

get your mind ready for college

By Brenda Stokes

PRACTICE THESE TIPS TO BECOME FLEXIBLE, AWARE AND RESPONSIBLE FOR YOURSELF BEFORE YOU LEAVE FOR COLLEGE

college



You can take college-prep courses, sign up for the PSAT and devour every college brochure within arm's reach, but will you really be prepared for college? What about actually attending classes, living in the dorm and being away from your parents?

Here are a few tips that you should follow to prepare for college.

Take responsibility for you

Once you're off at college, your parents won't be there to cook your meals, do your laundry or drag you out of bed in the morning. Many college freshmen are overwhelmed because they don't know how to fend for themselves!

Start taking responsibility for your everyday life during high school. By senior year, you "should know how to do laundry, cook a few simple meals, use a thermometer and know how to take any needed medication," says Joan Casey, college-planning consultant for Educational Advocates in Brookline, Mass. She adds that, "Students should set an alarm and get themselves out of bed in the morning," which prepares you for college when there's no backup "mom alarm" to get you up and going.

Another great way to take responsibility for yourself is to use the resources available. Seek out teachers, counselors and homework help centers; don't just sit back and let yourself fall behind. In college, no one is there to make sure you're keeping up with the class, so this "self-advocating," as Casey calls it, is vital to collegiate success.



Joan Casey



Jeanie Allen



Harlan Cohen

Make your own college notebook

Pick up a large three-ring binder, some dividers, highlighters and anything else you think might come in handy for this little project. As you collect information about college, put it in your College Notebook, where it will stay safe and organized until you're ready to go. Make different sections for financial aid, deadlines, admissions information, potential colleges and majors.

Make good habits

Going to college is all about managing your academic, social, family and personal lives. Get into the habit of taking care of yourself and what needs to be done while still in high school. Strive to be self-motivated.

Habits that are vital to your overall academic success are reading and writing, says Dr. Jeanie Allen, instructor of the Alpha Seminar at Drury University in Springfield, Mo.

More importantly, try to begin assignments as you get them rather than waiting until the last minute. "Procrastination is the enemy," warns Allen, "result[ing] in lower grades and added stress."

Change your attitude

One great thing about college is the exposure you'll receive to different viewpoints, cultures and opinions. But if you march on campus with the notion that "my way is the only way," you won't learn much. Instead, Allen recommends trying to understand other people's positions on the issues, and ask questions like "Why and how did you come to that perspective?"

It may also be helpful to make connections between your classes and world issues. Instead of asking, "Why am I taking this class? It doesn't relate to me!" say, "How does this class relate to others and the world I'm living in?"

Avoid upperclassman burnout

Don't get so caught up in college stuff that you forget to enjoy your high school years! They only happen once, after all. Pace yourself and make sure you make time in your schedule for friends, family and the hobbies that you love.

Regardless of your mental preparedness for college, there are still bound to be some things that come up during freshman year that surprise you. "Avoid leaving for college with rigid expectations," says Harlan Cohen, author of *The Naked Roommate: And 107 Other Issues You Might Run Into In College* (Sourcebooks, \$14.95). "Instead, leave expecting the unexpected!"