



Instructor's Guide

ACADEMIC SUCCESS: SMART TIPS FOR SERIOUS STUDENTS

Introduction

This Teacher's Guide provides information to help you get the most out of *Academic Success: Smart Tips for Serious Students*. The contents of the guide will allow you to prepare your students before using the program and to present follow-up activities to reinforce the program's key learning points.

The *Academic Success* series is a six-part series designed to help students at the start of their college career to improve their study habits, test preparation, time management, and critical listening and processing abilities. This suite of critical skills, along with the focus on identifying personal values and setting realistic goals also emphasized in the program, will help viewers become more effective and efficient students. Especially valuable as students make their transition from high school to college, this program addresses the challenges many students face in prioritizing academics and using their time wisely to accomplish objectives in and out of the classroom. After viewing the six parts of this series, students should feel prepared to actively manage their time, think critically about their school assignments, study "smarter" and more effectively, apply new techniques to listening and remembering information, take tests with new confidence in their abilities, conduct more targeted academic research, and improve their writing habits.

Learning Objectives

After viewing the program, students will be able to:

- Articulate personal and academic values and goals
- Make effective use of their time to balance school, extracurricular, family, and employment responsibilities
- Apply critical thinking skills to current and future academic undertakings
- Understand practical strategies for improving reading and studying skills
- Prepare more successfully for taking tests and put new techniques to successful use while taking tests
- Streamline research and writing efforts for effective results
- Be better prepared to transition from high school academics to college-level work

Educational Standards

National Standards

This program correlates with the National Standards for Family & Consumer Sciences Education from the Family and Consumer Sciences Education Association. The content has been aligned with the following educational standards and benchmarks from this organization.

- Evaluate reasoning for self and others
- Demonstrate scientific inquiry and reasoning to gain factual knowledge and test theories on which to base judgments for action
- Demonstrate transferable and employability skills in school, community and workplace settings

The National Standards for Family and Consumer Sciences Education reprinted with permission.

English Language Arts Standards

This program correlates with the National Standards for the English Language Arts from the National Council of Teachers of English. The content has been aligned with the following educational standards and benchmarks from this organization.

- Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
- Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
- Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

The activities in this Teacher's Guide were created in compliance with the following National Standards for the English Language Arts from the National Council of Teachers of English.

- Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
- Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
- Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
- Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

Standards for the English Language Arts, by the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English, copyright 1996 by the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English. Reprinted with permission.

Technology Standards

The activities in this Teacher's Guide were created in compliance with the following National Education Technology Standards from the National Education Technology Standards Project.

- Creativity and Innovation: Students demonstrate creative thinking, construct knowledge, and develop innovative products and processes using technology.
- Research and Information Fluency: Students apply digital tools to gather, evaluate, and use information.
- Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making: Students use critical thinking skills to plan and conduct research, manage projects, solve problems, and make informed decisions using appropriate digital tools and resources.

The National Education Technology Standards reprinted with permission from the International Society for Technology Education.

Series Overview

Students are usually very excited to graduate from high school and move on to higher education. Through their performance in high school and acceptance into college, they've demonstrated the potential to succeed on this next rung of education. However, once on campus, do they actually have the academic and personal skills to keep performing well? This six-part series utilizes real students and seasoned college administrators to ask the challenging questions about effective academic skills and offers many realistic, practical tips.

Academic Success doesn't just tell students what to do to achieve academic success, it gives them the opportunity to actively practice and put their new knowledge to immediate use. Exercises and questions woven into the videos allow students to try their hand right away at the new tips and techniques presented. Academic success is not just about scoring well on tests or writing good papers — though of course these are important components! As the video highlights, succeeding in school means managing time and commitments wisely, listening and recording information effectively, and proactively addressing problems and challenges when they come up, not after they've grown out of control. This is a practical series filled with real information for students looking to refine their skills, and the six episodes empower students with the knowledge that they can improve their academic performance with seemingly small (but very meaningful) adjustments to their study and classroom habits. Students should approach this series ready to learn and practice. Though not everyone learns the same way, as *Academic Success* highlights, by identifying specific tools and approaches provided in the video that work for them, students should see real improvement. At the conclusion of the series, students are ready to study smarter, listen better, write more effectively — and see real results.

Programs

Program 1: Values and Goals

What is a value? How are your values and your goals connected? This episode defines values and goals, and explores how actively clarifying what makes you happy and what you want to achieve in life can help you succeed. Students learn how setting short and medium term goals can help them meet their long-term objectives.

Program 2: Time Management

When making the transition from the structured schedule of high school to the flexible and fluid calendar of college, students often fail to manage their commitments and responsibilities effectively. Here, the program explores tips and techniques for scheduling, avoiding cramming and all-nighters, and achieving a good balance between what one wants to do and what one has to do.

Program 3: Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving

College students are expected to examine issues and questions systematically and objectively, synthesizing multiple viewpoints and utilizing past experience. They are also expected to put these critical thinking skills to work in solving complex problems, whether academic or more personal. In this episode of the series, students learn what critical thinking and problem solving actually are, and hear from students and administrators on how they might sharpen their own skills in this area.

Program 4: Active Listening and Note-Taking

Everyone is guilty of it — occasionally zoning out in class and missing key information from a professor's lecture or class discussion. In episode 4, students focus on how to engage and actively participate in class, and also on the most practical and effective ways to take useful and complete notes.

Program 5: Research, Reading, and Writing

Research, reading, and writing are critical college skills — success in almost every class (and beyond in the professional world) depends on successful execution in each of these linked areas. Strong performance in one area typically requires competency in the other two. Here, students hear insider pointers and recommendations on improving their own academic abilities.

