

7 Strategies for Success

- 1. Get to know yourself as a thinker and learner.** When and where are you most productive? What tends to distract you? Knowing your intellectual proclivities and habits helps you to apportion your time more effectively and to be more productive overall.
- 2. Set a personal goal for each course.** Instead of focusing solely on the grade, consider how each course deepens your expertise in a field of interest or contributes to your overall intellectual development. In other words, motivate yourself in terms of mastering skills and concepts as opposed to getting a good grade or avoiding a bad one.
- 3. Manage your time and your attention.** People who devise detailed, goal-directed schedules are more productive and less stressed. And once you've scheduled your calendar, focus and stick to it by setting external stakes (meeting with professors, a reading group, or ACE fellows) and rewards (dinner with friends, TV, etc.). During a study session, be in the moment: turn off distractions (cell phones, e-mail) and dedicate yourself to a single task. Divide or continuously switch your attention and you do several things poorly instead of one thing well.
- 4. Think like a professor.** Instructors have reasons for why they craft their courses as they do. As you move through your courses, spend some time considering these reasons. Ask yourself, for example, why you're reading this text and this point in the semester or what this writing assignment is designed to help you to *do*.
- 5. Review your notes as soon as possible after class.** Students forget 50% of what they learn if they don't review within 24 hours and 65% if they don't review within a week. Even a brief review pays off.
- 6. Do a little work on an assignment the day it's given, preferably mapping out a plan or outline for its completion.** Starting a project often proves the hardest part; starting early gets you over this high hurdle with plenty of time to develop your work.
- 7. Explain a difficult idea, concept, problem, or passage to a friend.** Research shows that one of the most effective ways to learn is to teach. If you try to explain what you've been studying to another, you'll transfer the information from short- to long-term memory, and you'll more clearly see what you understand and what you don't.

Take advantage of all the wonderful resources at Princeton designed to help you succeed as a student, including the McGraw Center's offerings; strategies workshops, review sessions, individual and group tutoring, as well as the Writing Center, reference librarians at Firestone, etc.