only will you feel overwhelmed by the amount of information you need to learn, but you may also find yourself with more work than you can handle.

Procrastination is caused by a number of different reasons. In some cases, you may feel overwhelmed by the size of a project. Maybe you’ve never written a paper with that many pages or sources. To help yourself get started, break up the assignment into smaller chunks. Instead of working on a ten-page paper for two weeks, set yourself a goal of finishing one page a day. This strategy will prevent you from putting off the entire paper until the night before.

Procrastination can also stem from fear or self-confidence issues. If this is the case, you might feel like your work will never live up to your expectations. In these situations, remind yourself that your identity is much more than your GPA. Even if you don’t score as highly as you’d like on an assignment, you can take the opportunity to learn from your mistakes and perform better the next time.
Studying consistently will prevent you from feeling overwhelmed by assignments.

One final reason for procrastination is time management. Perhaps you feel like you just don’t have enough time to complete all of your class work. Take an honest look at your schedule over the last week. You may find that watching TV and using the internet used up more time than you realized.

If your schedule is truly too full, you need to think about the commitments that are most important to you. You may need to reduce the amount of time you spend on activities that take time away from your top priorities.

To learn more about managing your time effectively, see Lesson 1.5

Further Resources
Procrastination can often become a vicious cycle, causing you to fall further and further behind on your work. To learn more about the breaking the "doom loop" of procrastination, read this article [http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/08/the-procrastination-loop-and-how-to-break-it/379142/] from The Atlantic.

Key Terms

| Acronym: an abbreviation that helps you remember important terms |
| Learning Style: the different ways that people learn new information |
| Planner: a place for you to organize your schedule and record any important tasks or responsibilities |
| Procrastination: putting off work until the last minute |

Lesson 1.8
Reducing Test Anxiety

Tests. Assessments. Exams. These words can strike fear into the heart of almost any student.
Tests can be a major source of stress for students.

Everyone gets a little anxious before a big test or exam. This is a completely normal reaction. Feeling nervous can even help motivate you to study harder.

In some cases, however, test anxiety begins to affect your mental health, leaving you overwhelmed by fear or stress. Learning to overcome this anxiety will improve both your self-confidence and your grades.

Remember that tests aren't a complete picture of your abilities. Many smart and creative people struggle on exams but excel in other ways. While you may never become a great test-taker, you can become more confident in yourself and your abilities.

This lesson will discuss three strategies for reducing test anxiety:

Keep a Positive Attitude
Know What to Expect
Use Test-Taking Strategies

When you think about tests, you probably think about the exams you take in school. However, tests are part of almost every workplace. Training certificates, specialized licenses, and even job interviews all involve either written or oral tests. In these situations, you can use the same strategies to deal with test anxiety that you use for assessments in school.

Keep a Positive Attitude

Your attitude sets the tone for how you react to a situation. If you are constantly thinking negatively about yourself and your abilities, you won't feel confident about taking a test, regardless of how well-prepared you are.

Researchers have found that your attitude has an enormous influence on your actions. Think about the last time you went into a store. What music did they play in the background? Most likely, they played something with an upbeat melody and strong beat. Stores use this type of music because they know that when you feel happy and energized, you purchase more items.
Reflection Questions
In what types of situations do you feel the most and least confident? What about each situation influences these feelings?

Changing the way you think about yourself and your abilities doesn’t happen overnight. Just like any skill, however, the more you practice, the easier self-confidence will become.

To start thinking more positively, try these strategies:

**Be more aware of negative self-talk.** You may not even realize how often you talk about yourself in a negative way. Listen carefully to your own words and stop tearing yourself down.

**Praise yourself and others.** Instead of dwelling on negative thoughts, focus on the times that you achieved your goals. Positive thinking is contagious. When you notice other people succeeding, don’t hesitate to congratulate them.

**Think of setbacks as opportunities for growth.** If you expect only perfection from yourself, you are bound to be disappointed. When you experience a setback, learn from your mistakes and keep moving forward.

**Find a ritual that makes you happy.** Some people listen to music, take deep breaths, or imagine future success. Regardless of which strategy you choose, find something that calms you down and helps you feel confident.

