



Key Study Skills Tools to Achieve Academic Success

College Success/Study Skills Glossary of Key Terms

Our college academic success and student study skills glossary includes 150 key terms, definitions, and links to more detailed information and resources.

Abstract: Capsule descriptions or thesis summaries of student papers, typically about 200-350 words in length. An abstract should provide concise description of the work that would enable anyone reading your abstract to grasp the main idea and usefulness of the work. See our article, [How to Write an Abstract](#).

Academic Adviser: College staff or faculty member who assists students (advisees) with course selection, developing 4-year academic plan, and providing advice regarding careers and/or graduate school.

Academic Audit Sheet: A record of courses taken, grades received, credits earned, and grade point average. Often includes list of courses a student has to take for a given major and degree program.

Academic Calendar: Provides key dates and deadlines -- by term -- for an academic year, including add/drop deadlines, registration dates, mid-term and final exam periods, school holidays, and more.

Academic Degree: Conferred by academic institutions in recognition that a student has completed a specified course of study. Undergraduate examples include Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Business Administration. See also *Bachelor's Degree*.

Academic Honesty: Ethical standards applied to all students regarding conduct related to academic performance -- on papers, tests, etc. Some colleges have detailed codes of conduct and honor codes. Penalties vary from failing the work in question to expulsion from the institution. See also *Honor Code, Plagiarism*.

Academic Standing; Scholastic standing of a student based on his or her grade point average (GPA). Academic standing can be computed at college level, school level, or major level.

Academic Support Centers: One or more student support centers at a college that provide no-cost instructional services to students to assist in achieving better academic success in all academic areas -- generally with specialized centers in math, writing, and foreign languages

Academic Year: A period of months that include the major terms offered by a college, starting traditionally in August or Fall with the Fall Semester or First Quarter and running through April or May. (Some schools also mini-mesters and summer terms and count these as part of the academic year.)

Accreditation: The oversight of a university, college, or academic program by one or more outside organizations. Accreditation organizations certify that an institution is following certain guidelines and policies.

Active Listening: Theory that the more a person listens, the more s/he learns. Also called learning to listen -- listening to learn -- it's about developing the skill and effort to listen effectively. Students may hear a class lecture, but if they are not actively thinking about what is being said, they will not absorb much of the spoken material. If you want to benefit from showing up to class and attending the lecture, you'll need to work at actively listening to the instructor.

Active Reading: A broad number of reading strategies designed to increase a student's involvement with a textbook or other reading assignment that should result in improved comprehension and retention. With the increased amount and level of reading expected in college, students should seek out an active reading strategy that best works for their individual needs. See our article, [Understand What You Read Through Active Reading Techniques](#).

Add/Drop: Typically two periods early in a semester or quarter in which students may add or drop courses from your schedules. The add period lasts only a very short period of time

at the beginning of the term, while students can often drop a course until much later in a term.

Adjunct Faculty: Part-time instructors that colleges hire to fill temporary holes in full-time faculty positions. Unlike full-time faculty, adjunct faculty often are professionals or retired professionals from the community. See also *Full-Time Faculty*.

Alumni: People who attended or graduated from a college. Alumni are important for their involvement and financial contributions, and can be important contacts for guidance in choosing a major and finding an internship or graduate program.

Analytical/Sequential Learner: Students who prefer linear steps that logically follow each other and prefer working on projects in small chunks. They can discern details but often have trouble seeing the big picture. See also *Learning Styles*. See our article, [A Student's Brief Overview of the Analytical/Sequential Learning Style](#).

Articulation Agreement: An arrangement between colleges and universities that facilitates the ease of transferring credits from one school to the other by basically outlining that certain courses offered at one school are the equivalent to those offered at the other. See also *Transfer Credit*.

Assignment: Required work assigned by instructor that is to be completed outside of class and prepared for a certain class day, as noted on the course syllabus. (Note: This is a major difference between high school and college; for other differences, see our article, [Ways in Which College is Different From High School](#).)

Associate Degree: Requires completion of a minimum of 60 credit hours of academic work and is considered the first level of college degrees. Associate of arts and sciences degrees are offered by community and junior colleges, and can be typically completed in two years of full-time enrollment.

