



15 TIPS

for

COLLEGE

SUCCESS

collegecake

INTRODUCTION

Hello, and welcome! It's a good sign for your future that you decided to download an eBook all about college success, and I'm so glad that you're here.

Whether you're getting ready for your first semester at university or you're already in the thick of it, this eBook provides you with tips and strategies that help with you achieve physical, mental, financial, and academic success in college.

I also include several real-life examples to help contextualize what you're learning. Essentially, the eBook is designed to help you thrive as a college student.

So, who am I? I'm Devlin Peck, founder of CollegeCake! I founded the company after finishing my Master's to help make college a piece of cake for students around the country, and we're getting off to a great

start! I don't usually like talking about my accomplishments, but if you're wondering why you should listen to the guy who started a company with a silly name, here's a bit more about me:

1

I earned an A in every class that I took at my university (that's over 60 classes between my Bachelor's and Master's degrees)

2

My Master's is in Instructional Design, which is all about how to help people learn more efficiently and perform better.

3

I earned scholarships to study abroad in London. They covered tuition, housing, food, airfare, and entertainment, with an extra few thousand dollars to put into savings.

4

I secured funding to conduct a summer research / service project in Vanuatu, a beautiful island-nation near New Zealand and Australia.

5

I completed a 100-page undergraduate thesis and won my university's annual "Best Thesis in English" award.

6

I landed a job at a fine-dining restaurant as an undergrad and earned my first \$100 tip.

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I earned \$100 an hour as a consultant during my Master's.

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I scored in the 98th percentile on the GRE.

9

I led a mock trial team in competitions nationwide as the mock trial team captain.

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I landed a remote gig at Apple, both as an undergraduate and Master's student, that provided full tuition reimbursement.

Whew, that's enough about me!

We're really here for *YOU*.

My list of accomplishments may seem like a lot (or not), but following this list of tips is the first step to your own success at college. Let's jump right in and get started!

TIP #1

SET GOALS

Setting goals is a great way to hold yourself accountable and get the most out of college. Start off with a long-term goal that is about 5 years in the future. Do you want to get accepted into your dream law school, secure a job in big tech, or just graduate college, make a ton of friends, and earn your degree?



Once you've decided upon a long-term goal that resonates with you, it's much easier to make short term goals that contribute to that goal. For example, if you're aiming for that ivy league, you're likely going to need A's in all of your classes as well as a kickass personal statement.

Your short-term goals may look slightly different than someone whose long-term goal is to go down in the books for throwing the wildest rager in college history.

Either way, we're not judging.

When you're aware of your goals, it's easier to take steps towards those goals. And don't worry! Goals can change. When I started off as an undergrad, it felt like my goals were changing every week (along with my desired major). That's part of the process, but working towards your goals is a skill that will stick with you for the long-haul.

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TIP #2

PRIORITIZE

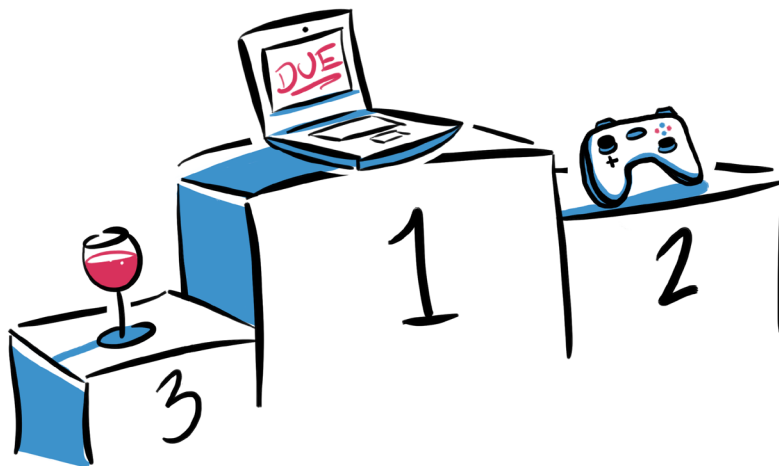
Prioritization is Goal Setting's best friend. You can set as many goals as you want, but if you can't assign weight to them based off of importance, then it will be hard to take action. If one of your goals is to achieve all A's so that you can get into grad school, but another one of your goals is to have as much fun in college as possible, then what do you do when a friend asks you to hit the club the night before a test?