### Further Resources
To learn more about developing the skill of self-confidence, watch this TED talk ([https://youtu.be/w-HYZv6HzAs](https://youtu.be/w-HYZv6HzAs)) by Dr. Ivan Joseph, the Director of Athletics at Ryerson University.

### Helpful Hint
To remind yourself about the power of positive thinking, try writing out encouragement to yourself on sticky notes and leaving these reminders somewhere you’ll see them often.

### Know What to Expect
One of the most nerve-wracking aspects of taking a test is the unknown. If you’ve never taken a class with a particular instructor, you may feel unsure about the types of questions to expect or which terms to study. Try using the following strategies:

**Pre Test Checklist**

- **Meet with your instructor.** If you are feeling nervous about a test, talk to your instructor about what you should expect and how you should study. This is also a good opportunity to ask about classroom testing policies. For example, you may want to find out if you are allowed to drink water during the test.
Take advantage of study guides. These documents are invaluable because they tell you exactly what concepts will appear on the test. Use your study guide to make flashcards, identify key terms, and create practice quizzes.

Review old quizzes or tests. This should give you a fairly good idea of the types of questions you can expect to see on the test. Some instructors even reuse questions from older assessments.

Study in the testing room if possible. Being comfortable with your environment can help you feel more at ease during the test. Additionally, your memory is often sharper when you are in a familiar location.

Use Test-Taking Strategies

Regardless of how well you've prepared, anxiety doesn't magically disappear on test day. In fact, it can sometimes get worse while you are taking the test itself. However, there are strategies that you can use to calm your nerves and recall the information that you studied.

Test Taking Checklist

- When you first receive your test paper, take a moment to write down anything you don't want to forget. This might include helpful acronyms or important terms. If you record this information right away, you don't have to worry about forgetting it later.
- Next, skim through the entire test, paying close attention to any instructions. This will give you a sense of what the questions look like.
- Once you've had a chance to look through the entire test, start writing down any answers that you know. Think through your answers, but don't dwell on a question for more than two or three minutes.
- Go through the entire test again, answering any questions that you skipped. If you honestly have no idea, take an educated guess by narrowing down your options as much as possible. Do not leave any answer spaces blank. Even a wild guess has a small chance of being correct.
- Finally, review the entire test to make sure that you didn't leave any answer spaces blank or make silly mistakes.

If you start feeling overwhelmed at any point during the test, close your eyes and take ten deep breaths. Giving yourself a short mental break will help you calm down and refocus. If your instructor allows you to move around the room during the test, consider stretching your legs or getting a drink.

Helpful Hint

If you are taking a test that involves a Scantron form, it's easy to lose your place. Try adding a small pencil dot next to any question number you skip so that you can find any unanswered questions again easily. Wait until the end of your test to erase these marks.

Key Terms

- **Acronym**: an abbreviation that helps you remember important terms
- **Test Anxiety**: strong feelings of stress or fear before a test
Lesson 1.9

Taking Advantage of Campus Resources

Many shopping malls are almost like their own miniature communities. You can get a haircut, see your doctor, buy new clothes, and have dinner with friends, all in the same complex.

This is called one-stop shopping. Mall designers have created a place for you to get everything you need without the hassle of finding a new parking spot or getting on the freeway. They hope this convenience will encourage you to become a frequent, satisfied shopper.

In a similar way, colleges offer a variety of services to their student body. These resources are located on campus to make them as convenient as possible. The college’s goal is to make you a more successful student by supporting you both academically and socially.

In this lesson, you will learn the purpose and services of five common campus organizations:

Student Services
The Library
The Academic Success Center
The Writing Center
Disabilities Services

Keep in mind that you have already paid for these on-campus services through your tuition. To get the most value out of your education, don’t hesitate to take advantage of them.

Student Services

Student Services is the office responsible for academic advising. Your advisor usually meets with you at least once a semester to discuss your course load and career plans. You can also bring up other concerns you might have about your classes.
Here are some questions you might want to discuss with your advisor:

- How many credits should I take in one semester?
- What classes do I need for my degree program?
- Which placement tests do I need to take?
- What are the differences between in-person and online courses?

Because academic advisors generally work with hundreds of students at a time, you should always schedule an appointment for your meetings. This will give your advisor a chance to review your information ahead of time.