Attention Span: Amount of time a student can concentrate or focus on a single activity, such as sitting in class listening to a lecture. Attention spans tend to be longer when a person is doing something they enjoy. Instructors complain that the attention of span of students is rapidly decreasing. See also *Concentration Span*.

Auditory Learner: Students who prefer to absorb information through their sense of hearing. They tend to be fond of speaking out loud, talking to themselves, and listening to themselves talk. They have difficulty handling distracting noises. They are said to be able to recall at least 75 percent of material they hear. About 30 percent of learners have the auditory learning-style preference. See also *Learning Styles*. See our article, [A Student's Brief Overview of the Auditory Learning Style](#).

Bachelor's Degree: Requires the completion of a minimum of 120 credit hours of academic work, including a concentration in one or more academic majors. Includes bachelor of arts (B.A.) and bachelor of science (B.S.) degrees, as well as more specialized degrees.

Blue Book: Small, traditionally blue-covered booklets filled with ruled notebook paper that many college instructors use for short-answer and essay exams. In some cases, the instructor provide the blue books with the exam, in others, students must provide them. In more recent times, these booklets have come with different colored covers.

Brain Fitness: A growing number of scientific studies show a connection between physical fitness and brain fitness, and many top-performing students talk about the importance of nutrition and physical exercise in improving their abilities to learn and retain more information. See also *Wellness*.

Certificate Program: Involves a small group of related courses designed to provide expertise in a particular field and typically completed in about one year when the student is enrolled full-time.

Charting Method: A classroom note-taking method that has students make several columns on a piece of paper, each one representing an important category of information that the student expects covered in the lecture (based on chapter readings from the textbook). The Charting Method typically works best for basic classes in which the lectures contain a large number of facts, dates, and relationships. See also *Note-Taking Techniques*.

Class Participation: Some college faculty require -- and grade -- class participation, while others reward active students with bonus points. Either way, the best students find that by participating in class -- asking and/or answering questions -- they understand the course material better, become known by the instructor, and earn better grades. Plus, class discussion can break up a somewhat boring lecture style, take discussion down an unpredictable path, and energize both instructor and students alike. Class participation makes the class more stimulating and interesting to both students and faculty.

Classroom Etiquette: General rules or norms of acceptable behavior that students are expected to follow, such as arriving to class on time, turning off cell phone ringers, paying attention, and not talking out of turn. See our article, [10 Tips for Proper Classroom Etiquette](#).

Class Schedule: List of classes that a particular student is enrolled in during a given term, including course names and sections, instructor, meeting days and times, and classroom or lab location.

Class Standing: Refers to a student's official year in school -- first-year (freshman), sophomore, junior, or senior -- based on the number of college credits completed.

College: A postsecondary institution of learning offering courses and granting degrees in a particular field or fields.

College Stressors: Elements unique to college experience that cause students higher levels of anxiety, and include academic stress (increased workloads and demands on your time), personal stress (typically dealing with personal growth and maturing, as well as relationship issues), family stress (related to leaving family behind and pressures to succeed), financial stress (related to paying for college or working), and future stress (dealing with worries about choosing the right major and career). See our article, [Top College Stressors That Affect Academic Performance](#).

Commencement: Graduation exercises at which academic degrees are conferred to students. Typically, most colleges have at least two commencements -- one in the fall and one in the spring -- though some universities may offer commencement in the spring, but divide it by college into several ceremonies.

Community College: Local educational institution developed to provide a broad array of educational opportunities, typically offering both certificate programs as well as tracks leading to associates degrees. Many community colleges also offer vocational degrees and certification programs.

Commuter Student: A student who does not live on campus. Typically refers to a student living at home, but can also mean any student who lives off-campus.

Concentration: An area of specialization, focusing on a core number of classes in a very specific field. In some majors, students need to choose at least one concentration. For example, a major in management, with a concentration on entrepreneurship.

Concentration Span: Amount of time a student can realistically study before attention fades -- another reason for scheduling studying in relatively small chunks of time to ensure that you continue to absorb the material. Another option is big study blocks with short breaks and rewards built in to help you recharge. See also *Attention Span*.

