

GETTING THROUGH SCHOOL

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Learning Outcomes

At the end of this chapter you will be able to do the following.

- Apply the 60 MPH principle to your school experience.
- Outline an academic plan.
- Identify the binge/purge cycle with regard to college students.
- Identify assignments in a syllabus that can be started early so as to distribute the load.
- Describe the advantage of focusing every paper possible on a specific topic.
- Describe the advantage of having access to a wide variety of knowledge.
- Describe how to be a better classroom student.
- Avoid common grammatical errors.
- Calculate your GPA.

HOW TO GET THROUGH SCHOOL FASTER: THE ACADEMIC PLAN

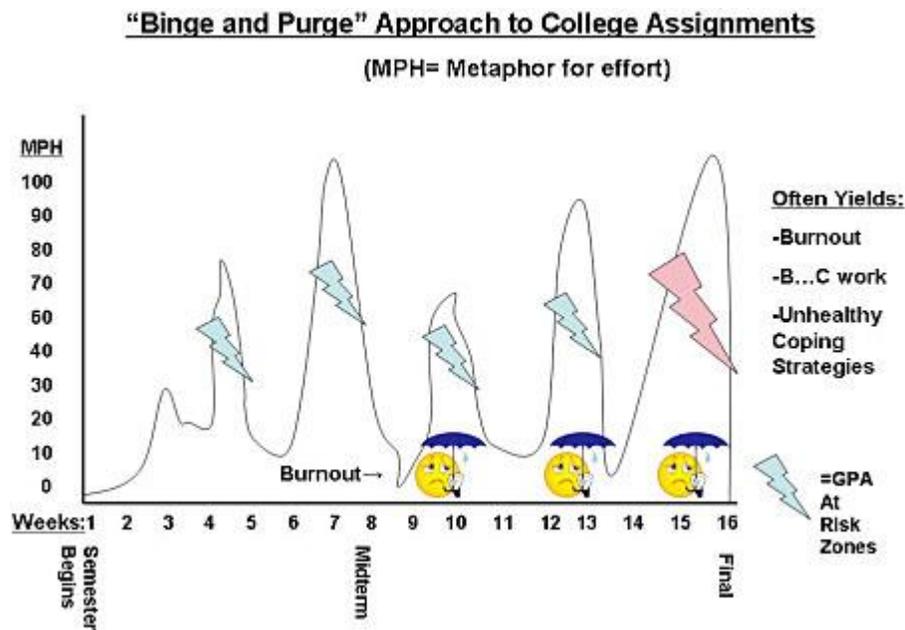
1. Visit with your advisor EVERY semester. The middle of the semester is a good time to make an appointment since that is when the counselors are less busy. Even though you may know what classes you are supposed to take, meet with a counsellor. Many students get to the end and find they missed a class.
2. Get a list of all courses required for your degree. Keep it somewhere safe and check off the classes you complete and record the grade. Bring this with you to your counseling appointment each semester.
3. Plan out a schedule of courses you will take over the duration of your program, using “The Academic Plan”. Often your counselor will do this with you.
4. During your first visit with your advisor, be sure to ask if certain courses are only offered once per year, or every other year. Write these in your Academic Plan.
5. Consider taking summer term courses. Students can knock as many as 18 months off their time in the program by attending summers.
6. If a thesis, dissertation, or senior project will be required, begin working on it right away and work on it some each semester. Write it into your plan.

AVOID THE “BINGE & PURGE” PATTERN OF MISMANAGED COLLEGE EFFORT

As you probably already know persons suffering from Bulimia often engorge themselves to unhealthy levels of eating then follow up immediately with self-induced vomiting and laxatives to void out all the over-consumed food. This is a very unhealthy eating pattern. College students often binge and purge when it comes to procrastinating in their studies. Here’s a typical scenario: Bill started his semester overwhelmed by all the assignments required by his professors. He experienced “first day of class shock.” He then procrastinated doing studies or homework because the pressure felt too intense, and he also never fully recovered from last semester’s feeling of burnout (that resulted from binge

