

10 TIPS TO THRIVE AT COLLEGE

College brings about a whole new set of challenges; learning some key problem-solving tips and how to deal with difficult situations that are known to arise in college is essential to success. Below are 10 tips to help you thrive at college.

1. BE OPEN-MINDED

Seek out and take advantage of new opportunities. Be willing to push yourself outside of your comfort zone. Try new things, whether it is an elective or campus activity, joining a conversation you wouldn't normally insert yourself in, or partnering with someone you haven't worked with yet. This also means being open to and curious about viewpoints, personalities, and interests different from your own. Through this, you will learn a lot about others, yourself, and contribute to a supportive and friendly college environment.

2. ESTABLISH GOOD ROUTINES

Self-Care

As tempting and necessary as all-nighters seem to be, you will not perform well when you are sleep deprived. Establish a healthy routine for [sleep](#), exercise, nutrition, and [self-care](#). Explore different [coping ideas](#) to use when needed and be mindful of [unhealthy ways of coping](#).

Studying

Figure out the time of day you are the most energized and engaged and use this time to study and work on assignments. Get yourself organized early on with due dates and assignment outlines. Consider and implement the [time management](#), [reading/note-taking](#), and [studying/test-taking](#) strategies that work best for you.

3. BE PREPARED FOR STRESS & STRUGGLE

It's going to be stressful. It would be odd if it wasn't. We need an optimal amount of stress and pressure to be motivated and perform well. Being prepared for this and establishing a [stress management](#) routine and implementing [anxiety management strategies](#) early on will help mitigate some of the impact. Embrace some of the discomfort you will feel; this indicates opportunity for growth. Review some tips for [boosting your resilience](#).

Accept and intervene during those times when it's difficult to [focus](#), [motivation](#) inevitably dips, and [procrastination](#) becomes your default setting. Be prepared for normal [test and performance anxiety](#).

Changes in mental health are common during the transition to college. These changes may be part of a normal adjustment process, including [homesickness](#), or may indicate something more. [Depression](#) and [anxiety](#) disorders are common amongst college students and nothing to be ashamed of. Help is available on campus. If you have a chronic mental illness, a [Wellness Recovery Action Plan](#) can help you monitor and respond to symptoms. Meeting regularly with the [campus counsellor](#) can also help and the [counselling website](#) has numerous resources.

4. KEEP THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE

Stay focused on why you are here. It's important to have fun but it's easy to slide into unproductive habits. When we are stressed, it's also easy to [catastrophize](#) what is happening and what it means for us. When you are overwhelmed, consider the [role of your thoughts](#) and what [unhelpful thinking patterns](#) may be influencing your stress and behaviour. Try to [untwist your thinking](#) and to think realistically and [positively](#) about yourself and the situation. Try practicing [mindfulness](#) to help you relax and be less reactive in situations.

5. KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES

You didn't get here by accident. Remind yourself of your [strengths](#), whether it's organization, empathy, or creativity. Be aware of and accept the areas you struggle in. Be willing to ask for help. Take advantage of the [student resources](#) available to you, including the [Student Survival Guide](#), the [Student Success Specialist](#), [academic coaching](#), [peer tutoring services](#), [academic accommodations](#), and [learning strategies](#).

6. ACCEPT AND LEARN FROM MISTAKES

Accept that you, and others (friends, classmates, instructors, staff) will make mistakes. Instead of being too hard on yourself, use your mistakes as learning opportunities. Assess what happened, come up with creative ways to do things differently, and celebrate when you make positive changes.

7. LEARN HOW TO PROBLEM-SOLVE

Explore and implement [problem-solving](#) to deal with issues that arise. Be prepared for issues with [group work](#), time-management, [finances](#), and [career uncertainty](#).

8. LEARN HOW TO COMMUNICATE

Issues with faculty, roommates, group members, parents, friends, or partners are bound to come up. Strong [communication](#) and [assertiveness](#) skills will be necessary for you to express yourself, delegate, and/or set boundaries.

9. BE SAFE

Be smart and know your limits with substances and in relationships. Review [safe use strategies](#), [safe sex](#) and [consent resources](#), and information about [healthy relationships](#).

10. SET YOURSELF UP WITH SUPPORT

It's easy when you're a student to become consumed with school. While "balance" is always easier said than done, it's important to carve out time for a social life and for yourself. Friendship and humour go a long way toward reducing stress. As does having a [social support](#) network. Try and stay in contact with friends from home and [build the new friendships](#) you make in college. Surround yourself with people who are good for you, and can provide you different things: companionship, fun, support, and practical help. Connect with the [Student Association](#), take advantage of the [campus support services](#), and reach out to instructors and [academic advisors](#) when needed.