Convocation: University-wide meetings, typically held at the beginning or end of academic years, in which the top administration discuss the vision and accomplishments of the institution and sometimes present awards to top-performing students.

Core Course/General Requirements: All degree programs have a certain number of courses that all students must complete to earn their degree, typically revolving around English, math, science, social science, and foreign language courses.

Cornell Method: A classroom note-taking method that has students divide notepaper into two columns: a 2-1/2 inch left column/margin and a 6 inch right column. During class, students take notes in the right column, leaving a few lines between major points. Once class is over, you add as much detail to your notes as possible. Then, in the left column, write short descriptions, keywords, or questions that relate to the key points in the right column. See also *Note-Taking Techniques*.

Course Catalog: Official booklet of a college or university that outlines critical information about admissions and academic requirements, majors and minors, courses of study,

Course Description: Typically found in the course catalog (and sometimes on the course syllabus), this narrative contains important information and details about the course, from what the course entails to pre-requisites required.

Course Load: The number of credit hours for which a student is enrolled in a given term, typically with a cutoff between students with part-time status and full-time status. For example, in a semester system, a full-time course load is generally 12 or more credit hours.

Course Number: A cataloging system that contains a series of letters and numbers to designate a course by the department that teaches it and the academic level. For example MKT315 is a junior-level course taught in the marketing department.

Course Section: See *Section*.

Cramming: Attempting to learn all the material for an upcoming test by studying the night before, sometimes referred to as "pulling an all-nighter," in order to memorize key materials. Cramming has some short-term benefits, but results in little long-term learning or comprehension -- and thus should be avoided. Studying in college requires a daily commitment. See also *Study Methods*, *Study Schedule*.

Credit Hour: A unit of measurement that determines the amount of class time required each week of a term. In a typical semester system, a 3-hour class requires classes to meet in three 1-hour sessions, two 1.5 hour sessions, or one 3-hour session.

Cross-Listed Course: A course that is offered for credit in two different academic departments (to fulfill different major or minor requirements), but is the same class regardless of which course designation is used. For example, a class about gender issues in advertising might be cross-listed as both ADV (advertising) and WGS (women and gender studies).

Curriculum: The collection of courses required to complete a degree or certificate program.

Dean: The top administrator and academic officer within a college or school.

Dean's List: A high academic honor that is awarded each term and one that students should aspire to attain. While rules vary by university and college, it's fairly typical that students must have a GPA of 3.7 (A- average) or higher to earn the award.

Degree: Credential awarded to a student who has completed all requirements of a course of study/degree program.

Degree Audit: An evaluation from the college registrar that tracks a student's progress (courses completed, grades received) in his or her degree program (majors and minors),

and a key tool in both academic advising and in future course selection. Sometimes referred to as an *Academic Audit*.

Degree Plan: A sequence of courses and academic requirements that a student must complete in order to graduate. The most organized students -- who know their majors -- can make 4-year degree plans in their first year, thus mapping out their entire college program.

Department: A division within a school or college that offers instruction in a specific subject area.

Department Chair: A faculty member who manages an academic department, and typically the person to see when a student is having scheduling problems or issues with a particular faculty member.

Distance Education: Credit, non-credit, and degree programs offered through a variety of technologies that do not require students to complete any long-term residency. Also referred to as *Distance Learning*.

Double Major: Students who have a strong interest in two subjects may attempt to study both concentrations. For example, a student might double major in history and political science. Most students who double major do not have any minors. With proper planning, double-majoring students should still be able to complete their degree on time. See also *Major*.

Drop Deadline: A key date, typically about midway through a term, with which a student can drop a course he or she is failing without any kind of academic penalty. (There typically is a second drop deadline that deals with any financial penalties.)

Dual Degree: A specialized program in which students are enrolled in two degree programs, often at an accelerated pace and typically resulting in an undergraduate degree and a master's or professional degree.

Elective Course: A course that is not required for any major, minor, or general education requirements, but used to fulfill the credit hours required for a degree. Most degree programs allow for at least a few elective courses.

Essay Exam: A test with one or more comprehensive questions that require a detailed and comprehensive understanding of the course material, far beyond basic knowledge of facts. These exam challenge your knowledge and require you to put your answer in your own words. Compare to *Objective Exam*. See our article, [Top 10 Key Words Used in Essay Exam Questions](#).