When you've prioritized your goals, decision-making becomes much easier (saving more brainpower for the important things).

Since you're enrolled in classes that cost thousands of dollars, it's probably a good idea to put academics towards the top of that priority list...but then again, your goals are your choice.

So where do you start? Once you have your short- and long-term goals listed, try ranking them in order of importance. Use this list to guide your decision-making on a day-to-day basis. Progress towards your goals is inevitable when you use this approach.

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TIP #3

STAY ACTIVE

If there's one thing that you can do to help yourself in college, it's staying active. Seriously. Well, maybe eating and going to class are kind of important, too. But by getting outside for a run or going to the gym to lift, you will be doing yourself a huge favor.

First, there are the physical benefits. No matter your level of anxiety towards the Freshman 15, everybody knows that it's a problem. Healthy eating can slip when you're busy (I'm looking at you, frozen pizzas), but making time for exercise will do more than keep your weight down.

The biggest benefits of exercise are psychological. Do you ever check yourself out in the mirror after hitting the gym for a few days in a row? Even if you haven't really made any gains, it feels like you have.

You might notice your muscles looking bigger or your waist looking smaller, but either way, it's a huge confidence booster.

Higher self-esteem leads to more confidence, which, in turn, leads to you conquering college. And, believe it or not, taking some time out of your study routine to work out may pay off academically. There are many studies that tout the positive effects of exercise on memory, so breaking a sweat will keep your mental acuity high.

Are you sold on staying active? Happy body, happy mind, happy you.



TIP #4

ELIMINATE DISTRACTIONS

Distractions are the death of productivity. If that's not already a quote, then it should be (because it's true!). Distractions can take many forms, too.

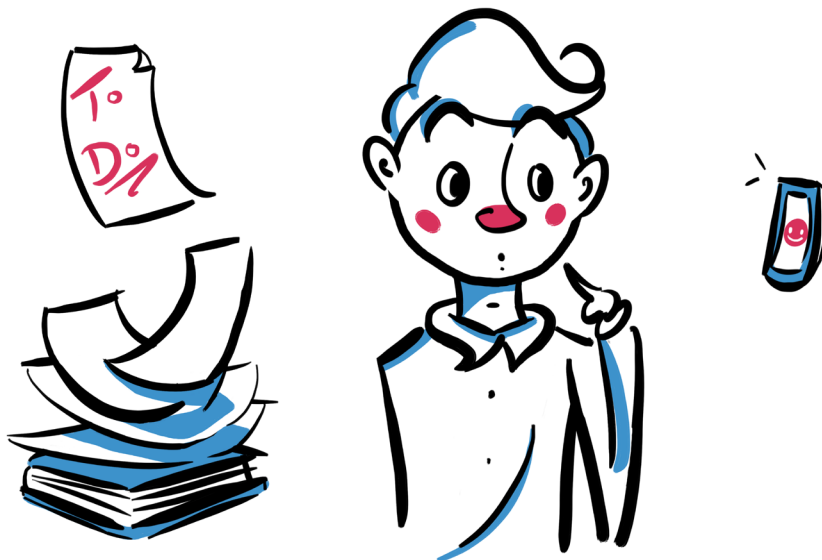
They're not only the notifications about who liked your latest Instagram posts, but anything that can take you out of your study flow. Studying with a friend and they ask you a question? Distraction.

Feeling bored by your math homework so you open up Facebook? Obvious distraction. Coffee shop closing so you need to pack up and leave? You guessed it! Distraction.

Distractions may also be more subtle. Maybe you have an unclean work-space, your phone is always in your field-of-view, or you're physically uncomfortable (hungry, too cold, too hot, etc.).

By cleaning up your workspace, putting your phone on do-not-disturb, and ensuring that your physical needs are met, you will start to hone that hawk-like focus.

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TIP #5

MAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

Aligning your actions with your prioritized goal list is great, but you need to make time for yourself. Once you get into the productivity groove and start knocking out assignments and seeing the fruits of your labor, relaxing can be hard.

Every minute you spend playing video games, napping, or taking a stroll across campus might start to feel like a wasted minute that could be better spent studying, reading, or working.

Despite that feeling, taking time for yourself is better for your mental health and academic performance in the long run.