Program 6: Studying and Test-Taking

Certainly topics feared by many students! Upon entering college, many students think they are supposed to pull all-nighters and cram their learning into one night of intense study before an exam. This final episode of the series emphasizes the many more effective ways to prepare for and take tests, and addresses some of the anxiety around test-taking with practical tips and strategies.

Insight and Tips

Values and Goals: Insight and Tips

- What makes you happy? Answering this question can help you define your values.
- Values and goals motivate you and keep you moving forward when you are tempted to give up. They also help clarify your priorities when your principles are challenged or you feel overwhelmed with decisions.
- Considering what you value in life can help you set your long-term goals. For instance, if you value education, you might want to pursue graduate studies.
- First, identify a key long-term goal for yourself, such as becoming a doctor. Next, set short and medium term goals that will help you achieve your ultimate objective. For instance, take pre-medical coursework and sign up for a preparation course for taking the MCAT.
- Short- and medium-term goals help you create a blueprint for the actions you need to take to achieve your objectives in life.

Time Management: Insight and Tips

- Remember, your time in high school was likely very structured and planned, while your time in college will be much more fluid and open. Think about and plan for this difference ahead of time.
- Work-life balance is important. Ensure that you schedule things that you WANT to do in with the assignments and commitments you HAVE to do.
- A very common mistake that wastes time is getting distracted by going on the Internet while studying or writing a paper. Consider turning off your computer before studying or working in a place where you don't have Internet access for maximum focus.
- When you get to college, it will be very exciting, and easy to over-commit yourself to clubs and activities. Before joining anything, review all of your choices and think realistically about how they might fit in with your class, work, and study schedules. Start slow — you can always look to get more involved later in college.
- So you've taken the time to write out a schedule for your semester? Now actually pay attention to and follow it! A schedule book won't do you any good if you never open it.

Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving: Insight and Tips

- Emotions such as anxiety, frustration, or anger can cloud your objective judgment. When you need to think critically about an issue or problem, do your best to remove emotion from the process. This might mean taking a break and coming back to the problem, or asking someone for help.
- College students are expected to approach problem solving with an open mind. When giving thought to an issue, seek out different sources and viewpoints before making up your own mind.
- Breaking down a larger problem into smaller pieces can make it less overwhelming. Instead of trying to solve everything at once, identify a small part of the issue that you can address quickly and successfully.
- Part of critical thinking is knowing if you've picked the appropriate place and time to take action. Consider your particular situation and those people involved when making choices.
- There are always people around to help you! If you need a different perspective or just to talk a problem out, reach out to a friend, a professor, a school administrator, or a tutor.

Active Listening and Note-Taking: Insight and Tips

- Passive listening is letting a professor's words go in and out of your mind without thinking about them or committing them to memory. To get the most out of your classes, make sure you are actively listening — asking questions, taking notes, and participating in discussions.
- If you need an extra push to pay attention in class, try to sit in the front of the room or near the professor. It will be harder to zone out or fall asleep.
- Review your class notes the same day you take them. The information will be fresh in your mind, and you can fill in any blanks you might have. A second review of the information in the same day will also help you really remember it.
- There are many different styles of note-taking. Try a few and see what works best for you — there's not one right way.
- When possible, compare your class notes to a friend in the same class. You both might realize you missed a key piece of information and by comparing are able to fill that in to your own notes.

Research, Reading, and Writing: Insight and Tips

- Your college employs experienced librarians who can help you learn about and access the many resources of the library. Get to know them and take advantage of their skills and knowledge to improve your own abilities.
- Use caution when citing Internet sources in a paper. Never use only Internet sources (unless specifically instructed to do so) and verify that the sites you do use are accurate.
- You will have a great deal of reading for your college classes, usually much more than you had in high school. Stay on top of your reading, doing some every night or every week. You don't want to get to the week before a final exam and realize you have chapters and chapters still to read!
- To help organize your writing, develop a structured outline before starting a paper. This will help you stay on track and organize your thoughts in a meaningful and coherent way. You may even ask your professor or a tutor to review your outline before starting the paper to ensure you are on the right track.
- Be careful when using spell-check! After running spell-check, always go back and review any changes to ensure they are all accurate for your paper.

Studying and Test-Taking: Insight and Tips

- Cramming usually doesn't work! Start preparing for tests well ahead of time and leave the night before for a final review and good night of sleep.
- If appropriate for the subject matter, consider making study tools such as flashcards. Just creating the cards will reinforce your knowledge, and actively practicing with them engages your mind on the subject.
- When you first get the test, quickly review the whole document before starting. Move quickly through the questions you do know and come back to those on which you are unsure. Leave time to check your answers at the end.
- While taking a test, be conscious of time. If there are essays or other lengthy questions, be sure to leave enough time so that you are not rushing through them.
- Anxiety about a test is not going to help you — in fact, it will probably hurt your performance. Work on staying calm during test-taking — ask for help if you need it.

What NOT To Do

Values and Goals: What NOT to Do

- DON'T let other people define your values and goals for you. It's always good to listen to and consider the advice of those around you, but decide for yourself what makes you happy and what you want out of life.
- DON'T give up if you don't immediately achieve what you want. Patience and practice are important skills — you will value your accomplishments much more if you really work towards them.
- DON'T set only long-term goals without also setting some shorter-term ones. How will you reach your big goals without smaller ones to help you get there?
- DON'T believe that money and financial success are the only worthwhile career goals you should have. Think about what really makes you happy and what kind of job would inspire and excite you.

Time Management: What NOT to Do

- DON'T be a slave to time — be a master of time instead. Make your schedule work for you and not the other way around.
- DON'T have an empty schedule that only includes classes. Not only will you be missing out on interesting activities and clubs, but having a fuller schedule will actually help you prioritize and get things done.
- DON'T forget to schedule breaks from studying and time for fun in addition to school and employment commitments. Work-life balance is important. Ensure that you are taking time to blow off steam, enjoy your friends, and create good college memories.
- DON'T think that your college schedule will be the same as your high school one. You have much more control over and responsibility for how you spend your time as a college student.

Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving: What NOT to Do

- DON'T make important decisions when you are emotional or angry. Whenever possible, take time to rationally consider and analyze your choices.
- DON'T think your problems are too overwhelming for you to address. By taking a systematic, objective approach and breaking down larger problems into smaller pieces, you can often solve them effectively.
- DON'T be afraid to ask for help. There are always resources around you to put to good use.
- DON'T get frustrated and give up. Try to find a different angle or new approach when solving problems. If needed, step away from the situation and come back to it with a fresh mind.

Active Listening and Note-Taking: What NOT to Do

- DON'T try to capture and write down every word the professor says. You will lose track of the context of material, fall behind and feel lost, and feel frustrated and frantic — it's not possible to write down every single word the professor says.
- DON'T highlight every other line in the text when reading for class. When you go back to study, so much highlighting will confuse what information is actually most important. Highlighting text can be a passive activity as well — as soon as you see a keyword, you can just highlight that line and zone out a bit.

- DON'T skip class and copy your friend's notes. Someone else's notes will never be as meaningful or clear to you as your own, and won't be as helpful when you are studying for a test. Copying is also a passive activity that doesn't require your full engagement, and, perhaps most importantly, might violate your school's code of academic integrity. Ensure you understand what this code covers and how its stipulations affect you.

Research, Reading, and Writing: What NOT to Do

- DON'T conduct only Internet research unless specifically instructed to do so. It's not always reliable, there many other excellent sources to explore, and only making use of the Internet demonstrates a certain level of laziness.
- DON'T ignore the correct citation procedures for crediting research sources.
- DON'T skim class reading too quickly to fully absorb the important information.
- DON'T put off class reading until the end of the semester or before a test — you will fall behind, be unable to participate as fully in class, and feel overwhelmed as a test or final exam approaches.
- DON'T write in a rambling, disorganized manner — although it's important to sound natural when writing, papers should not sound exactly as you would talk. And just writing what comes to mind without organizing or summarizing your thoughts demonstrates a lack of preparation for the assignment.
- DON'T make (and fail to correct) careless spelling and grammar errors in writing assignments. Proofread everything you will turn in carefully!

Studying and Test-Taking: What NOT to Do

- DON'T study for tests by cramming at the last minute and pulling all-nighters. This behavior is stressful on the mind and body, relies more on memorization than actually learning the material, ratchets up the anxiety level already surrounding tests, and contributes to (and is the result of) procrastination and poor time management.
- DON'T just flip through your textbook and notes for hours and call it studying. Effective studying needs to be much more active — answer practice questions, quiz a friend, make flash cards, etc.
- DON'T skip class. Material talked about in class (and perhaps not in the text) will certainly be on the test. Also, class discussions reinforce the readings and contribute to a better understanding of the topic.
- DON'T panic before (or during) tests. You need to focus your energy on actually studying for and taking the test, not worrying about how you will do on it.
- DON'T convince yourself that you are just a bad test taker and that you won't succeed no matter what you do to improve.
- DON'T participate in study groups that are too social and don't really accomplish any actual studying.

Pre-Program Discussion Questions

1. Why are you looking forward to being a college student? Do you have any anxieties about being a college student? How do you think college academics will be similar to and different from high school work?
2. What are some of your goals for during and after college? How do you think you might reach those goals?
3. Do you currently keep a calendar or schedule book? If so, what do you schedule or write down in it? If not, do you think it might be useful to have one? Why or why not?
4. What is your favorite academic subject? How do you act in your favorite class? What is an academic subject you don't care as much for? Are there any differences in your behavior in that class compared to your favorite class?
5. How do you usually study for tests? Do you find your style is effective? Why or why not?

Post-Program Discussion Questions

1. What do you value? How did you figure out what you value? How did or will your values help you set personal goals?
2. If you had to write up a schedule for next week using the tips and recommendations from the film, what would yours contain? (Can ask students to create a weekly schedule and compare with classmates here)
3. What did the people in the film mean by "active listening"? What would active listening look like for you? Why do you think it might help you be a more effective student?
4. What are some of the challenges with using Internet sources when writing a paper? How might you address these concerns?
5. Why doesn't cramming for a test usually work very well? What are some better strategies for studying and test-taking?

Group, Individual, and Internet Activities

Values and Goals

Group

- As depicted in the program, ask groups of students to work together to create their own video diaries (or skits, if video equipment is not available) with individual students in the group giving advice and insight into values and goals. View videos together as a class and comment on similarities and differences in the advice.
- Have small groups of students choose a literary character or historical figure (this could be in conjunction with a current class students are taking). Groups should identify the long-term goal or objective of this character/person, and create a timeline or other depiction of the short- and medium-term goals that helped him or her reach the ultimate long-term objective. You may encourage students to be creative in mapping out these blueprint goals. Ask groups to share their goal timelines with the rest of the class.
- Together, peruse college literature or Web sites — these might be colleges where students are already accepted or schools in which they are interested. Choose a few different types of institutions to explore. Ask students to identify the values of a particular college or university — these might be articulated in a mission statement or college homepage. Once students have identified specific values, next ask them to continue to use the literature/website to help understand how the school's values connect to its goals. For instance, a college with a religious affiliation might value promoting faith-based education, and thus their goal might be to have every student take a religion class. A state university might value affordable education, and so might have a goal of not raising tuition costs for in-state students. Encourage students to identify how the values of a school and their own personal values might connect or overlap.