and purge practices, see Figure 1). Look at the diagram below. Bill relaxed (20-30 MPH of effort) and took in some social scenes, played some video games, watched a few football games, and worked. By the time the 4-5th week came around, Bill realized that he was under immense pressure to take a few tests and turn in a field-work assignment. Because he'd procrastinated, this made Bill have to put forth enormous efforts to get good grades (70 MPH of effort). The next few weeks Bill had to recover (10-20 MPH). During weeks 7-8, Bill had midterms. He felt busy every waking moment and managed to catch up and perform at an acceptable level, again the effort required was enormous (80-100 MPH). Bill got sick from feeling burned out and repeated the binge and purge cycle throughout the semester until finals ended. He again found himself with a burnout hangover (just like the semester before). Although Bill earned good grades with each binge he went on, his finals proved to be overwhelming and he saw every grade fall in each class.

Figure 1. Binge and Purge.



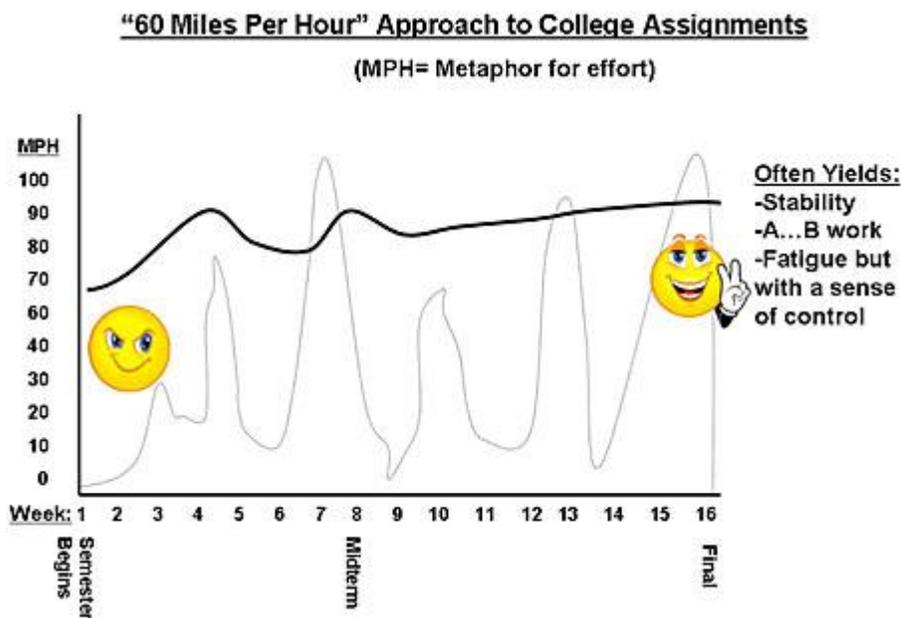
60-MPH principle steps (see Figure 2)

1. On the first day of class record all assignments for each class with due dates in your planner or on your mobile device. Most professors spell these out on their syllabi, and if they don't, it is your right to know them up front, so ask.
2. Identify any assignments that you can start to work on immediately. Yes, even on the first or second day of the semester! Start that project, paper, survey, etc., and get as much work as you can get done during the slow, beginning phase of the semester—this will relieve the high pressure times such as midterms and finals. Take a look at the syllabus for this class and decide what you can do earlier than the day or two before it is due.
3. Once you have finished and turned in the assignments you can finish early, begin working on bigger projects, studying for tests that may be given in the next few

weeks, and/or writing your senior research paper. Some professors won't let you turn assignments in early so store them safely.

4. If possible write every paper you have to write during college on the same or highly related topic. This will help you deepen your knowledge and if you go on to graduate school it will really help when it comes time to write a thesis or dissertation. (However, acquiring a broad base of knowledge from taking a variety of courses also enriches your undergraduate *and* graduate academic experiences.)
5. Choose now to use the 60 MPH Principle for a well-managed and self-disciplined college effort.

Figure 2. 60 MPH Principle.