You need time to recharge, reflect, and relax. The right amount of time will depend on the individual, but try to take at least 30 minutes a day (or a few hours a week) to do something relaxing.

Do you need ideas for relaxing things to do besides watching Netflix? Try walking around a local park, participating in some rec sports, journaling at a coffee shop, or going to a trivia night.



TIP #6

TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR WORK

An excellent way to elevate your academic performance is to treat every assignment that you produce as an extension of yourself. Think of schoolwork like an artistic endeavor, similar to painting, writing fiction, or filming a video.

This doesn't make as much sense for busywork, but when it comes to writing essays, giving presentations, or other similar assignments, you can let your creativity run wild. Obviously, there are going to be some constraints. Your essay will need to respond to a prompt, your presentation will need to be related to a specific topic, and your other assignments won't be any different.

That doesn't mean you can't be creative. Rather than going for the easiest topic or writing the essay as fast as possible, find an angle that interests you. Take the time to explore it and think of the assignment as a way to share your thoughts and findings with your audience (either your professor, TA, or classmates). When you frame your assignments as a form of self-expression, it

becomes much easier to take pride in your work. For example, deep-diving into a topic that interests you and putting together a compelling paper or presentation will give you a sense of satisfaction similar to if you had finished a painting or written a short novella. Likewise, putting effort into ensuring that every detail of your lab report is correct will give you a brain-high similar to that of a world-renowned chemist publishing a new paper. If that warm fuzzy feeling sounds nice, then the A that you receive from your professor will be the cherry on top. As long as you meet the requirements of the assignment, the effort that you put into the work will not go unnoticed by the person with the grading pen.

Essentially, you want to be proud to have your name on every assignment that you turn in. Make sure it represents you in the best light possible.

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TIP #7**TREAT SCHOOL LIKE WORK**

You've probably heard that for every hour you spend in class, you should spend 2-3 additional hours studying outside of class. This means that with a typical 12 credit-hour schedule, you will devote 12 hours per week in class and 24-36 hours outside of class.

If you do the quick math, you'll find that this workload exceeds that of a full-time job. With that being said, many college students just go to class (some don't even make it this far), study a bit before tests, and call it a day. This isn't sufficient if you'd like to be high-performing academically.

Set a schedule for your out-of-class hours. You can stay on campus from 8-5 and get everything done, or you can study for a few hours before going to sleep each night.

Whatever you decide works best for you, it's great to set a schedule and then stick to it.

Even if you don't establish a routine and stick to your schedule, the worst thing you can do is neglect those out-of-class hours. This time is essential for completing the course readings, working on your assignments, and studying for exams. If you don't do this regularly, your stress levels will be through the roof before due dates or big tests, which leads us to our next tip...

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TIP #8

DON'T PROCRASTINATE

Oh, man. If there's one tip that you should get tattooed on your body, it's this one. Please, please, please don't procrastinate. I've seen friends who neglect this rule turn into zombies for days at a time.

When I worked as a Resident Assistant, I witnessed too many freshmen go on caffeine-riddled, sleepless exam weeks as a last mad dash to hopefully pass their courses. That's not a pretty sight, and I also can't imagine how stressful it would be.

The better approach is to spread that stress out across the semester. As soon as you have the course syllabi in your hands, you should be looking at the assignments, tests, and important dates.

As soon as you know what you need to do, that's when you should start stressing in small doses. This is healthy, and it helps motivate you to get the assignments done.

So, rather than waiting the week before the assignment is due or the test is scheduled to study and write, get started as soon as possible. Did you run out of class readings during your scheduled "out-of-class" hours? Good! Start finding sources for your upcoming essay or looking at what you'll need to study for the test. Again, you might feel more stressed than your carefree peers during the semester, but you'll be cruising through exam week while they're taking micro-naps as their fingers churn out lackluster final papers.