Individual

- As the students in the video do, ask students to each identify a key long-term goal. This might be going to graduate school, becoming a veterinarian, or buying a house. Once the long-term objective is clear, students should develop at least 3 short-term and 3 medium-term goals that will help them achieve their long-term goal. Beyond this exercise, encourage students to create these plans whenever they identify a personal objective to achieve.
- Values can be a subject of sensitivity, confusion, and passion with students. To deflect some of the personal nature of considering one's values, ask students to each write a short creative story, comic strip, or play depicting the challenges of identifying and sticking to personal values, even in the face of adversity or challenge. Invite volunteers to share their creations with the class.

- Ask students to imagine that they will become stranded on a deserted island and have the opportunity to take two items with them. Assuming food and water are available on the island, what two things would they take? After students record their answers, reflect on what individual student decisions say about personal values. For example, someone who values practicality might take a pocketknife. Someone who places an emphasis on family might take a photo album. Encourage volunteers to share their items and what choosing those items might mean.

Internet

- Have students identify a career in which they are interested (or choose a few careers ahead of this activity). The class should use the Internet to search detailed information about the steps and requirements needed to pursue this particular career. For instance, if someone wants to own a small business, he or she might need an idea, a business plan, partners or backers, a small business loan, space or equipment, finances, customer base, advertising, background in sales or business, etc. Using the information found online, students should create a goal timeline of short, medium, and long-term goals for this particular career.
- A gentle reminder about one's values and goals can make staying with them and achieving them easier. Ask students to set up a periodic email reminder to themselves emphasizing an important value or key goal — this email might be inspirational, have a photo of the goal attached, or simply remind students what makes them happy and why they should stay true to what they value.
- Once students are attending college, finances will be a huge (and challenging) part of their everyday lives. Every student should set financial goals for him- or herself and set up a realistic plan to actually meet these goals. Through Internet research, students should investigate what online tools exist for money management and planning and record the pros and cons of each. Examples might be online banking, savings online with higher interest rates, online bill pay, direct deposit by a campus employer, or organizational tools like Quicken. What could students see themselves using while in college? How might these tools help with financial goals?

Time Management

Group

- Assign students to small groups to review the following scenarios and provide suggestions and possible solutions to them:
 - ~ A student who wants to sing in the choir and play basketball realizes that, once a week, the practice schedules conflict. Instead of discussing options with the choir director and coach to see if some sort of timing arrangement or compromise can be worked out, she (with disappointment) pursues only one of the activities.
 - ~ A student has a research paper due and a major test to take on the same day. The student carefully plans out weeks of work on the paper, but forgets to slot in study time for the test. The night before, the student is cramming to study for the test and loses the previously allotted time to put the finishing touches on the project.

~ A student agrees with a boss to work 10 hours a week, and that student plans to commit at least another 5 hours per week working in a science lab with a mentor. Although the agreed commitment to the job was 10 hours, the boss keeps scheduling the student for at least 15 hours of work a week. The student is missing time in the lab and falling behind, but doesn't speak with the boss about the scheduling.

- If students don't have a clear idea of why time management will benefit them personally, they won't be particularly inspired to stick with it. To that end, ask groups of students to brainstorm the benefits of strong time management skills. Once groups have worked together to identify reasons, have them call out thoughts and ideas. Compare and contrast the responses from different students.
- Sometimes humor is the best way to make a point. Again in small groups, ask students to come up with possible negative consequences for poor time management. Encourage students to be creative and even a bit silly. Ask groups to share their ideas in a humorous way, perhaps through a cartoon drawing or short skit. At the end of the group presentations, remind students that although they all enjoyed laughing together at the antics of their classmates, time management itself is not at all a laughing matter!

Individual

- As in the video, ask students to each map out in detail what their current months, weeks, and days look like schedule-wise. Remind them to include school, assignments, extracurriculars, commitments with family and friends, sports, employment, and upcoming holidays or vacations. When finished, encourage students to think about how their schedules in college might look both the same and different.
- If time management were easy, everyone would do it very effectively. Have students brainstorm a list of challenges that would affect them personally as they try to develop strong time management skills. This will differ from student to student — for one, it might be peer pressure from friends, for another it may be deciding which clubs to participate in and which just won't fit in the schedule. After creating the list of challenges, students should look at each and start developing a plan to address and successfully overcome that particular obstacle.
- Everyone has to think about managing their time, so there are lots of opinions and words of wisdom on the subject. Ask students to each interview family members, friends, teachers, and other connections on the subject of time management. Upon finishing the interviews, students can compile the advice and reflections and present to the class (or submit as a written assignment).

Internet

- Once on campus, students will be faced with many time management and scheduling choices and challenges. Give them a head start by reviewing college websites for examples of real class schedules, employment opportunities on campus, student clubs, sporting events and concerts on campus, etc. Armed with this information, ask students to start mocking up potential schedules based on the data found online. Remind students to build in ample time to study, sleep, and socialize!

- Just simply entering words and phrases into a search engine such as Google can yield a world of information on a particular topic (not all of it particularly useful). Have students enter words and phrases such as “time management” or “time saving tips” into an online search engine. What results do they receive? Work with students to identify useful search results and glean information from them. This may also be an excellent opportunity to review information on reliable websites and online content.
- Effective time management is a skill to keep learning and practicing throughout life! Ask students to search online news and magazine sites for articles on organization and managing time and schedules. Compile interesting results into a handout for the class.

Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving

Group

- Assign students to small groups to review the following scenarios and provide suggestions and possible solutions to them:
 - ~ Student considers History his worst subject, and he has just been assigned a paper where he needs to answer five separate questions and connect all of the answers into one coherent essay. How might he tackle these five questions one at a time in a way that makes the assignment more manageable? How can he keep his anxiety about the project from getting in the way of success?
 - ~ Student has done poorly on most of the assignments for her biology class, and she is in real danger of failing. The final exam is fast approaching, and she feels completely lost and behind all of the other students. How might she put problem-solving skills to work in facing this problem, getting help, and passing the class?
 - ~ Student consistently forgets his homework assignments and often turns papers in a few days late. His teacher keeps warning him that he is negatively affecting his grade with these habits. He’s unsure how other students manage to remember everything they need to do — he always forgets no matter how hard he tries. How can problem-solving help here?
- Emotions such as anger, frustration, confusion, and anxiety can impair problem-solving abilities, magnifying issues to make them seem even more overwhelming. To successfully solve problems, students have to work on removing negative emotion from their decision-making and problem-solving processes. In small groups, have students discuss ideas they’ve heard or used to reduce emotion and anxiety when facing a problem. These could include breathing exercises, talking to a trusted friend or parent, or making an organized list with all of the issues at hand. Encourage groups to share ideas with each other.
- High school and college students face problems and challenges all the time. Invite a school counselor from either your high school or a local college to speak to your class about the issues and topics facing students their age. If possible, the speaker should use real-life examples of problems other teens have faced and handled to inform and inspire your students.

Individual

- Ask students to reflect on the following situations and choose one on which to write up some ideas and potential solutions for the issue in question:
 - ~ The process of researching and writing a long paper intimidates a student. The assignment calls for selecting a topic from a long list, researching it, coming up with an original thesis, and exploring that thesis through the paper. How can the student successfully manage the process using critical thinking and problem-solving skills?
 - ~ Student is continually stumped by “fill in the blank” questions on tests, and just starts writing in answers in a panic, usually getting them wrong. How can he work to logically examine why this happens and why these questions fluster him, and then come up with a process to successfully prepare for and answer these questions on the next test?
 - ~ Student often gets into disagreements with her teacher/professor in class over interpretations of and reactions to the literature the class covers. While these could be constructive debates, they usually have a negative feel to them, and end with the student being frustrated and the teacher being angry with the student for continually interrupting and criticizing. How might the student apply critical thinking and problem-solving skills to this situation to still engage actively with the teacher, but in a more respectful and effective manner?
- As discussed in the video, breaking down a larger problem into smaller pieces can make it more manageable and less overwhelming. Ask students to identify a personal problem, issue, or question they are facing or might encounter. Over the course of a week, students should write about one aspect of this problem each evening in a journal. Each journal entry should identify a piece of the problem and list some suggestions for managing just that aspect. At the end of the week, students should reflect on whether or not they are closer to handling the overall problem or issue after looking at smaller pieces of it throughout the week.
- It can be helpful practice for students to apply problem-solving and critical thinking skills to problems that aren't personal. To that end, ask students to identify (or assign directly) an incident from history or literature — you might coordinate this with a topic students are currently learning in another class. Ask students to analyze how critical thinking skills were (or were not) utilized in this incident. What might they have done differently if involved?

Internet

- Whenever possible, give students the opportunity to practice and flex their problem-solving abilities. By searching local newspapers online, have students find a story describing an ongoing problem or issue in your local area. Ask students to apply their own critical thinking skills to identifying a possible solution or direction to take. Follow the story online over the next days/weeks to see how the ultimate resolution (if there is one) aligns with the suggestions from the class.
- As college students, your class members will often need to search online journals and databases. While many of these will be by subscription only and thus only accessible from their campus library or intranet, provide students with the opportunity to get exposure to these types of databases by accessing a resource such as ERIC (<http://www.eric.ed.gov>). While reviewing what this database

has to offer, ask students to search for papers or abstracts dealing with critical thinking and problem-solving. What new or interesting insights do these academic sources provide on the topic?

- Never miss a chance to challenge your students' problem-solving abilities! Ahead of class, develop a quiz or trivia sheet with challenging questions students need to answer by searching the Internet only (these could relate to an academic topic students are currently studying). By simply determining where and how they should search, students will be putting critical thinking into action. This might also be an excellent opportunity to review reliable Internet sources versus those that likely should not be used for research.

Active Listening and Note-Taking

Group

- Listening is not as straightforward as some students think it is! Play a few rounds of the classic game Telephone (whispering a piece of information from student to student and comparing what the last student thinks it is to the original message). Why does information get garbled and misheard in this game? How does an activity like Telephone connect to active listening in the classroom?
- All of us prefer to learn information in a particular way, as we each have a preferred learning style (visual, auditory, or kinesthetic) or combination of preferred styles. Choose information that can be relayed to students in three different ways — by talking about it, having students read about it or see it, and by demonstrating it to students and letting them practice (this could be something as simple as how to tie a bow or why baking soda and vinegar react when combined). Following this, ask students to identify which style of learning worked best for them. How can they incorporate this awareness into active listening in classes (where they may or may not have any say about the learning style used)?
- If they aren't doing so already, students should start practicing and improving their note-taking skills whenever possible. Invite a guest speaker to your class (on any topic of your choosing) and ask students to take notes during the talk. Afterwards, have students compare notes in small groups. What information did everyone write down? What information did some people miss? What styles of note-taking seemed to work best for most students?

Individual

- The experience of being on the other side of a lesson or lecture can be an eye-opening experience to those students who aren't typically engaged or interactive in class. Ask each student to prepare a 5- to 10-minute short lesson on a topic of their choosing (or, assign topics ahead of time). Encourage presenters to be interesting, informative, and engaging with the rest of the class. Presenters should try to facilitate discussion and questions as much as possible. After each presentation, have both the presenter and the rest of the class reflect on improvement on both sides to increase the overall active participation and engagement on the topic.