Bill took an ABSC seminar on getting through college efficiently and quickly. He employed the 60 MPH Principle and used his Semester Assignment Form. His first day of class he called his grandfather in Michigan and interviewed him for a paper that was due in one month (for a Gerontology Course assignment). The second day he located two research articles about recreation in the mid 1900's then found an article on Google about how recreation changed for people over the last half century. He typed up his paper and saved it in the notebook he took to his Gerontology class. Bill then worked on the next assignment that he could begin work on and started it. See the 60 MPH Principle diagram below. This approach centers your locus of control within yourself (you start on your time table rather than waiting for the onslaught of assignments to pile onto you). It diminishes your sense of vulnerability as you act proactively rather than defensively. It also alleviates the pressures common to mid-terms and finals by dispersing the load more evenly throughout the semester. By the end of this semester, Bill had worked hard, justifiably felt tired, and had managed his energies in such a way that he felt much less burnout after finals.

STRATEGIES FOR GETTING THROUGH COLLEGE EFFICIENTLY AND WITH PERSONAL SATISFACTION

- Keep records of papers and supportive articles you've written. It may be helpful to have written several papers on highly related topics. Once in graduate school continue writing about the same topic and focus your thesis/dissertation on the same topic.
 - However, taking a variety of courses allows you to engage multiple perspectives, and make connections that you may not otherwise be able to make. Focusing course work has its benefits, but also certain limitations.
- File all your syllabi and graded assignments in folders (and backed up on e-versions), so that you can get back to them to revise papers and resubmit for other courses. This is in part why you write on the same topic for all your papers. Filing your work is valuable because often your graduate school courses will be very similar to your undergraduate courses. By the time you graduate, you'll have your own library of your academic work.
- Every chance you get, study in groups. You remember more for tests (and later in your profession) if you've taught each other and learned together.
- Be decisive about choosing your major/career paths early in your undergraduate studies. This will help you focus on the graduate program you may want and you can tailor your undergraduate coursework toward it. Many students take the "I'll wait until it comes to me" attitude until they are seniors, then they get focused. Follow the example of pre-nursing, pre-law, pre-engineering, and pre-med students who concentrate their energies in anticipation of their graduate school. Choose a major based on what you might like to do for a living, not on what major is fun. Sociology is way fun, but do you want to be a doctor? Sociology would not be the worst undergraduate major for a doctor, but your time might be better spent as a biology major.
 - However, it is important to keep in mind that college introduces students to courses not offered in high school. There are multiple benefits to keeping yourself open to new experiences and ways of thinking.
- Become a planner/organizer person. Carry a week-at-a-glance planner if you do not have a mobile device with a calendar. Use it daily. Put school assignments (papers, projects, tests, etc., work hours, play, and other demands on your time) clearly into the planner, and stick closely to the Motto "write it down now."
- Locate favorite places on campus to study and frequent the same places when you study. Empty classrooms, quiet hallways, far corners of the library and other places can be very powerful to your quality of studies. If you study in the same place at the same time everyday, you condition your brain to learn in that place and time. Also, you sometimes have to hide from friends and family to get real studying done. Turn the cell phone off, hide, and study. Remember that college is like a job and many students find that it becomes stressful to carry their job into their home. Go home after you've finished your studies.
 - Change locations every now and then, as even the same venue can become distracting.

- Find an exceptional student in your major that tends to out-perform other students and model their behavior. Interview them about what they do that works for them.
- Take highly related courses at the same time so that you get reinforcement on the same topic and can learn common materials for both (e.g., counseling and personality theory or applied parenting and adolescent development). Also disperse the easier classes to lighten the semester load when a tougher class is on your schedule (e.g., Research Methods and Statistics should be combined with some less intensive general education courses).
- Build relationships with professors teaching courses in which you have a special interest. Meet with them during office hours to further discuss topics covered in class. Often you can make appointments with faculty, if you cannot meet during their office hours. Continue these relationships even after you have finished taking his or her course. Faculty members who have gotten to know can write more meaningful letters of recommendation. Professors teaching courses in your major area may be the best sources for letters of recommendation, especially if you are going on to graduate school or a career in your major area.
- Get involved in clubs, organizations, research projects, and/or internships. These extra-curricular activities will also help you build an impressive resume or curriculum vitae (CV) and provide networking opportunities, as well as provide other benefits. Keep track of all your activities for your resume or CV.
- Create a resume and CV, and add to it every time you complete an extra-curricular activity. Numerous samples are available on the Internet.

