

Media students:

How to go to university

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There are certain things students should do, but don't. Simple, obvious things that would make their lives better and their time at university more rewarding (and I'm not just talking about marks here).

1. Turn up

This one has to be at the top of the list. History favours those who show up. There's a direct correlation between attendance and marks. Don't come to me after I've spent three hours explaining something to a group of your peers and ask 'what did I miss?'. If it took me three hours to explain to students who attend, it's going to take me at least that long to repeat it to you.

2. Read books

To an outside observer, this would seem like the most obvious thing in the world that a student should be doing. To many students, the idea comes as a complete surprise. I am not going to give you every single piece of information on the topic – and, more to the point, reading around the topic will give you a better and more complete understanding of the topic itself. And don't restrict yourself to the topic. It's part of your job as a full-time student to expand your horizons. Read one book a month that's not related to your core subject.

3. Learn how to learn

Learning is something you can be better at. There are some good books to help you do that. I don't care who you are or how smart you appear to be, your study skills, comprehension, speed of reading, ability to synthesise learning, revision, recall, creativity, writing and organisation can all be improved. Start with Tony Buzan and work your way out from there.

4. Talk to other students

The best way for you to go from learning, to knowledge, to understanding is to reflect upon what you've been told and what you're reading. You may wish to stop thinking about school stuff the moment you leave the class, but that's a sure-fire way of forgetting about 85% of everything you were just told. Talking to other students is also a useful way of finding out about the directed study task or moved assignment deadline you may have missed hearing. Not communicating with other students is pretty much unforgivable in a Communication Studies student.

5. Learn how to spell

Not knowing the difference between 'affect' and 'effect' is very common. So is spelling 'lose' with an extra 'o'. Finding out where the apostrophe goes is a monumental challenge to some people. However, if you're going to hand in an assignment, getting it right is important. There are always marks for clarity of expression and presentation. Besides, people who mark assignments tend to be complete pedants. The misuse of apostrophes makes me cross - and why would you want to make someone who's marking your work cross?

6. Know your shortcomings

You are in a learning institution. The very definition of learning is to go from a point of limited knowledge and ability and then progress from there. If you're bad at something, then that's exactly the thing you should be focusing on. If you don't know much about a subject, then that's exactly the thing you should find out more about. The phrase 'Oh, I'm no good at that' – or worse, 'Oh, that's just because I'm not very technical' – simply indicate a need to spend more time becoming good at that – or becoming comfortable with the technical.

7. Relax

Stress is natural. Bad things happen. The work piles up. Sometimes things run away from you a bit. Sometimes personal life gets in the way of study. Occasionally, you may even get a bad mark for something despite your best efforts. Panic is unhelpful. There comes a point at which you need to realise the situation is out of your hands and just let it go. The world's not going to stop. Nobody will die. Just go sit somewhere quiet and breathe for a bit. We'll all still be here when you get back.

8. Read the instructions

This is the single simplest thing that any student can do in order to improve overall success at university. Every assignment comes with all the information you need to do well. We even tell you what constitutes a good, average or poor piece of work. It's very simple: we ask you to do something, tell you how to do it and then leave you to it. If you don't understand the instructions, you could always ask - but at least make sure you know what they are. Failure to follow instructions is the second biggest contributor to student failure after non-attendance.

9. Get involved

Nothing is clearer than the relationship between student engagement with student life, and the quality of that student's university career. You don't have to join the chess club or become a class rep - but there's so much going on around you, something's going to fit. And if there is no group that does what you want to do - start it. Most university student associations have money to give you to do just that. If someone offers you the opportunity to do something new, jump at it.

10. Figure out why you're at university

Some people go to university simply so they can get a good job. And that's fine and laudable. Others want to improve themselves academically, socially and intellectually. For most, it's a mix. If you keep the reason you go to university in mind, then the way in which you go to university will always serve that purpose. If you want a job, make sure that everything you produce is something you'd be happy to show a prospective employer. If you want to widen your horizons, read widely and keep up to date with current affairs.

For more helpful articles and advice on student life, visit:

[Uni Survival](http://unisurvival.com)
<http://unisurvival.com>

In addition to Uni Survival, Andrew Dubber maintains the following blogs:

[New Music Strategies](http://newmusicstrategies.com)
<http://newmusicstrategies.com>

[New Radio Strategies](http://newradiostrategies.com)
<http://newradiostrategies.com>

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