- Have students come to class prepared with a list of at least 7 discussion questions for a topic you will go over with them. Ensure you call on all students at least once and that all students are engaged and asking questions. After this exercise, ask students to reflect on how it felt to be prepared ahead of a class with good and interesting questions. Could this be a good practice to keep up in high school and college?
- It's amazing to think of all the information we hear in a day that we don't really even process. For instance, we are surrounded by news media in all different formats, and we often don't/can't engage with all of the data coming at us. To practice their active listening skills, ask students to watch a news broadcast and identify 3 key pieces of information from the program. Students should listen to and retain the details around these 3 key stories/pieces of information, and be prepared to share them with and talk about them in more detail to the class.

Internet

- Have students keep practicing their analytical Internet search and review skills. Students should enter search terms about effective note-taking and analyze the results and advice that are returned. Have they identified any new and useful tips? Have they found suggestions or ideas for note-taking that don't seem practical or helpful? Students should compile the most useful information they find online regarding taking good notes in class and circulate to all classmates.
- Active listening can prove challenging when you can't interact with the speaker, and thus all of the "activity" needs to come from you and your notes and written questions. Search online for audio recordings of speeches or debates (or even TV or radio programs). Ask students to actively listen to this content and take good notes. Following the activity, ask students how they were able to actively listen without being able to ask questions or participate in discussion.
- Students should discuss and share any good information or advice that comes their way! Have the class work together to compile all of the best information, advice, recommendations, and ideas around note-taking they have identified throughout this lesson. Students should then present this information in a useful and effective way online, likely by building a simple webpage (students can mock up this webpage on paper if your school computers do not have web publishing capability). How is the topic and information best presented? What would make other students more likely to visit this site?

Research, Reading, and Writing

Group

- Research, reading, and writing are a huge part of college academics — students may not really understand this until they are in college themselves. To continue to emphasize this point to your class, invite a counselor or tutor from a local college to speak to your class (an alumnus from your high school might also work well) and really emphasize the importance of these academic skills. The speaker should use real-life/personal examples as appropriate, as this will help students relate to the advice. Encourage your students to prepare questions and ask them of the speaker.

- Students will be expected to use correct citations sources when they write college papers, and college professors typically will not go over citations specifics as they often expect students learned this information in high school. Break students into small groups and give them a list of various resources that they might cite in a research paper (books, Internet sites, newspaper or magazine articles, etc.) and ask them to work together to properly cite these sources. Groups should compare results with the rest of the class. This could be an excellent opportunity to review the concept of plagiarism with students as well — failure to cite correctly can be viewed as plagiarism in some circumstances.
- Hopefully students will spend a good deal of time at the library when they are in college! Increase their familiarity with all of the library resources by taking a tour now. If at all possible, try to visit the library of a local college, but even a tour of your high school library or public library will be very useful. Ask the librarian to point out how resources are organized, how to access online library resources, and how the librarians at the reference desk can answer queries. Throughout the year, encourage students to use these various resources when writing papers or preparing presentations so they stay familiar with the library's many resources.

Individual

- One of the best ways to improve writing ability is to consistently review and refine past work. Ask students to find an old research paper, one they wrote in a previous semester or year. With their new insight gained on writing and research, have them review their past work and make recommendations to themselves on ways to improve.
- Everyone runs into challenges and questions while working on a research paper. The next time your students are undertaking work on a paper, have them keep a running list of challenges, questions, and issues that come up as they work. After the paper is completed, encourage them to work through their list, asking for help from a parent or teacher if needed. By addressing potential issues and problems as they come up, writing becomes interactive and a learning experience rather than overwhelming and frustrating.
- Practice makes perfect! For one week, have students complete a short reading assignment every night. They should take notes on what they are reading and jot down any questions or comments. Ensure you discuss the reading each day in school to encourage comprehension of the material. Over the next weeks, have students repeat the assignment with writing one week (a short writing assignment each night) and research the next (investigate a new topic each night, or use a different type of resource). When the weeks are finished, ask students to report back on their experiences and whether they feel the practice was useful to them.

Internet

- Not all research is for school! As students enter college and the workforce beyond, they will find it very helpful to be savvy consumers. How do you know you are getting the best deal on a car or a mortgage? When deciding what school to attend for graduate work, what helps you make

the decision? How can you find out what the best deal is on a flat screen TV? The Internet is an excellent resource for comparing prices, reading reviews, and checking out safety information. Have students imagine that they will be purchasing a new laptop for when they start college. What's the best laptop for them? Use online resources, such as Consumer Reports, and price comparison tools to help assess the best match.

- As stated in the film, the amount of reading, writing, and research expected of college students can be quite high. Freshmen often find this the most overwhelming part of adjusting to college, especially as compared to high school workloads. Help students get a realistic perspective on the amount of work expected of them by finding and viewing real college class syllabi. Students should be able to find these via Internet searches — they are often located on professors' websites or college department web pages. Ask students to compare and contrast the work expectations on the syllabi they do find.
- Typically, colleges and universities subscribe to online databases and journals that are accessible to students and faculty on campus. Students can then use these resources when researching and writing papers. Though you may not be able to access actual content without a subscription, use the Internet to have students find the type and variety of these sources on the web. Which look particularly interesting to them? Which look like good resources for a student's particular area of interest?

