

Quest Alumni Newsletter

February, Freshman Year

Write Outside of Class



Your number-one most important skill as a college student is writing ability. Your second most important skill as a college student is writing ability. Your third most important skill as a college student is, you guessed it, writing ability. And so on.

You probably get the point here: **Writing is really, really important for a college student.** You will succeed academically only if you have the ability to express your thoughts clearly and convincingly. This means that if you want to win at college, you need to be good at writing. *Really* good at writing.

A good analogy is that writing is to a college student what shooting hoops is to a basketball player. If you want to be a standout basketball player, you stick around after practice and shoot extra baskets. If you want to be a standout college student, you have to stick around after you are done with your assignments and do some extra writing. You can accomplish this by joining the staff of a publication on campus. It could be the daily newspaper, a writing magazine, a science journal, a political paper, or a humor rag. It doesn't matter what publication you choose as long as it requires you to write well and write often. You can also write guest opinion pieces, offer to tackle proposal writing for clubs you are involved with, or send well-crafted letters to local politicians and newspapers. If you are creative, you can write short stories, tackle screenplays, or craft reviews for the arts section of a student paper. The specific format isn't important, just as long as you are writing. The more words you transfer from your head to paper, the better you become at this vital craft.

Adopt the mind-set of Larry Bird. It didn't matter if he was happy or sad, energized or tired, every day he would shoot hundreds of baskets. You should do the same. Force yourself to write as much as possible. It is an essential, irreplaceable skill for succeeding at college. Master it.

How to Win at College
Cal Newport

Ten Steps to a Better Paper

Step 1: Choose a topic that you care about, perhaps related to a career or personal interest.

Step 2: If at all possible, use a sub-notebook or notebook computer. Otherwise, invest in some 3 x 5 index cards.

Step 3: If necessary, do some preliminary reading, for example, an overview article to help you develop a thesis or focus for your paper. (Your focus may change as you're doing Step 4.)

Step 4: If you need to do research, write your notes and ideas on a computer so it's easy to move things around. The Internet is an amazing tool. (Check out my favorite search engine, www.metacrawler.com, and my favorite gateway to periodical resources, www.elibrary.com. Ask your school library for a log-in.) If you don't have a computer, write one piece of information per index card.

Step 5: Place each piece of information into one of a few categories. This will be the structure of your paper.

Step 6: Within each category, put each piece of information in a logical order.

Step 7: Turn these ordered pieces of information into smooth paragraphs. Add and subtract material as you see fit.

Don't spend much time just staring at the screen. Keep adding, subtracting, and revising stuff even if you're not sure the changes are good. The constant changing keeps you feeling like you're making progress, and probably sooner rather than later, your product will get better and better.

Step 8: Write an introduction and conclusion. Don't stare at a blank screen. Write whatever comes to mind and revise. It's much easier to revise than to generate brilliance out of thin air.

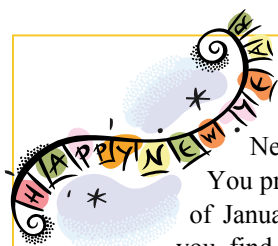
Step 9: Put your paper away for a day and then revise again.

Step 10: Show a draft to the person who will be grading the paper: the professor or teaching assistant. Often, he'll be willing to read a draft. That almost ensures a good grade when you submit your final version. If he refuses, try one of the campus' writing tutors, a friend, or even your parent. If you get a bad grade, ask the instructor if you can rewrite based on his feedback and resubmit. If he says yes, it's an almost guaranteed way to improve your grade.

You're Gonna Love This College Guide
Marty Nemko, Ph.D.

Writing Resources on the Web

- EnhanceMyWriting.com (a guide to writing resources)
- apastyle.org (APA rules of style)
- bedfordstmartins.com/online/ (guide to using internet sources)
- garbl.com (annotated directory of writing resources)
- bartleby.com (online reference books, including resources on English usage)
- scholar.google.com (search scholarly literature)
- worldcat.org (online database for largest library network in the world)
- easybib.com (bibliography composer)
- dictionary.reference.com/writing/ (links to sites writers can use)
- www.hwwilson.com (scroll down for PDF download on "How to use Readers Guide to Periodical Literature")



Five New Year's Resolutions You Can Actually Keep

New Year's resolutions can be hard to keep. You probably start off pretty good at the beginning of January, but by the time February rolls around, you find yourself eating more fatty foods, making excuses not to go to the gym, spending money on clothes or electronics that you don't really need, etc., etc. Even though they are the most common, resolutions involving food, money, and exercise are usually the hardest ones to carry out, especially for students. So, here are five New Year's resolutions that you can actually keep throughout the whole year.

