



How to Achieve Success in a College-level Psychology Class

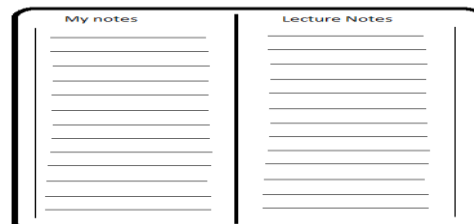
Taking a psychology class in college may be intimidating. But we believe that you can be successful. Take a look at the tips below. Try using these skills and techniques throughout the semester. We hope this will help you feel more confident.

Before you start

- **Start with the basics.**
 - In most psychology classes, the beginning of the semester will be spent learning and reviewing the basics of psychology. You can get a head start by **learning the definition and history of psychology, as well as commonly used psychology terms. Click the links below to learn more.**
 - [What is psychology?](#)
 - [Common psychology 101 terms](#)
- **Prepare to think differently.** Psychology courses require you to think critically about what you are learning. What is critical thinking? Critical thinking answers the question of “What does this mean?” rather than “What does this say?”
- **Sharpen your writing skills.** You may be expected write research papers and complete short answer questions on assignments and exams. These writing assignments and papers will likely be longer and more complex than what you completed in high school.
 - **Familiarize yourself with the APA format,** which is the official writing style for psychology. Follow this link to learn more about APA format.
<http://researchguides.cpcc.edu/c.php?g=127386&p=880097>

Studying on your own

- **Read ALL the material before each class,** including notes and handouts given to you by your instructor. Don't stress about understanding the material the first time you read it. The goal is for you to have an idea of what the instructor plans to discuss.
 - While reading, highlight things you don't understand. Write down questions you have.
- **Use good study skills.**
 - **Establish a study routine.**
 - Create a study schedule. Choose a quiet study space, with minimal distractions.
 - Here's a link with detailed suggestions for how to study for your psychology class → <https://www.verywell.com/psychology-study-tips-a2-2795701>
 - **Organize your notes!**
 - Make sure your notes are neat and legible. Instructors suggest organizing your notes in a way that allows you to easily compare information presented in class to your own notes. *See example below.*



Kendra Cherry. verywell.com. “Psychology 101 Tips: How to Pass Psych 101, Even If You're Not a Psychology Major”. <https://www.verywell.com/psychology-101-tips-2794790>

careersinpsychology.org. “How to Survive Introduction to Psychology Without Hating It”. <http://careersinpsychology.org/how-to-survive-introduction-to-psychology-without-hating-it/>

Mary Beth Erskine. Saint Leo University. “8 Tips On How To Be A Successful Psychology Student”. <http://blog.online.saintleo.edu/degree-programs/8-Tips-On-How-To-Be-A-Successful-Psychology-Student>



During and after class

- **Attend every class.** If you need to miss a class, give your instructor advance notice when possible. Take initiative to retrieve the information you missed. Ask a classmate if you can receive a copy of their notes.
- **Come prepared with all materials.** Bring your book and your notes.
- **Participate in class.** Ask questions about material you don't understand. Don't be afraid to ask your instructor to clarify or repeat information.
- **Note-taking during class is important.**
 - Reference the note-taking example on the previous page. If your instructor discusses information you've already written in your own notes, you don't have to scramble to write down everything they say. You can pay more attention to the lecture and only write down key points.
 - During the lecture, listen for key words or phrases. If your instructor says things like "this is important" or "this will be on the exam" then you should probably write that down. Also, most anything that the instructor writes on the board during the lecture is important to note.
- **After class, use your resources!**
 - Consider joining a study group.
 - The Academic Learning Center at CPCC offers free tutoring for writing assistance. A tutor can help you with outlining your research papers and documenting/citing your research.
 - The CPCC library can also assist you with finding, evaluating, and using/citing information for research papers. They also have resources for learning more about the APA format.
 - And, of course, utilize your instructor's office hours. Most instructors will gladly offer guidance and answer your questions. **Please see "How to Contact Your Instructor" and "Meeting Etiquette" for more information about scheduling an appointment and visiting your instructor during office hours.**

If you have additional questions, feel free to call to speak with a STAR coach at 704-330-6754 or email star.success@cpcc.edu. Check out the rest of our tip sheets on our website <http://www.cpcc.edu/star>.

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