Studying and Test-Taking

Group

- Study groups can be both help and hindrance to students when preparing for a test. Some are a perfect mix of discussion, interaction, and learning, while others are just too social and surface-level to be of much true help when preparing for an exam. Before a test or exam, allow students to form small study groups in class, and allow them to structure the groups as they see fit. Don't interrupt groups even if you sense they are becoming focused on topics other than the test subject! After the exam, ask students how helpful they felt the group studying was. Ask the groups to report back on the methods they used to organize the group and style they took when covering the information for the test. Would students use a study group again?
- Being aware of time is critical during a test or exam. Students should always be aware of how much time is left, and move on if they sense they are spending too much time on too few questions. Keeping track of time can help students feel calm and in control, even during a stressful exam. To get students focused on timing, set up some different activities that small groups need to complete in set amounts of time. For instance, go through a set of flashcards in 30 seconds or read a short story and answer a comprehension question on it in 2 minutes. Time students as they go through these activities and keep track of how well groups do — this can be a competition between small groups if desired. Remind students that the focus is not racing through tasks carelessly, but having a strong awareness of the amount of time allowed to complete a task.

- Active practice before a test is a great way to study. Ask students to each develop a short quiz on current subject matter, and then exchange quizzes with a partner. Partners should take the quiz and return to the creator for grading. Classmates should compare quizzes/answers or try their hand at another quiz created by a classmate. Ask students if they would use practice quizzes as a real tool before a test. Why or why not?

Individual

- Many students do better studying and preparing for tests and exams individually, instead of with a study group or partner. Ahead of a big test, distribute a series of practice tests for students to complete as homework. Review the answers to the practice tests in class. Ask students to track their performance on the practice versions — do they improve as they complete more practice tests? What do they think about practice tests as a preparation tool for the real exam?
- As stated in the video, creating a study schedule ahead of a test is quite useful and prevents cramming the night before. If possible, it's great to spend the night before the test doing some light review and getting to bed early. To help make this a reality, instruct students to lay out a study schedule for at least one week before a scheduled test. Review what students have scheduled — do you see chapter review, flashcards or other study tools, time to review notes, and other active studying practices? If not, encourage students to add these in. Following the test, have students reflect on the scheduled studying — did they think it was helpful? Why or why not?
- Emphasize to students the importance of getting lots of sleep and eating a healthy breakfast. If they are not doing so already, ask students to try at least one week of getting 8-9 hours of sleep a night and eating a good breakfast each day. What changes might students have to make to stick to this schedule? For instance, might a student need to spend less time on the phone so she can complete her homework earlier and then go to sleep? Might another student have to wake up 15 minutes earlier in the morning to have time for breakfast? After one week, ask students to report back on their experiences trying to get more sleep and eat a healthy breakfast.

Internet

- Stress and anxiety can easily cause an otherwise-prepared student to perform poorly on a test. There are many ways to try and achieve a more relaxed and calm state of mind, and learning to do so could be quite beneficial to performance on tests and exams. Ask students to use an Internet search engine to research relaxation and stress-reduction techniques, and to try out at least one that they find. This could be as simple as squeezing a stress ball or something more involved such as taking a yoga class. As a class, you all may want to try some breathing exercises (these can also be found online) — you can ask students to describe whether or not they feel calmer or less anxious.
- There are literally hundreds (if not thousands) of resources out there for use in preparing for standardized tests. Some of these might be a great resource for students and truly help them improve performance, and other options may seem more like a waste of money. Ask students to use the Internet to explore different test preparation courses, books, and materials, and to make a chart

capturing the information they find (such as type of resource, cost, time commitment, guarantee of results, etc.). When the chart is complete with at least 10 different options, ask students to make a recommendation on the course they would choose, based on the data they found.

- Some students claim they can study anywhere, while others need a very specific environment in which to concentrate and get work accomplished. With ideas and products found by completing Internet research, ask students to design and present their personal ideal studying situations. For some students this might include wireless access to the Internet, while for others classical music might be playing in the background. Some students might find the arrangements in college libraries to be the best fit for them, while for someone else a sunny outdoor spot is just perfect. What matters is effective studying, so encourage students to be creative in thinking of where they can do this best.

Assessment Questions and Activities

First, ask students to comment on the video content overall. Did they agree or disagree with what they heard? Were they surprised by anything said? What did they think was missing from the content? You may want to ask students to come up with tips or advice they might include if making this video themselves.

Content-specific assessment ideas:

1. Ask students to write down three things that make them happy. Next, students should explain how each of these items indicates a value they hold. You may also want students to connect these values to one or two long-term goals they have (this may be written down or shared with the class for feedback and discussion).
2. Ask each student to write down one long-term goal, followed by at least two short-term and two medium-term goals that are part of the blueprint for achieving the long-term goal.
3. Distribute a course schedule from a local college (or create a mock example). Ask students to identify classes they might want to take from this schedule and to pick four or five that do not conflict and form a good weekly class schedule for the student — remind students that the schedule should also work with other commitments such as an expected work schedule. Have students explain why they selected the days/times they did. Did anyone experience a conflict in the timing of two classes they wanted to take? How did they decide on the one in which they would enroll? What was fun about this activity? What was challenging?
4. Provide students with a real schedule book or a handout of a week or month calendar, and ask them to start scheduling in their current academic, extracurricular, and fun commitments. Ask some students to share with the class — are there things students forgot to include? What scheduling conflicts or challenges have come up?