1. Volunteer more. Not only will this look good on your resume, but you will be helping your community. If you already volunteer, but do it on a limited basis, make a resolution to find the time to volunteer more often. If you do not currently volunteer, decide what you have a passion for and then look for an organization in which you can experience that passion on a regular basis. Love animals? Volunteer at an animal shelter. Interested in becoming a teacher? Volunteer at a local school.

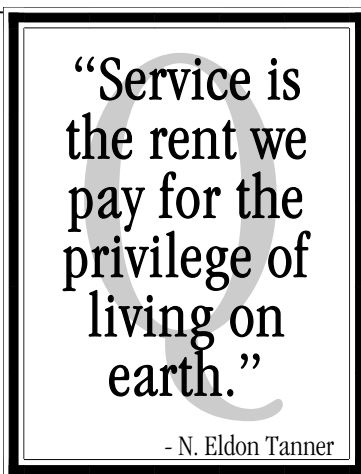
2. Don't procrastinate. It's hard not to put off school work until the last minute, but try to make a resolution to complete assignments in ample time before they are due. That way you will have plenty of time to check answers, proofread, etc. in order to make good grades. Plus, by completing assignments early, you won't be rushed to complete them the night before they are due.

3. Don't sweat the small stuff. So you didn't make a perfect grade on that philosophy paper. Big deal. It's not like that one grade will keep you from getting a good job when you graduate. You will just have to make sure to do better the next time around. If you stress over stuff that you can't change, you will only make yourself sick.

4. Update your resume regularly. Has it been a while since you've updated your resume? If so, make a resolution to revise your resume every time you change jobs, win an award, etc. By updating your resume on a regular basis, you will be more capable of remembering specific details to include and won't forget to add anything to your resume that is noteworthy.

5. Relax. This should be an easy resolution for anyone to keep! College students have very busy schedules, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't be able to find the time to relax now and then. Sticking to resolution number 2 will make this resolution much easier to keep. If you find that you have had a very busy day, week or month, set aside a few hours or even a whole day for some much needed relaxation. Get a massage, read a non-textbook book, try out some yoga techniques, watch your favorite TV show, or just chill with your closest friends.

www.eCampusTours.com



Help If You Get Sick

Most colleges generally provide, at minimal cost, such benefits as unlimited visits to the campus infirmary for consultation and treatment by student health service doctors and nurses. Your student health service will probably serve mainly as a dispensary, offering a few basic services that may include the following:

- Prescribing commonly used medicines
- Performing routine diagnostic tests and X-rays
- Providing first-aid treatment of injuries not requiring surgery
- Offering psychological counseling for personal and emotional problems (unless your college has a separate counseling center, to which you'll be referred)

When to see a doctor

This is the big question, and we can't answer it for you—only you know how you feel. But we can offer the following general guidelines, which were compiled with the help of a Johns Hopkins internist:

- If you have a fever higher than 101 degrees Fahrenheit that doesn't get better with aspirin or acetaminophen.
- If you have severe pain that's unexplained (i.e. not caused by muscle injury, tension headache, menstrual cramps, etc.)
- If you're unable to keep down food or water for more than 24 hours.
- If you're unable to urinate, or you haven't had a bowel movement in several days.
- If you notice any unusual vaginal discharge, blood in your urine or bowel movements, or blood when you cough.
- If you experience burning when you urinate.
- If you've been coughing for several days, cough syrups don't help and your chest is getting sore, or if you're short of breath and can't take a deep breath.
- If you have a sore throat that lasts longer than a couple of days.
- If you're feeling excessively fatigued for several days and can't "perk up."
- If you become depressed or begin to have suicidal thoughts.

An Ounce of Prevention

The very best way to handle being sick is not to get sick at all. And there's a lot you can do to make sure this doesn't happen. With help from an internist at the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions, we've compiled a few sure-fire tips to boost your odds of staying well. They include:

- Wash your hands. Your mother was right. Do it before you eat, stick your finger in your mouth, or—this is really important—touch your eyes or nose.
- Take a multivitamin.
- An aspirin a day may keep cancer and heart disease away.
- Get a flu shot.
- Make sure your immunizations are up-to-date.
- Don't do stupid things (drinking and driving, or drugs).
- Stock your own medicine chest.
- Force fluids, preferably juices.

