

HOW TO DO WELL IN A BIOLOGY CLASS

Work ethic: Be willing and prepared to do whatever it takes to be successful. Some classes are more challenging than others. Some people have more time, more resources, less stress, better jobs (or no jobs), *etc.* Life is not fair. If there is something you really want, then you need to do whatever it takes to get there. A strong work ethic is the great equalizer in life.

Look ahead: Take time before each week (Sunday evening?). Have a plan. Do you have exams, papers due, special projects, *etc.*?

Come prepared: Have your notebook, grademaster forms, pencils, calculator, lab book, *etc.* at all times. Make sure your notes and handouts are organized. Read lab exercise before the lab.

Show up to every class: Don't miss class. If you miss work they will fire you. Work harder for yourself. Success in school comes with consistent participation.

Make time to study. 2-3 hrs/ week/ unit. We all know when we have to be at work and what times we must be in class. When are you going to study? At a minimum, you should set aside 2 hrs per week for each hour you are in class. So, for a 3 unit class, you need to set aside a minimum of 6 hrs per week to study. Draw up a study calendar at the beginning of the semester. Make sure you have enough hours set aside for the proper amount of study time.

Time management: Don't overextend yourself. Studies show that students who have more than 56 hours per week committed to work, class, and studying do not do as well as students who are committed for less than 56 hours. Be reasonable about what you can accomplish each week. There are only so many hours in a day.

Be an active student: Take notes, pay attention, and ask questions. Sit up front!

Re-copy your notes as soon as you can after class. Put a check-box next to concepts you did not understand. Then, ask a study mate, ask in the next class, look it up in your book or on-line, or go see your teacher during their office hours. Don't let information you do not understand pile up.

Read: Skim the readings before the lecture. Read for comprehension after the lecture. But make sure you read! The most important skills you can develop in school are related to communication: Read, write, speak, and listen. Take classes that will help you develop those skills.

Join a study group. You learn both by asking as well as listening to answers.

Practice exams: Use quizzes, study guides, questions in your book. Try to anticipate questions before the exam. Make up your own practice test. Practice BEFORE the exam. Don't just read your notes over and over. If there are equations, diagrams, *etc.*, practice them before the exam.

Re-evaluate your work: Go over you exam, quizzes, *etc.* Make sure you understand what you missed and why. Ask these questions when you are evaluating an exam:

Did I study that concept enough?

Did I just make a silly mistake by not reading the question all the way through?

Did I get help on the concepts I was having troubles with?

Was I studying consistently each week, or did I cram? (You can't cram a turkey in one meal; you can't cram Biology in one long night.)