The Student Services office also offers career resources. Throughout the semester, they may hold workshops to help you write a resume, practice job interviews, or find internships. Keep track of their calendar to make sure that you don’t miss any important events.

**Learning Style Tip**

If you're a *sequential* learner, ask your advisor for a semester-by-semester explanation of which classes you need for your major. This will give you a clearer idea of your goals and help you monitor your academic progress.

**The Library**

**Reflection Questions**

As more books, articles, and videos become available online, fewer people are using the library to find information. Do you think the library is still important in today’s world? Why or why not?

While you probably feel familiar with the campus library, you may not realize how many services it offers. Here are just a few:
Many libraries also create online **LibGuides**. These are websites that have been customized to a specific major or field of study. They include links to databases, websites, and other resources that you might find helpful for course projects and papers.

If you are having trouble using the library catalog or finding a particular book, the librarians are there to help. Some libraries even have a service that allows you to text a librarian with your questions.

**The Academic Success Center**

The **Academic Success Center** exists to help you succeed academically. If you are struggling in a course, you can schedule an appointment with a tutor to get extra help. Make sure you know where the tutoring office is located. Sometimes, tutors work in a specific building, while other times they meet in the library.

The Academic Success Center may also hold weekly group discussions to help you get the most out of your courses. This is a good opportunity to study the material in a group and hear the perspectives and thoughts of others.
Don’t wait until the week before finals to take advantage of these resources. Often, the Academic Success Center has limited tutoring hours available during the end of the semester because there are so many students using their services.

**Helpful Hint**

Don’t feel embarrassed asking for academic help! Everyone has strengths and weaknesses as a student. For example, you may excel in math classes but struggle in history classes.

**The Writing Center**

During College, you will write a lot of papers. The **Writing Center** offers specialized tutoring for all stages of the writing process. They can help you brainstorm topic ideas, write a strong thesis statement, organize your **paragraphs**, or make revisions. Feel free to schedule multiple appointments to get assistance on the same paper.

Tutors at the Writing Center can help you strengthen your papers.

To get the most out of your time in the Writing Center, follow these suggestions:

- Before your appointment, come up with two or three specific ways you want to improve your paper. This will help your tutor focus your meeting on the issues that are most important to you.
- At the end of your appointment, ask your tutor to help you identify specific action items that you can complete on your own.
- Remember that a visit to the Writing Center doesn’t guarantee that you will receive an **A** on your paper. The tutors are there to help you become a better writer, a process that could take months or even years. You can’t expect instant perfection.
- The Writing Center may offer specialized tutoring in different course subjects such as biology, history, or psychology. Contact their office to see if there is a specific tutor you should request when making your appointment.

**Reflection Questions**

Have you ever asked a friend or roommate for a second opinion on a paper? Why was this helpful?
Disabilities Services

The Disabilities Services office assists students who have learning disabilities or physical limitations. One of their main purposes is arranging classroom accommodations for students who require assistance in class. These accommodations might include receiving extra time on projects, receiving the help of a translator or note-taker, or taking tests in a quiet environment.

Colleges are legally required to provide accommodations for students who need them. However, these must be coordinated through Disabilities Services. If you have a learning disability or physical limitation, make an appointment with them as soon as possible.

The Disabilities Services office can also help you find accessible course materials such as braille textbooks or closed-captioned videos.

Further Resources

Learning disabilities are often misunderstood. To learn more about some of the common myths about learning disabilities, read this article (http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/five-misconceptions-about-learning-disabilities/) from PBS NewsHour.

Key Terms

- **Academic Success Center**: the office responsible for on-campus tutoring
- **Accommodations**: personalized classroom assistance such as extra time on projects or a separate testing environment
- **Disabilities Services**: the office responsible for assisting students with learning disabilities or physical limitations
- **LibGuides**: a website that contains helpful resources for a particular major or course
- **Paragraph**: a piece of writing that focuses on one main idea
- **Planner**: a place for you to organize your schedule and record any important tasks or responsibilities
- **Student Services**: the office responsible for academic advising and career services
- **Writing Center**: a service that provides writing assistance

Helpful Hint

Use your planner to keep track of appointments with your advisor, tutoring sessions at the Academic Success Center, or important library due dates.