Expository Writing: Major umbrella term for most college writing assignments, and many variations fall within the umbrella. In the most simplistic terms, an expository paper is one that explains. An expository essay can explain the views of others (such as other writers as in expository essays about literature), report on an event or situation, or subject (such as in [descriptive essays](#) and [narrative essays](#)), present and summarize a topic in detail (such as in a *report*), compare and contrast two or more works or two or more of anything (as in a [comparative essay](#)), or argue for a certain position (as in an [argumentative essay](#)). For more details see our article, [A Student's Brief Overview of Expository Writing](#).

Faculty: Instructors (also known as lecturers or professors) who teach college courses. Most college faculty have graduate or professional degrees. Full-time faculty typically hold doctoral degrees and prefer to be addressed as "Dr. Last-Name." From highest to lowest, faculty can hold the ranks of (full) professor, associate professor, assistant professor, instructor, and lecturer. See also *Teaching Assistants, Full-Time Faculty, Adjunct Faculty*.

Final Exams: Most colleges set aside a week at the end of each term for professors to administer a major (and often comprehensive and cumulative) exam that represents a major grade for the class. Students should refer to each class syllabus for final exam policies.

Five-Paragraph Formula: A technique to help students organize their writing that works best for shorter assignments, such as essays and papers written over a relatively short period that don't require enormous amounts of research. The basic building blocks of the formula are five paragraphs. See our article, [The Five-Paragraph Formula for College Writing](#).

Freshman/First-Year Student: An entering undergraduate student who has earned fewer than 30 credit hours.

Full-Time Faculty: The core instructors (professors) of a college or university who are under contract for at least a complete academic year. Full-time faculty are generally involved with teaching (1 to 4 courses), advising, and academic and university committee work. See also *Faculty, Professor*.

Full-Time Student: A student who is enrolled in at least 12 credit hours during a given term.

Global Learner: Students who are intuitive decision-makers for whom interpersonal connections are important, solving complex problems and put things together in innovative ways. See also *Learning Style*. See our article, [A Student's Brief Overview of the Global Learning Style](#).

Grade Point Average (GPA): A numeric measure of a student's class performance in a given period or over a number of credits. Many colleges have a strict policy that students must keep a minimum GPA of 2.0 to keep in good academic standing (and keep attending classes), as well as for graduation. Falling below 2.0 can lead to academic suspension or dismissal.

Honor Code: A set of rules, guidelines, or principles that relate to the academic standards expected of all students and faculty. Included are sanctions for students found guilty of violating the code, from failing a class to expulsion. See also *Academic Honesty, Plagiarism*.

Honor Roll: One of two academic honors (the other is Dean's List) that is awarded each term and one which students should aspire to attaining. While rules vary by university and college, it's fairly typical that students must have a GPA of 3.5 (B+ average) or higher to earn the award.

Incomplete Grade: A temporary grade that faculty can award a passing student who, for reasons outside his or her control (illness, death in family, etc.) cannot complete all coursework and assignments in a given term. Students typically have one semester following the incomplete to meet with the professor and complete the work.

Independent Study: A specialized course of study under the supervision of a faculty member. The burden is usually on the student to conduct a much more self-directed study plan than in a normal class setting.

Interdisciplinary Studies: Programs, majors, minors that use a combination of classes from two or more academic disciplines, often to compensate for not having the resources for a complete program. For example, a small college might offer a journalism interdisciplinary major that includes both journalism and English courses to fulfill the major.

Internship: An opportunity for students to gain critical experience in their chosen field of study. While many internships are not paid positions, the experience is invaluable -- both in gaining a better understanding of how what you are studying applies to the workplace, but also to help fine-tune your specific career path. Many programs provide college credit for internships. See this free internship tutorial from our sister site QuintCareers.com, [Get That Internship -- and Excel in it! Tutorial](#).

Junior: An undergraduate student who has earned between 60 and 89 credit hours.

Junior College: Another name for community college.