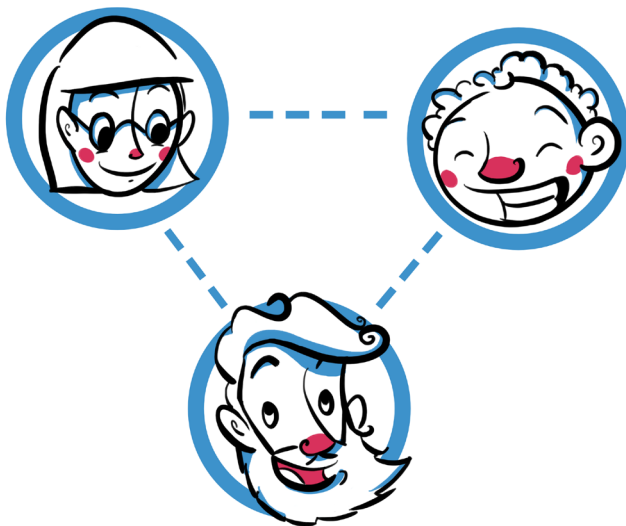
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TIP #9

NETWORK

Ah, the vague advice that I guarantee you'll continue to hear throughout college and beyond: network. At its core, it's just talking to new people and building relationships. Some of you might already be curling up into yourselves just reading that sentence, but it doesn't have to be as scary as it may sound.

Networking can take on many forms, but its purpose is simple. When more people know and like you, there will be more opportunities coming your way and less closed doors.



For example, if I'm looking for a digital marketer to help me with a project, and I know that my friend Jimmy has been studying digital marketing for the last three years, I'm going to turn to him before turning to a stranger.

Likewise, if I'm trying to land a gig at Apple and I have a few friends that work there, they can put my resume in front of the right person so that I can finesse an interview.

Again, this doesn't have to be stressful. While face-to-face interactions are the easiest way to leave an impression, it's easier than ever to network virtually. LinkedIn is growing faster than ever, and millions of recruiters and professionals hang out there.

If you start growing your digital footprint as an undergrad, you'll have a huge leg up on people who don't start until they graduate. If there's one takeaway from this section, it's that you should be meeting new people and getting your name out there. Which, once again, brings us to our next section...

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TIP #10

GET OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE

College is about growth, and there's no better way to grow than to step out of your comfort zone. Think about the things that make you uncomfortable. Is it public speaking, introducing yourself and striking up a conversation with a stranger, or maybe going to an interview?

When I started college, I definitely had social anxiety. The idea of speaking in front of a class of random, older college students was somewhat traumatizing. So what did I do? I essentially beat it out of myself.

That's right! I became a Resident Assistant, and I still remember my heart racing as I approached my first resident's door to introduce myself. I also joined the mock trial team, where I had to recite 8-minute long closing statements in front of live audiences (and a whole lot more on top of that).

It wasn't easy.

I forgot my closing statement halfway through the first time I was giving it, and my 20 onlookers stared in confusion as I went over to my script and started reading through it. I don't mean to make this about me, but I can tell you from experience that forcing yourself to do things you're uncomfortable with is the best way to become comfortable with them in the future.

My confidence, along with my social skills, have improved dramatically, but I can't imagine where I'd be if I didn't have those terribly awkward and nerve-wracking experiences as an undergrad. Back to you. First, make a list of things that currently make you uncomfortable, but that you'd like to get better at.

Next, find every opportunity to do the things on that list. It might sound ridiculous, but this is a great way to growth-hack yourself and grow into the person that you'd like to be.



TIP #11

PARTICIPATE IN INTERNSHIPS AND EXTRACURRICULARS

Getting involved in structured activities outside of the classroom is a great way to meet people with similar interests, learn new skills, and build your resume. That's right: networking, stepping out of your comfort zone, and professional development, all in one.

When you apply for scholarships, grad schools, or maybe even some jobs, you will be asked for a personal statement. This is where you talk about your life experiences leading up to your application to that school, scholarship, or job.

If you've just spent the last 4 years grinding in the library and sitting in the front row of all of your lectures, you might not have very much to talk about. That's where extracurriculars come in. Let's say you're applying to law school.

If you can talk about your experience touring the country on a mock trial team and interning at a local law office, then your personal statement is going to be a little more compelling than the student who spent every waking moment studying for the LSAT.

It gets better.

Internships and extracurriculars give you a better idea of who you want to be and what you want to do. Building off of the previous example, let's say that you fully believe you want to be a lawyer.

After you do your internship and join your mock trial team, though, you realize that being a lawyer would suck. So you pivot and decide you might want to be a teacher, so you do an internship at a local high school.

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If you don't like that either, then move on to the next thing. No matter the situation, getting involved in internships and extracurriculars will help you grow personally and professionally.