The Ultimate College Survival Guide
Janet Farrar Worthington and Ronald Farrar

Tips to Help Manage Your Money

- 1. Track your cash.** To be fiscally fit you need to know how much goes in and out of your account. Keep monthly records of your spending and living expenses. (Try out www.BillMonk.com or www.mint.com.)
- 2. Get organized.** Keep ATM transaction receipts, bills, purchases and tax records organized together in labeled files. This will help you stay on track with your budget and make it easier when it's time to pay bills.
- 3. Shop second hand.** Buy used books. Used books are usually in good condition and cost about half the price of new books. If you can curb the desire for all new flashy items and clothing in favor of reliable practical things with a bit of history, you'll be ahead of the pack.
- 4. Keep the car home.** The insurance, maintenance and gas will eat you alive. Most university towns are compact and everything you need will be within walking distance of campus. If some of your friends have a car, great—let them cover the expense.
- 5. Look for student discounts.** Take advantage of the perks offered to students. Be on the lookout for deals on plane tickets, pizza, books, clothes—everything. The student newspaper is a good place to start. The Internet can be a gold mine of discounts. (Check out www.statravel.com and www.studentadvantage.com.)
- 6. Get smart about credit.** Credit cards are not magic money; they're a loan with an obligation to repay. Don't spend more than you can afford to pay back. Get a card with a low limit. Shop around for the best deal and read the fine print before signing up.

"Don't use a credit card for anything you eat, wear, or listen to. Who wants to pay interest on a meal eaten a month ago?"

Been There Should've Done That
Suzette Tyler

- 7. Live within your means.** Don't buy what you can't afford. Don't eat out all the time. Pack a lunch. This will save you big bucks. Don't eat regularly at fast-food restaurants because it will reduce your bank account while packing on the extra pounds.
- 8. Smart spending equals savings.** Find inexpensive ways to entertain yourself. Visit museums,

parks or read at the coffeehouse, check out sales racks and consignment shops, cut coupons or search the Internet. If you do a little research, you will save money.

- 9. Protect yourself.** Don't be a victim of fraud or identity theft. Guard your credit card, PIN and account numbers. Buy a shredder so you can dispose of statements, receipts and bills properly.
- 10. Pay attention.** Read your bills and statements each month. This helps you keep track of your spending, alerts you to fraud and any mistakes that may occur on your account. If you move, inform the bank of your new address. Guard your credit card number and close unused accounts.

Average credit card debt for college students: \$2,748

Been There Should've Done That
Suzette Tyler

- 7. Get the best deal on a checking account.** Shop around before opening a checking account. Smaller banks may offer a better deal. Compare fees. Ask if there's a fee for dealing with a teller, including deposits or withdrawals. Ask if there's a fee to use a debit card. Ask about ATM fees. Ask if overdraft protection is part of the student package. If not, ask about linking such coverage to a bank-issued credit card.



- 8. Start saving.** Open a savings account. Establish a savings plan and kick in a little money each week. Stick with it. Compound interest is a wonderful thing and it's always wise to have a little extra tucked away.
- 9. Bonus tip: Don't be dumb!** Some expenses can be easily avoided. Things like parking fines, overdue library books, and late fees are controllable by simply reading signs and following the rules.

www.experience.com



Pay careful attention to the drop/add deadlines at your school. If your school charges per credit hour, dropping a class after the deadline is just like flushing money down the drain! And keeping close track of your graduation requirements can save you the expense of an extra semester or more in school!

Zen and the Art of Course Selection

Ohmmm: Creating a Balance

Selecting courses should be easy. You just pick any three or four that you need, stir gently, and you have an instant course schedule, right? Actually, you need to ask yourself some questions as you create your course schedule each semester—and be honest with yourself. Are you really going to wake up early to make it to an 8 A.M. class? Is the only course section offered this semester taught by the professor who made your roommate so nervous she broke out in hives? Will you have to run at breakneck speed from one end of campus to the other in the 15 minutes between classes? To create a balanced schedule, you need to consider the following issues.

Balancing Tasks

When choosing courses, think about the tasks you will be required to do. You really don't want to take four courses that all require heavy reading, like literature, sociology, history, psychology, or biology. Likewise, you don't want to be doing only mathematics problems all term either (no matter how much you enjoy them). Instead, try to create a balance between heavy reading courses and those that require less reading, courses that involve problem-solving and those that do not.

Balancing Interests

It would be great if you could be interested in each and every course you take in college (we hope you will find *something* interesting in every course). However, most colleges require a core of courses, some of which may not be your favorites. Instead of waiting until the last possible semester to take these dreaded courses, it is a much better idea to spread them out over your college career. Try to balance your semester with some courses you find highly interesting; something in your major, or a course that focuses on topics you've always wanted to know more about. For example, one of the authors of this book took an elective course on King Arthur legends that was not part of her major but was the highlight of that semester.

