

# THE 21 THINGS EVERY FIRST YEAR COLLEGE STUDENT SHOULD DO

## 1) Establish a study schedule

Your first year of college promises to be a busy one, so make sure to set aside at least a couple of hours each day for homework. Getting into a study routine early on will help you meet the academic challenges of college and make effective use of your time. Sure, the first few weeks of college are exciting, a time to meet people and see new places, but you also need to realize that this is not a long vacation. You need to set a routine and stick with it.

## 2) Experiment with a variety of classes

College is not only a time to learn, but also a time to explore. So don't be afraid to take a class in a subject you have never studied before. Look at college as an opportunity to expand your knowledge and your interests. Many students remember and appreciate the things they learned in offbeat classes.

## 3) Learn major prerequisites and requirements

Whether you've chosen a major or not, you'll need to learn what prerequisites are necessary to declare a major in a particular subject, and then what classes are needed to complete that major. Even in your first semester, it's never too early to start fulfilling major prerequisites or requirements.

## 4) Find out when you have to declare a major

Chances are, you won't have to declare your major until you complete your second year of school. However, some majors, such as engineering, may require a student to declare by the first semester or by the end of the first year. Also, some schools require that athletes or students involved in other special activities declare early. In any case, know what your school requires.

## 5) Learn graduation requirements

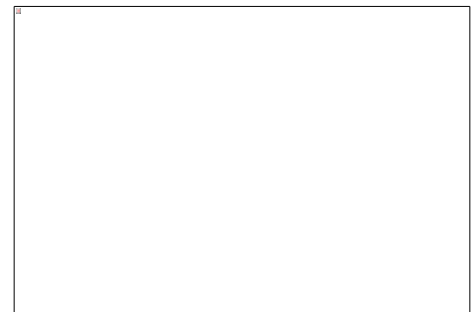
Just like in high school, most colleges require all students to complete certain classes in order to graduate. These college-wide requirements usually consist of a combination of classes in English, mathematics, language, science, and social science. Learn what classes you need to take in order to graduate, and plan, over the course of your college career, when you will satisfy those requirements.

## 6) Meet with an advisor

A catalog of courses will tell you what the prerequisites and requirements are for a certain major, and requirements you must satisfy in order to graduate. But if you have a question not answered by the catalog, or just want a little guidance with regard to choosing a major, talk with an advisor. Advisors will help you understand policy and procedures.

## 7) Meet your instructors

Take the opportunity to meet your instructors and visit with them during office hours. You will invariably learn something about the instructor and gain new information on their subject. Hopefully, you'll make a new friend. In addition, you may need a letter of recommendation or a reference from a college instructor some day, and knowing them will certainly help you when you go to ask.



### **8) Take time to socialize**

Making friends is one of the best things about college, so take time to socialize and meet new people. If you are shy of, try joining a club, or ask some other people in your class to study one evening over coffee.

### **9) Check out the Greek system**

They might not be for everyone, but fraternities and sororities are yet another place to make new acquaintances. In fact, most Greeks will tell you that their friends are the best thing about being involved. After checking out the Greek scene, you might want to join, or you might decide that going Greek is just not right for you. But you'll never know unless you give it a look.

### **10) Find out what student activities your school has to offer**

Whether you like to pass your spare time playing chess, or taking photographs, chances are your college probably has a club that matches your interests. In addition, most college gymnasiums also sponsor a variety of intramural sports. Intramural sports teams are typically coed and range in skill level. Intramural sports are a great way to stay fit and meet new people.

### **11) Know your campus and the resources it has to offer**

Become well-acquainted with your campus and its resources, such as tutoring services, the library, computer facilities, and so on. Avail yourself of all your school has to offer. After all, you'd hate to find yourself writing a paper late at night, have your printer fail, and not know where to go in order to get everything printed in time for your 8 a.m. class.

### **12) Keep an eye out for limited campus engagements**

You never know who or what might pop up at a college campus. A band, a famous visiting lecturer, a dance performance, or a rare art exhibit may be coming to your school soon. Colleges are a mecca of academic and cultural activity.

### **13) Explore beyond campus**

Familiarize yourself with the city you live in and the resources it has to offer. This is your new home, after all, and if anyone ever visits you, they'll want to see more than the campus dining hall.

### **14) Be aware of safety on campus and in town**

Post emergency numbers beside your phone and always carry identification.

### **15) Learn all about financial aid**

Financial aid is an ongoing process, so you'll need to know what forms to fill out to apply for financial aid, what scholarships you are eligible for, when financial aid checks are disbursed, and filing deadlines.

Also, make sure you thoroughly understand the terms and conditions of taking out loan money and your repayment obligation. It is amazing how many students get in financial trouble after college because they didn't realize how much money they were borrowing and when it needed to be repaid.

### **16) Get a checking account**

A checking account is a must for just about everyone. Set one up if you don't already have an account.

### **17) Set up a monthly budget**

A simple monthly budget will keep you from overspending, and will make paying bills so much

easier. Allocate yourself a weekly allowance after bills and stick to it, and remember that the little things add up fast.

### **18) Look into housing options for the following year**

If housing is hard to come by where you go to school, start hunting for housing by the second semester of your first year.



### **19) Explore internship opportunities**

If you feel your academic schedule can handle it, think about applying for an internship in a field that interests you. An internship can help you choose a major and a prospective career, in addition to giving you valuable contacts and real-world experience.

### **20) Balance work and play**

All work and no play is a sure recipe for unhappiness, but so is all play and no work. It all catches up to you eventually. Learn to balance school work with a healthy social life. Try to set aside some time each day to rest and relax.

### **21) Start planning for life after college**

What do you want to get out of college? What do you want to do after college? How will you achieve your goals? Ask yourself these questions and see if you can't come up with a rough plan to achieve your goals for the next few years.

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