

Optimizing Your Classroom Time

By Rachel Neumeier

Classroom attendance correlates with course outcomes. To put that another way: students who attend class most of the time usually get better grades. "Most of the time" doesn't mean "80% of the time." It means, "99% of the time."

But coming to class and then snoozing or texting doesn't count as really attending class. Yet you probably often feel either tired or bored in class, and what are you supposed to do then?

Students who are tired in class because they stay up late watching movies or chatting with friends or playing solitaire just need to cut it out and get

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FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR EXCEL/SSS STUDENTS

EXCEL/SSS students have the opportunity to apply for the Fall 2009 EXCEL/SSS Scholarship which is awarded by Mineral Area College and for SSS Supplemental Grant Aid which will be awarded in the spring semester. The EXCEL/SSS Scholarship is a non-renewable \$500 scholarship. The SSS Supplemental Grant Aid will be awarded

to a maximum of 34 participants who meet federal eligibility requirements and EXCEL participation requirements. The minimum amount of the award is \$976. Applications and eligibility information for both the scholarship and the grant aid are available in the EXCEL Office and on the EXCEL web page.



Coming Events



- Oct. 3 EXCEL/SSS Field Trip SEMO Show-Me Day
- Oct. 14 EXCEL/SSS Workshop Financial Literacy 10:00 AM, A & S bldg., Rm. C9
- Oct. 16 Mid-term Grades Available on the web
- Oct. 21 EXCEL/SSS Workshop Test Taking Tips 10:00 AM A&S bldg., Rm. C9
- Oct. 25 EXCEL/SSS Workshop Writing Well 10:00 AM, A&S bldg., Rm. C9



- Nov. 6 Fall Break, - No Classes
- Nov. 11 EXCEL/SSS Workshop Preparing for Finals Week 10:00 AM A&S Bldg., Rm. C9
- Nov. 14 EXCEL/SSS Field Trip UM-SL Open House
- Nov. 18 EXCEL/SSS Workshop Career Choices 10:00 AM A&S Bldg., Rm. C9
- Nov. 26 - 28 Thanksgiving Break

Optimizing

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more sleep. But what if you work long hours and / or have family responsibilities *and* also take classes? How can you combat fatigue in the classroom if you really have no choice but to come to class tired?

In the same way, what if you're taking a class in a subject that just makes your eyes glaze over with boredom? Maybe your instructor lectures in a soothing monotone that makes everything seem equally unimportant and bland: that doesn't help, either. Especially if you're trying to argue with your boyfriend via text messages at the same time. How can you handle boredom in a class if the subject just isn't your cup of tea?

The answer to both fatigue and boredom is actually the same. There is only one main key to making your classroom time useful even if you're tired or bored:

MAKE UP YOUR MIND TO PAY ATTENTION. Passive listening is what you do when you watch TV. It is the wrong, wrong, wrong way to listen when you are in the classroom! In the classroom, you should be *making decisions* all the time you are listening. You *decide* whether you really understood what the teacher just said. You *decide* whether to write it down. You *decide* whether it's important. You *decide* how it fits in with the rest of the lecture.

If you *understand* a lecture, then it's much easier to tell what's important, much easier to take clear, neat notes, and *much* easier to remember the material! It's a terrible waste of time to sit through a lecture without learning anything! If you do that, then you just have to learn all the material later, when the test is about to land on your desk. If you understand the lectures, then you will have much less work to do later!

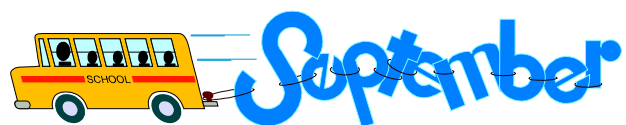
There are two techniques that are HUGELY helpful if you have trouble understanding the lectures. You use one before the lecture and the other afterwards.

The first is: **READ THE TEXTBOOK BEFORE LECTURE.** This is especially important if the teacher goes too fast for you when lecturing. Read ahead even if your teacher says that he isn't really using the book. Even if *he* isn't, *you* can, and it will help a whole lot

as you try to learn and understand and remember the course material. If you fall asleep when reading, then take notes out of the book to help yourself stay awake.

The second is: **REVIEW, CLARIFY, AND SUMMARIZE YOUR NOTES AFTER LECTURE.** Do this every lecture day, as soon as possible after lecture. Type your notes up, if you like! Boldface or underline important points. Add a summary after each main topic that the instructor has finished. Print out your notes and put them in a three-ring binder. Add key words in the margin. Also write possible test questions in the margin. Voila! You have created your own study guide, only you shouldn't have to actually study all that much later, because working with your notes soon after lecture helps so much in remembering the material.

Intending to learn, and using these techniques to help you learn, should ensure that you get everything possible out of your lecture classes and that you waste as little time as possible learning the course material!



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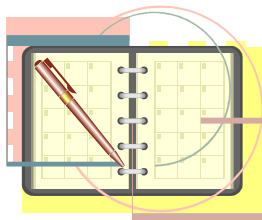
The Tutor's Corner

By Bernie Ratliff



Hey EXCELLERS! Welcome to Fall Semester 2009. How are you doing in your classes? Do you need help with preparation or studying? I want to offer some suggestions that may help you with your studies.

1. Develop a plan for studying and completing your assignments. Are you keeping a calendar or some other written schedule for making appointments with yourself to get your schoolwork completed? A schedule will help keep you on task. By making your studies a priority, you train your mind to be ready and receptive for study. Also, having a schedule allows you to see when you have free time for recreation. We have monthly planning calendars in the EXCEL office if you would like to have one.



2. Learn to utilize your time wisely. Develop ways to take your studies with you wherever you go. If you have 10 minutes while you wait for someone or something, get out note cards or a notebook and review. While not everyone likes note cards, the fact is, they are portable and can be carried and studied anywhere at any time. Remember, short periods of study can be very effective for learning. You don't have to read the entire chapter of an assignment at once. Reading it in sections as you have time can keep you from getting behind. It also keeps you from feeling overwhelmed by the entire assignment.

3. Take a quick inventory of your study habits. If the way you study is not working, get help

immediately. Study methods that worked for you in high school or in other classes may not work for you now. Consider getting tutoring if your grades are not what you want them to be. Once you receive tutoring, continue it until your grades have stabilized to the point you can feel a sense of accomplishment. Generally speaking, coming in for tutoring once or twice may not be enough. Be realistic about your grades and the amount of time and effort that you are putting into the class. Work with a tutor to develop strategies for learning to take test effectively.

4. Learn to prioritize what needs to be studied first, second, and so on. Determine which courses will require more study time and schedule accordingly. Try to study your most difficult courses first. If your algebra test is Friday, plan to review 30 minutes or more each day of the week. By using a plan for systematic review, you will be prepared for that next test. On the other hand, if you have a research paper due in mid December, set aside special time once a week to work toward getting ready for that paper. You will need to increase the allotted time for working on your paper as you get closer to the due date.

5. When things get tough, take a break. Decide how long you need for your break. Will you need an hour, a half-day, or even a weekend? Maybe, you just need to go for a brisk walk or jog around the block for 20 minutes. Take short breaks as you study so that you don't get burned out. Just remember to always return to your studies.

EXCEL/SSS MISSION

To provide the support necessary for each EXCEL/SSS student to reach his/her own level of "academic excellence" and succeed in achieving a postsecondary education.

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