Keywords: Key tool for conducting academic research, which you will employ to find both library and Internet resources. Finding the best keywords -- and understanding how different research tools use keywords and keyword phrases -- is both an art and a science (as well as some trial and error). The best students are persistent and creative in using keywords. See our article, [A Student's Brief Overview of Using Keywords to Search for Research Sources](#).

Kinesthetic/Tactile Learner: Students who prefer to take in information through movement, manipulation, and touch. They tend to be able to operate equipment without reading instructions. They can easily learn dance steps and athletic maneuvers. About 5 percent of learners are kinesthetic/tactile. See also *Learning Style*. See our article, [A Student's Brief Overview of the Kinesthetic/Tactile Learning Style](#).

Lab/Laboratory Class: Learning environment in which hands-on work is completed, typically in science and foreign languages.

Learning Style: Refers to a student's learning preference -- how a student best acquires and absorbs information. Everyone learns a bit differently, with preferences for how best to take in information. Major learning styles include *Visual*, *Kinesthetic/Tactile*, and *Auditory*. Two other learning styles that overlap include *Global* and *Analytical/Sequential*. See our article, [What's Your Learning Style -- and How Can You Make the Most of It?](#).

Lecture: A class session in which the instructor speaks on a specific topic or topics for the entire class period. A very common method of college instruction, lectures require a strong note-taking strategy.

Life-Balance: Perhaps one of the most important things for academic success is finding a balance among all the demands college students face. Some of the best students are those who are very involved in social and professional activities on campus, but being too involved can also impact your ability to study. See our article, [10 Tips for Finding Life Balance in College](#).

Lower Division Course: An undergraduate course that is designed for and taught at the first-year or sophomore level. All community college courses are lower division by definition. Lower-division courses are often numbered 100 or 200 (or 1000 or 2000).

Major: A concentration of courses that is a student's primary course of study. Students must major in a subject while in college, though some double major, and others pursue one or more minors. See this article from our sister site QuintCareers.com: [Choosing a College Major: How to Chart Your Ideal Path](#).

Mapping Method: A classroom note-taking method that is all about relating facts from lectures to each other in some form of graphic representation (such as tree diagrams), typically revolving around the central point(s) of the lecture. This method works well for when you have lectures that cover large amounts of interrelated material. See also *Note-Taking Techniques*.

Mid-Term Exams: A major -- and sometimes first -- subject exam given toward the middle of the term. Often used to establish mid-term grades for colleges that require interim grade reports, and scheduled before final drop deadline for students at risk for failing.

Minor: A secondary course of study, typically with a concentration smaller than a major, that a student chooses to enhance his or her major or simply to pursue a subject of interest.

Mnemonics: Study method that involves organizing key concepts using each concept's first letter to create a sense or nonsense word or acronym that is easy for you to remember. Originating from the Greek term for memory, mnemonics is an effective way to remember hard-to-retain lists of facts. For example, if you were trying to remember the order of taxonomy in biology, you might use a common mnemonic (or make one of your own), such as Kids Prefer Cheese Over Fresh Garden Salad, which is designed to help recall Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, Species. See also *Study Methods*.

Non-Credit Course: A course in which no credit is offered toward degree requirements.

Non-Degree-Seeking Student: Sometimes also referred as a transient student, this student takes courses for personal enrichment or as part of pre-requisites for graduate or professional programs.

Nondocumentary Research Sources: Unpublished forms of communication and information, which can include conversations with faculty members, other students, and experts in the field. See also *Research Sources*.

Note-Taking Techniques: One of the most important skills to learn is how to take good class notes. Taking notes will keep you actively engaged in the course material, help organize your thinking and opinions on the material, and better prepare you for studying for quizzes and exams. See also *Charting, Cornell, Mapping, Outlining, and Sentence Methods*. See our article, [10 Tips for Excellent Note-Taking](#).

Objective Exam: Tests in which there is only one (objective) correct answer to the questions. Examples of objective exams include multiple-choice, true-false, fill-in-the-blank, and matching questions. Objective exams test your ability to recognize the correct (right, best) answer and are extremely popular for testing your ability to define terminology. Compare to *Essay Exam*.

Office Hours: The dates and times that college faculty set aside to meet with students enrolled in their classes. Students should use these times to meet with professors regarding any problems, issues, or questions related to their classes. See our article, [When It's Time to Meet With Your Professor: 10 Do's and Don'ts for Office Visits](#).