Balancing Time

When creating your course schedule, you should also consider when each class meets. If you know that you have grave difficulty just finding the shower early in the morning (let alone trying to make your brain function), avoid 8 A.M. classes like the plague. In addition, don't overload your schedule. We have known students who have attempted to take all of their courses on Tuesdays and Thursdays and were in class from 9 A.M. until after 6 P.M. Unless you are extremely disciplined, you will soon find this kind of schedule grueling. Also, try to schedule the courses you are least interested in at your personal peak times. This way you are more likely to make it to class every day.

Creating a balance in your schedule can often mean the difference between a great semester and a lousy one. Take the time to consider these factors each time you make your course schedule.

Working with Your Advisor

Although we strongly believe that advisors should be up on things, we also know that it is very difficult for them to keep up with the many curriculum requirement changes that occur at many colleges—especially if advising is not the advisor's full-time job.



Quest Alumni Advice

“Try to meet people who are about to, or have already graduated from a program that interests you. Ask them for advice on what classes to take. Often they will be more helpful than the advisors.”

- Alumna, FGCU, QFK Class of 2003

No matter who your advisor may be, it is *your responsibility* to be sure you get the guidance you need. Here are some basic questions to ask your advisor:

1. **Which courses are required for graduating with my major?**
2. **Are there prerequisite courses for any of these requirements?** (You may want to ask this question every time you meet with your advisor.)
3. **How often are these courses offered—and are there any that are only offered occasionally?** On most campuses, courses are planned almost a year in advance (or at least tentatively planned), so your advisor should be able to find out what will be offered the following semester (or even, in some cases, the next two semesters).
4. **Are there any requirements governing how I must choose to use my elective credit hours?** Some colleges require that you take some electives in the humanities, sciences, and so on. Others have no such requirements for electives and you can use them as you choose.
5. **Is there a particular order I should follow when signing up for the courses in my major?**
6. **Are there any courses that need to be taken at the same time?**

Choosing Your Professors

Many students tell us that selecting professors is even more important than selecting courses. Ask your friends, your advisor, and students in your major which professors they'd suggest. Try to get some specifics about the professor. What is his general style of teaching? What kinds of tests does he give? You may even want to go talk to the professor through email or during his office hours to find out a little more about a course before signing up. (**Check out www.ratemyprofessors.com.**)

In general, seeking help from advisors, peers, and professors can help you create a course schedule you can live with (and even learn to love).

Adapted from *College Rules!*
Sherrie Nist, Ph.D. and Jodi Patrick Holschuh, Ph.D.



Classes Worth Their Weight in Gold



Not all classes are created equal. Some classes in particular will help you excel in your career. Here are the college courses that are highly likely to come in handy immediately following your graduation:

Business-Writing Course

While college may teach you to write academically, usually exploring a subject in-depth using an advanced vocabulary, businesses and organizations need you to be able to write papers that are short, simple, and to the point. As a matter of fact, the ability to communicate effectively has been consistently ranked as the number one performance factor for professional success. If you want to look good to your future employers, take a business-writing course. The course usually covers how to write memos, reports, and business letters.

Grant-Writing Course

Being able to get free money to help you do the work of your dreams is a reality if you know how to apply for grants. What is a grant? Let's say you become very rich running a magazine and decide that you want to give \$5,000 a year to help other people start magazines. That \$5,000 is called a grant and is given to the person with the best application. Now, here's the great part—there are grants for almost everything! In 1998 alone, grants from U.S. foundations totaled \$20 billion and the grants were given to assist every purpose under the sun! Once you've completed a grant-writing course, you'll know how to find and apply for the grant money. Knowing how to apply for grant money is a valuable skill that many businesses need and pay money for. In addition, it might be your key to having the money you need to do the work of your dreams.

Promotions/Public Relations Course

Take a course that covers paid and unpaid activities designed to encourage the purchase of products and services including advertising, display, publicity/press releases, public relations, packaging, special events, and sales promotions. You'll find that all companies can benefit from good public relations. Taking this course could open up a lot of job opportunities for you.

Speech/Business Presentations Course

Take a course that includes discussions and practice on delivering persuasive speeches, body language, assertive communications, and audiovisual aids. THE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY RANKED THE NUMBER ONE PERFORMANCE FACTOR FOR PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS. In our society, shyness is not considered an asset. A speech course can help you feel confident speaking to one or 1,000. And you can apply this confidence to situations that occur more often than in public speaking: speaking well over the phone; speaking up in class; making a good impression on an interview; and expressing your ideas in a meeting.