HOW TO FIND SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION AND HOW TO GET ONE

- www.fastWeb.com
- www.Finaid.org
- www.petersons.com
- There's a list of books on getting scholarships at www.finaid.org/questions/reference.phtml#books

Look at the subject criteria: stated requirements, service to others, academic achievement, extracurricular activities, leadership, traits specific to that organization, goals and values of organization.

Look at your own personal qualities: hard working, overcomes obstacles, works well on a team, perseveres, individual initiative, passion and enthusiasm, responsible, civic minded to do your duty, have purpose and character.

When applying, develop 3 or 4 themes in your scholarship application: (service, creative talent, survival, academics, community action, entrepreneurship, leadership, science, athletics, and ethnic identity are a few).

Then add breadth and depth to your application: Breadth: select at least 3 ways you used the theme (e.g., for the service theme you volunteered for three agencies in the

community). Depth: Wow them with specifics (when I volunteered for “Sub for Santa,” I supervised 26 students and we raised \$1,200.00 dollars)

How to make it easy for a professor or supervisor to write you a letter of recommendation

Give the person a minimum of two weeks to work on your letter, and provide the following information in detail, so that he or she can write you the best letter possible. Do not ask faculty members who don’t know you. If you have never talked with this person outside of class, don’t ask him or her. Be sure to include any forms the faculty member needs to complete on your behalf (transcripts, academic planner, etc). Fill out your part of them first, and include self-addressed, stamped envelopes for mailing.

Name:

Student ID for identification to the person/department to which this letter is directed:

Phone number:

Email address:

What class(es) of mine did you take? What semester/year?:

School/program/scholarship to which you are applying:

Why are you applying for this school/program/scholarship?:

Deadline for this letter:

Person (or office) to whom (which) the letter should be addressed:

Full mailing address:

What exactly is this letter for? (i.e., scholarship, admission, internship):

Major:

Future career aspirations:

Graduate school in your future?:

Where have you done volunteer work?:

For how long (or how many hours) have you volunteered here?:

What were your volunteer tasks here?:

What are your extracurricular school-related activities?:

What are the personal characteristics that make you a good candidate for this university (or other place for which you need this letter)?:

What are your greatest strengths?:

What are your greatest weaknesses?:

What made you stand out in my class? (not your grades, attendance, or looks):

What else should I know? (e.g., you are a first generation college student, you have overcome the odds to go to college):

HONE YOUR WRITING SKILLS WITH EACH PAPER YOU WRITE

Every school has a writing lab with tutors who can help you with this. Make it a habit of visiting them for every paper you write. Listen to what they tell you about your writing and ask questions.

Common Writing Errors to Avoid—By Tricia Cherin (modified by Anne Laurel Marenco, Kathryn Coleman, Nayla Huq)

1. Subject and predicate

A sentence is a whole statement. It must have a subject and a predicate. The subject is what the sentence is about, and the predicate is the verb, the action it takes or a state of being.

Error: Starts on time. (In this fragment the subject is missing.)

Correction: The teacher starts on time.

2. Clause combining

There are three ways to punctuate two complete statements. Use a comma with a coordinate conjunction, use a semicolon, or use a period between the statements.

Error: Bonelli Hall is at the middle of the campus, it will give us much needed space. (A comma is insufficient punctuation to place between two independent clauses that could be whole sentences.)

Correction: Bonelli Hall was built in the middle of the campus, and it gave us much needed space.

Correction: Bonelli Hall was built in the middle of the campus; it gave us much needed space.

Correction: Bonelli Hall was built at the middle of the campus. It gave us much needed space.

3. Matching sentence parts

The subject and the verb must match by agreeing in number.

Error: More than half of the students was able to register for classes. (In this sentence, the subject is plural, more than one, and the verb is singular in form. The stated verb form was would match with I, not with students).

Correction: More than half of the students were able to register for classes.

Error: The child run on the playground. (In this sentence, the subject and verb do not agree in number. The verb form that goes with a singular subject in the present tense ends in s.)

Correction: The child runs on the playground.