Open Book Exam: A class test in which students are allowed to refer to their textbooks, notes, and/or a one-page study sheet or index card. Be wary of a common mistake that students make in assuming an open book exam is easier because of the access to study materials, as this type of exam is more about testing your understanding of complex relationships than about facts and terms.

Outlining: A key tool for writing paper, an outline is an organizational framework, the skeleton of your paper -- and a key tool to avoiding poor organization. A good outline serves as a road map that enables you to visualize where your paper is headed. See our article, [The Power of Outlining When Writing College Papers](#).

Outlining Method: A classroom note-taking method that involves listening to the lecture/discussion and writing key points and material in a logical pattern or order. Because many lectures are presented in outline form, this method works naturally in those classes. As with any outline method, your notes should be organized around major points, followed by supporting information (either indented or bulleted). See also *Note-Taking Techniques*.

Overload: Occurs in a given term when a student attempts to register and complete a higher number of credit hours (and courses) than is typically considered a standard load. Permission is often required by an academic department head or dean.

Part-Time Student: A student enrolled in fewer credit hours (and courses) in a given term than the college considers as full-time. A change to part-time status typically affects financial aid, housing, and meal plans.

Pass/Fail Option: Some colleges offer an option to take a small number of courses -- typically free electives that do not count to a major or core educational requirements -- to be taken as pass/fail (instead of granting the typical letter grades).

Plagiarism: A major form of academic dishonesty that occurs when a student uses the words of another without attribution, passing them off as their own. Typical examples include borrowing passages from published materials, using the works of others without their permission, and submitting a paper written entirely or in part by someone else. See also *Academic Honesty*.

Postsecondary: Refers to all educational programs after high school, including technical schools, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities.

Practice Test: A study method in which students take a simulated exam prior to the actual test. Practice tests can often be acquired from the professor, department, textbook Website, or by developing your own.

Practicum: A course designed to provide students with supervised practical experience in which students apply the materials learned in their coursework to the actual situation. An example is student-teaching for education majors.

Prerequisite: A course that is required to be taken and passed prior to registering for another course. A number of upper-division courses often have prerequisites.

Primary Research Sources: Published original writings, reflections, and reports that can be found in books, periodicals, monographs conference proceedings, patents, and theses and dissertations. See also *Research Sources*.

Professor: General term for all faculty teaching at a college or university. If your professor holds a doctorate degree (Ph.D.), it is a sign of respect to refer to him or her as Doctor [LastName] unless otherwise instructed. See also *Faculty*.

Provost: The senior academic officer of a college or university.

Quarter: One of two types of academic terms during which courses are taught; the other is the semester. Quarters typically last 8 to 12 weeks.

Registrar: A key administrator and office on any college campus who oversees such things as registration, storing academic credit records, maintaining academic audit sheets, and dealing with transfer credits from other colleges.

Registration: When students enroll (register) for classes for an upcoming academic term.

Research Paper: A form of academic writing that requires abstract and critical thinking about a topic and includes an integration of research findings with the student's own ideas. See our article, [A Five-Component Plan for Writing a Research Paper](#).

Research Sources: Research is the backbone of most of the writing assignments students complete in college. Different professors require different levels and types of research, so know what is expected before you begin. The major research sources include *primary sources*, *secondary sources*, *tertiary sources*, and *nondocumentary sources*. See our article, [Using Research Sources Effectively](#).

Residency Requirement: For state universities that offer a two-tiered tuition schedule (in-state, out-of-state), proof that the student or student's family reside in the state to qualify for resident status (and lower tuition costs).

Resident/Non-Resident Status: The determination, for tuition purposes, whether or not a student is obligated to pay resident fees or non-resident fees. Resident status typically requires having lived in the state for at least one year prior.

Review Session: Class period, often outside of normal class time, when a professor provides a review of course material for an upcoming exam, including answering questions from students in attendance. These sessions are a great opportunity to raise questions, review the material, and perhaps gain some insights into what to expect on the exam.

Schedule of Classes: A publication (now mostly Web-based) that is released prior to registration for the next term, and includes the list of courses, faculty, sections, hours, and classroom locations.