Sales/Selling Principles Course

Sales courses are helpful to everyone no matter what their professional aspirations. A good sales course will cover customer

service, the processes and techniques of selling, time and activity planning, product/service knowledge, supporting activities, and managing the selling function. In addition to being a valuable skill in every field, knowing how to sell yourself is the key to winning the jobs and salaries that you desire. Studies suggest that you're going to need to win at least ten different jobs during your lifetime. So remember, if you can't sell yourself or your ideas, nobody will buy your services.

Time Management Workshop

Time management is a great tool everyone can use to work more effectively. You need to develop a system that allows you to get the most done in the least time. It's a wonder that it's not a required course for college students because it's practically a required skill in the real world.

Human Relations/Interpersonal Communications Course

Master the ability to get along well with almost anybody in everyday business and social situations. Develop the ability even if you have to learn it on your own. Your college might not offer a course to help you develop your "people skills," but if it does, the course is probably titled something like "Human Relations" (as in "I can relate to humans") or "Interpersonal Communications." A good course promotes understanding of oneself and empathy for others as a basis for establishing satisfactory relationships on the job and in everyday living. It also covers listening skills and group decision-making processes. If your college offers such a course, take it—maybe even twice.

Marketing Course

Every business has a marketing plan. Artists who make a living selling their art have to use marketing principles. Performers and athletes market themselves like products. Colleges are marketed to high-school students and parents. Churches have fund-raising drives that are based on marketing. NBA basketball teams are marketed to the public. Everywhere you go in your work, marketing will be a part of the picture. If you take a marketing course, you'll have a fundamental understanding of a subject that everyone will at some time be involved in. It also looks great on your resume. Most courses will cover marketing environment, segmentation, marketing mix, marketing opportunities, and buyer behavior.

Language Course

Many major companies are doing business globally and they look for employees who can speak another language—or who have taken language classes. It shows an interest and ability to learn new languages. Even if you'll only work in the United States, learn a second language. Research trends point to a very near future where speaking a second language will be a necessary skill.

Take the courses above and you'll have more than an interesting library in your head on the day you graduate. You'll have the business basics that most employers require. Best of all, you'll have the know-how that will enable you to accomplish your dreams.

- *Major in Success* by Patrick Combs

STUDY BREAK

www.PrintSudoku.com

Laugh Every Day

2			6				7	5
	7			2				
6	8				5		1	
5		9		8	1			
			2	9		6		7
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1	4				3			9

Medium Difficulty

They say laughter is the best medicine, and this holds especially true for college students, mainly due to one particularly nasty recurring problem: stress. College-related stress has a negative impact on the body. It leads to exhaustion, a decrease in metabolism, a weakened immune system, and general unhappiness. It's hard to avoid situations that cause stress, but it's not hard to find methods to combat its negative effects. Laughing is one of these methods.

Not to get too physiologically specific, but the act of laughing releases an antibody known as IgA. This little critter releases endorphins, fights off stress-related hormones, and in general makes you feel good. Not to mention the physiological benefits of letting loose. The physical act of smiling actually shifts your mental state toward the positive. Basically, laughing is like an ultra-powerful vitamin, and you should treat it as such.

Find something every single day that will make you laugh.

How to Win at College
Cal Newport

For a chuckle, check out www.homestarrunner.com (Be sure to click on "first time here?") or www.netfunny.com.

Memo From Marilyn

Remember, this is **your** newsletter, and your input is welcome! Please let us know what features and articles you find most useful. If you'd like to see a particular topic addressed or have a suggestion for a "Study Break" activity, send me an e-mail. Or better yet, submit an article! Do we have any cartoonists out there? I'd love to include a bit of humor—this might be your chance to be published! Contact me at Marilyn@questctr.com.



Financial Aid and Scholarships

Remember that you must reapply each year for your financial aid. If you have not already done so, be sure to file your **FAFSA** as soon as possible!

If you received any scholarships this year, now would be a good time to send a letter to the group that awarded the scholarship. Let them know what you're doing and how much you appreciated the financial assistance. Perhaps they will renew it!

And finally, there are other scholarships out there. Check with your major department and your financial aid office. Marilyn would be happy to help you research options as well! Call her at 403-7174, ext. 326 or e-mail her at Marilyn@questctr.com.



Quest 2010 Speaker Series

February 5, 2010 ♦ February 26, 2010 ♦ March 12, 2010

Held at The Ritz-Carlton, Naples, the dinner/lecture series begins promptly at 6:00 p.m. Net proceeds raised from this event are used to fund the administration of the Quest For Kids program and purchase Quest college scholarships. If you are interested in attending one of the events, please contact Quest.

Speakers this year are Daniel Hannan, Mitt Romney, and David M. Walker. To learn more about the series and these speakers, visit the website at:

www.questeducationalfoundation.org

