3 Tips for Keeping a Handle on College Homework

Learning to stay on top of homework in college is often a challenge, even for conscientious students. You no longer have mom or dad looking over your shoulder, checking to make sure your assignments are completed on time. Your schedule is often erratic and unstructured, without the comforting daily routine you had in high school. And your professors are too busy teaching thousands of other students to care if you complete the coursework. It's entirely up to you to keep your head above water. But how?

Set Aside Regular Study Time

Once you hit college, say goodbye to a "normal" school schedule. You might have an 8AM lecture and be done by lunchtime on Monday, not start until 3PM (and finish after dark) on Tuesday, and have no classes at all on Wednesday. And then, of course, you want to make room for the rest of college life – work, campus events, clubs, fraternities, sports, and social activities. It can be hard to fit in a consistent block of time for homework – and if you're not careful, you'll find yourself rushing to complete assignments late at night or early the next morning before school. You may not be able to study at the same time every day, but you can set up a weekly schedule that allows you to study at the same time each day of the week. So for example, you might block off an hour right after lunch on Mondays, an hour first thing in the morning on Tuesdays, and a longer study session on your free Wednesdays. A disciplined homework routine will keep you from accidentally forgetting an assignment or missing a deadline – just make sure you buy a good calendar or planner so you can keep track of everything!

Think About Your Study Environment

Living on your own in a dorm or apartment for the first time is very exciting – but it's not particularly conducive to developing good study habits. There's just too much commotion, too much noise, and too many distractions. You answer the phone or a friend drops by, you decide to put in a load of laundry or watch a little TV – and suddenly the whole day is gone before you know it, and you haven't gotten any homework done. That's why universities set up rows of study carrels in the library – so kids can have a reliable place to focus on their schoolwork. If you don't like the library, choose a study area in another building – any spot that is quiet, comfortable, well lit, and away from the hustle and bustle. Set up a portable "study kit". This might consist of a hanging file box or expanding file like the Smead

TUFF™ Expanding Wallet™ that contains all of your supplies and school papers. Then settle in for an uninterrupted hour of work each day. You'll find that you get your assignments done twice as fast as you would in the middle of all that "dorm chaos," and then you'll have plenty of free time to hang out with your friends.

Making Choices And Setting Boundaries

In college, your schedule becomes your own for the first time in your life. You will discover very quickly that you simply don't have time for everything – and that's when you learn to prioritize. Keep your calendar with you at all times and write down EVERY important upcoming to-do that you can think of – football games, dentist appointments, work shifts, classes, study sessions, club meetings, project due dates, social activities, you name it. Then you will be able to pinpoint scheduling conflicts and make a decision about which activity is more important. When faced with a choice between writing a paper and attending a party, it's easy to say, "I'll do it later" – but that only works if you pick a specific time and schedule it into your calendar! Just remember why you're at school in the first place – for an education. And if the fun stuff is getting in the way of studying, you might need to make a few adjustments in your schedule.

By Ramona Creel