Scholarship: Monetary awards (that do not need to be repaid) presented to college students based on various criteria, such as need-based, academic excellence, leadership, community service, and extracurricular activities.

Secondary Research Sources: Published writings and reports that analyze, critique, or report on a primary source and can be found in periodicals and reference books. See also *Research Sources*.

Section: Some courses offered during a given term may have multiple class offerings -- on different days, different times, and sometimes different faculty. In terms of registration, courses with multiple sections give you the most flexibility and should be considered only after you have chosen classes that only offer one or two sections.

Semester: One of two types of academic terms during which courses are taught; the other is the quarter. Semesters typically last 14 to 16 weeks.

Seminar: A small class (generally about 12-15 students) engaged in the study of a specific subject under the mentoring of a faculty member. Typically only offered at the junior, senior, and graduate levels.

Senior: An undergraduate student who has earned 90 or more credit hours.

Sentence Method: A classroom note-taking method that is the best note-taking method when speed and efficiency are the crucial elements. In this method, typically when the

instructor covers a large amount of material in a short period of time, you simply write each new fact, definition, or topic on a separate line of your notebook. While it works well for capturing large amounts of information, this technique does not allow you to capture relationships or identify major points from minor points. See also *Note-Taking Techniques*.

Sophomore: An undergraduate student who has earned between 30 and 59 credit hours.

SQ3R: Study and reading method that stands for the words survey, question, read, recite, and review. Survey revolves around gathering, skimming, and reviewing the information (notes, textbook) you need to learn. Question deals with raising issues as you are surveying (whether reviewing or reading), such as "what do I already know and what was it the professor emphasized in class?" Read involves rereading the material and trying to look for answers to the questions you raised previously. Recite deals with reviewing the material and putting the concepts into your own words (mentally or on paper), sometimes actually saying them out loud so that you also hear your words. Review is about the importance of going through the entire process again and again until you are confident you have comprehensive knowledge of the material. See also *Study Methods*.

Study Abroad: College coursework that students take outside the U.S., providing a great opportunity to experience foreign cultures and travel. Most colleges have partnerships with foreign colleges and universities, providing an almost seamless transfer of credits from the study abroad experience.

Study Groups: Studying with a group of friends, which can be a fun and rewarding study method -- as long as students pick group members wisely and follow a few rules. Study groups should not be your sole method of studying, but they can be a great supplement to your individual efforts. Unlike other types of studying, talking out issues in study groups is another form of active learning, the strongest kind of learning.

Study Methods: Tools that have been developed to assist students in helping learn, not just memorize. What's the difference? Memorization is short-term, meaning what you memorize today will begin to fade pretty quickly. Learning is long-term because it transfers what you are studying into something that you can apply to various situations, and the more you use something, the longer you retain it. Some common study methods include ASPIRE, Mind-Mapping, Mnemonics, PORPE, SQR3.

Study Schedule: Studying in college is best done by regularly reviewing course material in smaller chunks -- to help train your brain into thinking and retaining information differently and avoiding all-night cramming for an upcoming test or assignment, and giving

you a more positive attitude about learning. Professors recommend two to three hours of out-of-class study time for each hour of class time.

Successful Intelligence Theory: Asserts that a person's overall intelligence comprises three distinct elements -- that when you are trying to solve a problem you use a combination of analytical, creative, and practical thinking skills. See our article, [Successful Intelligence: Use Your Smarts to Solve Problems in School](#).

Syllabus: A document (which some students and faculty see as the binding agreement about a course) provided at the beginning of a term that outlines the key elements of a course, including things such as learning objectives, assigned readings, major assignments, and test and quiz information. Usually includes a course calendar with due dates. The best students know to review and refer to the syllabus regularly throughout the term.

Take-Home Exam: All or part of a class test that must be completed outside of class. Be wary of a common mistake that students make in assuming a take-home exam is easier because of the access to study materials; quite often, these exams are much more difficult to complete than in-class exams.

Teaching Assistant: Typically a graduate student who either facilitates small, discussion sections of a very large lecture course taught by a professor or teaches his or her own sections of introductory courses. Many larger universities use TAs to fill multiple sections of many basic courses.