4. Verb tense

Sentences must signal the correct time and condition of the action. One of the most common changes regular verbs make is to add d or ed to signal that the action happened in the past.

Error: I practice the math problem several times before the test. (In this sentence, the verb does not signal that the action has already taken place.)

Correction: I practiced the math problem several times before the test.

Error: I was very surprise that the semester went so quickly. (Even with the helping verb was, the d ending is necessary.)

Correction: I was very surprised that the semester went so quickly.

5. Describing words

Describing words (adjectives if they are describing nouns and adverbs if they are describing actions), must have endings which match their function. A common adjective ending is d or ed. A common adverb ending is ly.

Error: I observed an experience actor. (In this sentence, the actor is the noun being described. The describing word needs to change form to show its place in the

sentence.)

Correction: I observed an experienced actor.

Error: The waiter serves slow. (In this sentence, the describing adverb needs the correct ending to signal how the waiter serves.)

Correction: The waiter serves slowly.

6. Word forms

Words change in form depending on the use they serve in a sentence. Try to determine what the purpose of a word is in a particular sentence and check with a dictionary, a peer, or a tutor to see if the form is correct for the purpose.

Error: I loss concentration and get distracted easily. (Loss is a noun, a thing that is a state, and the writer needs to use the form of that word that shows action.)

Correction: I lose concentration and get distracted easily.

7. Prepositions

The use of prepositions, words like on, in, to, into, and over, is idiomatic; correct usage depends on precise situations. Lots of reading helps us become familiar with correct idioms.

Error: Every Monday I write on my journal. (On means on top of and in means inside of.)

Correction: Every Monday I write in my journal.

8. Usage

Error: I plan to take an Math course at COC. (Use an in front of words that begin with vowel, a, e, i, o, or u, sounds and use a in front of words that begin with consonants, all other letters.)

Correction: I plan to take a Math course at COC.

Error: Than the speaker shared her own experience.

Error: Nancy is taller then Amy.

(Use then to indicate time and than to signal a comparison.)

Correction: Then the speaker shared her own experience.

Correction: Nancy is taller than Amy.

HOW TO CALCULATE YOUR GRADE

You should keep track of how you are doing in every class and be able to calculate your grade. A good time to do this is after every exam and major assignment. Record all scores you earn on papers, assignments, and exams. Add up all your scores. Then add up all the points possible so far in the semester. If you have three exams in a class but have only taken two of them then only add the points possible for the two you have taken. Of course if you missed an exam you do need to add the points for the missed exam and also your score of zero. Then divide your points by the points possible and multiply by 100 to get your percentage. Refer to your syllabus for the professor's grade conversion—most commonly 90% or above = A, 80-89%=B, 70-79%=C, 60-69%=D, and less than 60%=F.

Example: the class has five exams worth 50 points each, ten quizzes worth 25 points each, and three assignments worth 35 points each. The class has taken 2 exams and 4 quizzes and has completed one assignment. Your scores are:

Quiz 1	22	out of 25
Quiz 2	18	out of 25
Exam 1	39	out of 50
Quiz 3	20	out of 25
Assignment 1	34	out of 35
Quiz 4	17	out of 25
Exam 2	21	out of 50

You also earned 4 points extra credit for attending a workshop.

Your total is 175 out of 235

$175/235*100=74.46\%$

So you have a C if we use the conversion above.

Think about what you can do to improve this grade. It seems that your writing is fine since you got an A (34 out of 35) on the first assignment. If you want to know what grade you got on each item just divide what you got by what it was worth and multiply by 100

($34/35*100=97\%$). You got a B on the first and third quizzes, a C on the second quiz, and a D on the fourth quiz. You got a C on the first exam and a D on the second exam. Ok, so maybe you're not a test-taker, but maybe you're just not studying efficiently. When you receive graded materials, read over comments, and look at the incorrect answers. See if you can identify a pattern. Are you getting the same types of questions wrong? Check out the College of the Canyons College Success Tips

<http://www.canyons.edu/Committees/LEAP/Team1/>. There are a variety of tips on studying smarter as well as other tips to being successful in college. Also the TLC (Tutoring/Learning/Center) at COC (all schools have some type of tutoring center) can give you some suggestions about how to study smarter.