5. Ask one student to share a challenge or problem he or she has experienced or anticipates experiencing (alternatively, you could have students collaborate in groups to identify an example). As a class, work through solving the issue in small parts, using critical thinking and analysis. Encourage different viewpoints and opinions, and ask students to suggest additional resources one might use to solve this particular problem.
6. Why are critical thinking and problem-solving skills important to academic success? Ask students to write down at least three reasons. (Examples: Allow students to explore subjects in more depth and engage at a more meaningful level; Encourage students to give careful thought to questions on tests instead of immediately reacting with an answer; Help students become active learners through the give-and-take of questions and answers, rather than just receivers of information through lecture or passive reading; Can help take the reactive emotion and anxiety out of the test-taking experience; Encourage students to make reasonable, rational, and mature decisions about managing time, schoolwork, and relationships with teachers and professors.)
7. Before a lecture or discussion on a new topic, ask students to practice a different note-taking style than they typically use. Following the lecture, have students partner up and compare notes. Partners should assess if they each captured the key information from the class, and discuss how the new style worked for each of them. If time allows, meet with partners or small groups to review the note-taking successes and areas for improvement.
8. Play a portion of an audio book for your students, or read them a section of a text they likely would not already know. Instruct students to take notes on the information they hear and consider to be key. When finished, have students compare and contrast what they've written down and, as a class, determine what the three or four truly key pieces of information are from the selection.
9. Pull together a list of various Internet sites, some reputable references and others more questionable (more questionable sites could include blogs of someone's opinion on an academic topic, testimony on a product by the company that actually makes it, or a work of fiction or theory that comes across as factual information). Ask students to identify which would be acceptable sources for a research paper, and which would likely not work. Also ask them to provide the reasoning behind their decisions. Following this exercise, brainstorm some strong non-Internet sources students might use for a paper.
10. Ahead of a writing assignment, ask students to first prepare and submit an outline for their paper. You might review individually with students, or partner students up for peer review and feedback.
11. Before a test, ask students to create a study tool (could be flashcards, a practice test, study sheet, questions pulled from the test, etc.). Students should share their tool with the rest of the class. After the test, ask students to report how the tool enhanced their study or test performance.

- Instruct students to form study groups ahead of a test and provide time in class for these groups to work together. Following the test, ask for feedback on the usefulness of the groups. Have students provide pros and cons for working together to prepare for testing.

Additional Resources

Sites to Promote Academic Success

www.uni.edu/walsh/linda7.html

Academic Success Center

<http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/asc>

Tools for Student Success: Selected Publications for Parents and Teachers

www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/tools-for-success/index.html

Prentice Hall Student Success Supersite

www.prenhall.com/success/StudySk1

Academic Success Center

www.cla.purdue.edu/students/asc

Centre for Development of Teaching and Learning

www.cdtl.nus.edu.sg/cdtlhome/success.htm

How to Improve Your Study Skills

www.ehow.com (Search on "study skills")

More Tips and Advice for College Success!

- An exciting part of college is getting to know new people. With that in mind, make an effort to be friendly with your classmates. As the semester goes on, you may be able to compare notes, clarify questions, form a study group, or work together on a group project. When you feel comfortable with your classmates, you'll also feel better about speaking up in class and asking questions.
- College is about learning, growing, and utilizing new resources. Keeping that in mind, never let yourself get too overwhelmed or fall too far behind. If you ignore the fact that you are struggling or need extra help, your frustration and confusion will ruin your college experience. Always ask for help and don't be ashamed — if you already knew everything you wouldn't be at college in the first place!
- It's very easy to get carried away with partying and other non-academic distractions when you first arrive at college. While it's an exciting part of college to meet new people and have fun with them, your GPA will suffer if you don't also put time into studying and preparing for your classes. While that might not seem like a terrible thing during freshman year, you might find that it comes back to haunt you later in your college career if you are applying for scholarships or internships. It can take excellent performance during the rest of college to bring up a poor GPA from freshman year.
- Take advantage of all resources that your college offers! Check in with the career center to start a resume or find information on summer internships. Check with financial aid to see if there are additional scholarships you might apply for or work-study positions on campus. Investigate study abroad options, ask questions about different majors, and keep an eye out for interesting speakers as they come to campus. By staying connected to many different areas of your college community, you'll be able to take advantage of many opportunities.
- While you should absolutely use email, chat, and websites like Facebook to stay in touch with friends from home, don't do so to the exclusion of getting to know new people and spending time with them. Think about the best way for you to balance old friendships while forming new ones.
- If possible, work a few hours a week at an on- or off-campus job. You'll gain valuable experience, have additional information to add to your resume, and will make new connections and friends you might not have otherwise. Of course, you'll also make extra spending money!
- Try classes from a few different majors, even if you are fairly certain of the major you will select. By taking classes from different areas you may find a topic to be passionate about, a new major or minor, or just a subject of interest. Expand your horizons — college gives you that opportunity.

- It won't always be possible, but try to eat well, exercise, and get a decent amount of sleep. Staying healthy will support your academic and personal goals.
- Find out what resources and places of interest exist in the local community, town, or city where your college is located. Perhaps you can get involved with a local theater group, volunteer in a school, find out more about local politics, or simply eat at a great new restaurant. Expand your horizons beyond your college campus.
- Professors offer office hours for a reason — to answer questions, clarify concepts, and get to know students and their interests a bit better. Make use of these office hours, but plan your timing wisely. You might be better off discussing questions mid-semester as they come up rather than being one of the many students looking to meet right before final exams.
- Make use of your school's learning center or tutoring resources — you may even think about becoming a tutor yourself. Teaching is not only a good experience to build your communication skills; you may also find that it reinforces your own understanding of the material.
- If you are passionate about a topic or subject but don't think it would be a practical major for you, talk to your academic advisor. You might think about adding the subject as a minor or double major, or incorporating it into work you do for other classes. For instance, if you love dance, you might base a story around a ballet company for a creative-writing class.
- Just like in high school, it's still possible in college to get caught up in wanting to dress like classmates or buy the same things they have. There's nothing wrong with doing so, but remember college is an excellent opportunity to try out your own personal style — you may find you are admired for your individuality and creativity.
- Volunteer work is a great complement to your college experience. You'll meet new people, build skills you can include on your resume, and possibly discover a new talent or idea for a future career. Most importantly, you will be contributing to your local community and making a difference.
- **HAVE FUN!** College is a once-in-a-lifetime experience — enjoy it!