Team Assignments/Projects: Most college courses consist of individual work -- whether tests, papers, or projects -- but some courses require team assignments, which involve learning how to work with other students to complete a project. See our article, [10 Tips for Working in Student Teams](#).

Term: A period of time during which courses are offered. See Quarter and Semester for the two most common academic terms.

Term Paper: Generic name for an original student paper that is generally due at the end of the term. Research papers are a form of term papers. See also *Research Paper*.

Tertiary Research Sources: Include indexes, dictionaries, guides, and bibliographies. See also *Research Sources*.

Test Preparation: One of the most important keys to success for many college students is developing good test-taking preparation skills and habits -- such as reading all the course material, studying on a regular basis throughout the term, and knowing the types of exam questions to expect. See our article, [10 Tips for Better Test Preparation](#).

Time Management: A crucial skill students must learn in college to handle all the competing demands on their time. Common methods students use to manage their time include to-do lists, planners, and personal digital assistants (PDAs) -- but none of these systems will help if you do not make good use of all your time. See our articles, [Five Tips for Managing Multiple Deadlines](#) and [Time Management Do's and Don'ts: Conquering the Time-Management Monster](#) .

Transcript: Official record of a student's academic work showing dates attended, courses taken, grades earned, and credits received -- typically provided by a college's registrar.

Transfer Credit: College credit earned at one college or university and applied and accepted for credit at a different school. Process works both for college students who decide to transfer from one college to another as well as for students who wish to take summer classes at a different school.

Transfer Student: Student who attends one college but decides to leave that school and apply for admission to a different college or university. The student then transfers some (or in rare cases, all) credits from old school to new school.

Tutoring: An option offered by most college and universities to assist students who need assistance in a particular subject, such as languages, writing, and math. Often, tutors are outstanding juniors or seniors (or graduate students).

Undecided Student: A student who enters college with an undeclared major. Colleges often offer special programs for undecided students with names such as Discovery Students or Student Explorers. These students are often put into programs to assist them in finding their majors, but the key should be that for most students, there is no need to rush in choosing a major -- at least until the end of the sophomore year. See also *Major*.

Undergraduate Student: College student who is pursuing a baccalaureate degree.

Upper Division Course: An undergraduate course that is designed for and taught at the junior or senior levels. Upper-division courses are often numbered 300 or 400 (or 3000 or 4000). Some upper-division courses may need to be applied to or be approved by the professor, and in many cases, a prerequisite for taking the course is junior or senior standing.

Visual Learner: Students who prefer to take in information through sight and likes to learn through reading, diagrams, charts, graphs, maps, and pictures. These learners can easily mentally "see" facts and concepts and are said to be able to recall at least 75 percent of material read or observed. About 60 percent of people are visual learners. See also *Learning Styles*. See our article, [A Student's Brief Overview of the Visual Learning Style](#).

Vocabulary: The collection of words a student knows and uses in everyday speech and writing. More successful students understand the importance of growing and expanding their vocabulary, from learning a new word each day to other methods of expanding their understanding and usage of words. See our article, [Improve Your Writing With These 25 Words That are Sure to Impress Your Readers \(and Your Professors\)](#).

Wellness: Plays a critical role in a student's ability to study and achieve greater academic success. Wellness is about taking an active role in becoming aware -- and making choices toward -- a healthy existence and developing a good life-balance. See also *Life-Balance*.

Withdrawal: Typically refers to the dropping of all courses for which a student is registered in a given term.

Work-Study: A Federal financial aid program providing part-time employment to students based on the financial need of students and available jobs within the university.

Writing: For many students, writing is the most difficult part of attaining academic success. Some have little difficulty with tests and other assignments but suffer major angst and fear over writing. The good news is that with practice, you can overcome your fears and weaknesses and become a better writer. See our article, [Tips for Polishing Your Writing](#).

Writing Flaws: Errors that result in lower grades, including: misspellings/typos; awkward or confusing sentence structures; sentence fragments; run-on sentences; incorrect word usage; punctuation problems; poor or nonexistent transitions; wordiness; nonagreement of

subject and verb. See our article, [The Top 15 Writing Flaws That Can Lead to Lower Grades.](#)