Look at what's offered by your university and community, and don't be afraid to take initiative and reach out to your dream company about an internship that might be right for you.

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TIP #12

STAY IN CONTROL OF YOUR FINANCES

Whew...this is a big one, and it's probably too big to cover adequately in this "college tips" eBook (which is why we're developing a course all about mastering your finances as a college student). In a nutshell, you need to master your income, spending, and debt.

You may or may not have much control over your income. If your major is very demanding or if you want to devote yourself full-time to your studies, then it may not be realistic to land a part-time job from the get-go. And, if you're not receiving financial support from your parents, then that leaves you in a tough situation.

My first recommendation would be to apply for scholarships and consider any low-stress, low-hourly part-time work, such as an online job or weekend gig. However, sometimes your only option is to secure a student loan.

The terminology can get tricky with these, but subsidized loans are the best, unsubsidized are slightly worse, and private loans are usually the least desirable. Whether you're funded by your job, parents, or loans, you'll need to make your money last. Budgets are the best way to do this, but just by remaining aware of how you're spending your money will be sufficient.

When I was an RA, I had residents that would spend thousands of dollars on extravagant new clothes and electronics after student loan money dropped. If that doesn't sound like a good idea to you, it's because it's not.

Instead, focus first on the essentials: food, toiletries, rent, utilities, and maybe transportation. Don't get pressured into spending a ton at the club and, if you have some extra cash, throw it into a savings account.

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There's a lot more to it than that, such as making your money work for you, using credit cards to your advantage, and crafting a budget, but we'll save those for the larger course.

If you follow the finance advice above, then you'll be much better off than many of your peers!

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TIP #13

READ

There's no better way to fall behind in a class than to think of the reading as "optional." Almost all of your classes will have reading(s) assigned each week, and these are a key part of keeping up with the class discussion, completing the upcoming assignments, and performing well on the tests.

Beyond that, you will likely learn a whole lot more when you're reading in a quiet place than you will sitting half-distracted in class. However, if you are in a smaller, discussion-focused class, arriving prepared is a great way to join the discussion and make your thoughts heard.

It might seem silly if you're not used to it, but speaking up in class is a great way to practice your speaking skills and make a good impression on your professor. Without doing the class reading, your attempts at speaking up will probably fall short. If you

have time, it's also good to read for pleasure and keep up to date with world affairs. Smart is the new sexy, haven't you heard?

But really, the bigger the range of content you can get your hands on, the more well-rounded you will be and the more you will grow. Don't put your education entirely on your professors: it's up to you to supplement it with outside sources.



TIP #14

MAKE TO-DO LISTS

If you've been keeping up with the tips, then you're probably starting to realize that college is a lot to juggle: going to class, reading, shopping, cooking, exercising, internships, extracurriculars -- the list goes on. In addition to keeping a schedule that has your set obligations each week, to-do lists are perfect for staying on top of your commitments.

My to-do lists looked different throughout my college experience: sometimes I carried a flashcard with me in my wallet, taking it out whenever there was something new to add and crossing something off whenever I got it done. I also used the Notes app on my iPhone, because it was very easy to add a few things to the note when they came up, and then erase them when I was finished.

This process is good for the mind.

Imagine you need to go to the financial aid office to sign some papers. Rather than worrying about it and, worst case, forgetting about it, you can just add it to your to-do list.

Then, when you have some free time after a class, check your list and decide what you'd like to tackle. As you finish things that are on the list, it feels great to remove them and watch the list shrink.

To sum it up, to-do lists free your mind from the tasks that you write down (until you decide to tackle them, that is), and crossing them off as you finish them makes you vitally aware of your productivity.

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TIP #15

TEACH OTHERS WHAT YOU'RE LEARNING

This final tip, and one that has served me very well in my academic life, is to teach others what you're learning. The main reason for this is because it's the absolute best way to learn and understand something yourself.

When I was an undergrad, I was taking the hardest class of my life: The History and Philosophy of Science. I won't dive too deep into why it was so difficult, but the content was extremely dense, the expectations for the essays were very high, and the final at the end of the semester basically determined your grade for the entire course.

Determined to get an A, I realized that I wouldn't be able to do it on my own.

When one of the first few classes ended, I walked to the front of the class and told everyone to write their name and email address on a sheet of paper if they would be interested in a study group.

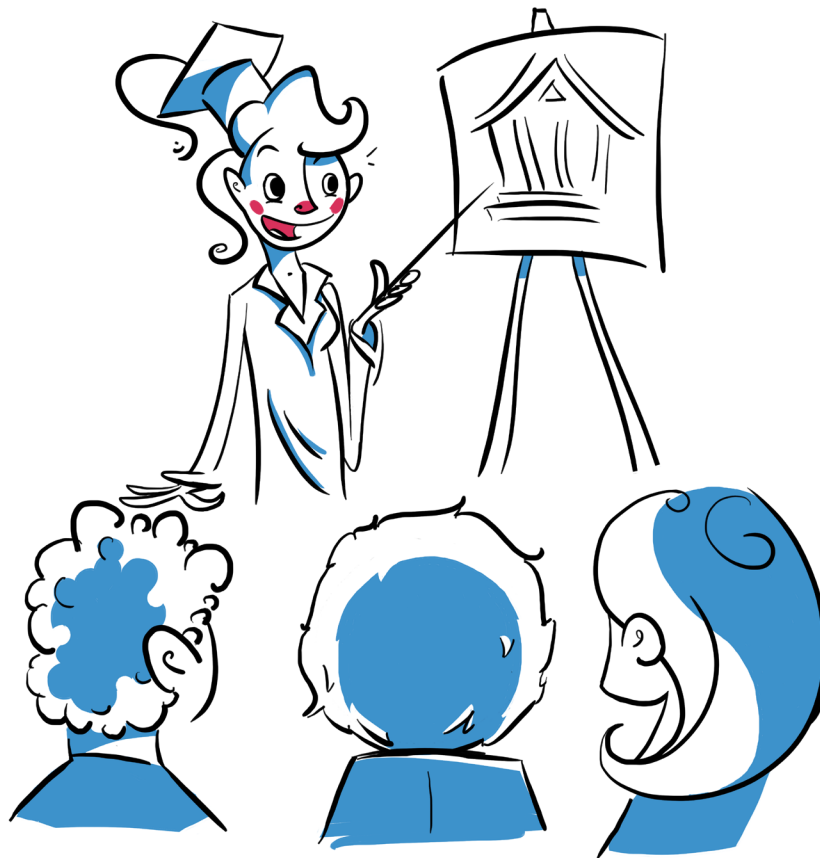
Realizing that we were in this plight together, about 2/3rds of the class signed up. Only a few people showed up to the first meeting, and nobody was really sure where to start with the content. So, what did I do? I decided to play teacher.

I went up to the whiteboard and we started talking through the content from beginning to end. I found that when I was in front of the others, things would start to make sense when they hadn't before, or I would think of questions to ask and we would all put our minds together.

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Over 5 meetings later, we had more than 10 students regularly attending. I was still the teacher-in-house, and there is absolutely no way I would have earned an A in this class if I hadn't had that experience.

The moral of the story is this: even if you don't fully understand something yourself, try teaching it to a classmate, younger sibling, or curious friend. You will surprise yourself at how it starts to make sense, and you will be surprised at how easy it is to write the essay or take the test after you've spent a few hours teaching the content to someone else.



WRAP-UP

Well, there we have it! 15 tips to help you conquer college. If it sounds like a lot all at once, don't worry. You will find your groove and figure out what works best for you.

An important thing to remember is that you don't have to go at it alone: you have peers, friends, professors, family, and other resources to help you along the way.

And that's why I founded College Cake: to help make college a piece of cake! College is tough, but it's much, much easier when you have a team of high-performing graduates giving you the skills and knowledge that you need to thrive. That's what we're here for.

We provide in-depth online courses, useful blog posts, and one-on-one college success consulting.

We're also not your typical "college prep" company. They're college prep, we're college success. We don't have a plain, "proper" name, and we aren't going to bore you with online lectures. Our online courses are fun, practical, and engaging. We use a combination of animated videos, crisp text, and interactive media to ensure that you're not only having a good experience during the course, but that you'll thrive with the knowledge and skills you take away from it.

If that sounds like something that might interest you, then head on over to

www.collegecake.org

We're growing fast, and every decision that we make is aimed at helping college students live happier, healthier, and higher-performing lives.