



Set Your Teen Up For College Success



Simple strategies you can share to prepare
your student to thrive on their own.

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Basic College Survival Skills

You're headed to college and moving away from home. It's exciting and a little nerve racking all at the same time. Do you have the basic skills in your arsenal to survive living on your own? Before you pack the first box, make sure you've got these essentials covered.

Unless you're living alone, you'll have a roommate. Are you prepared to deal with different lifestyles and beliefs? What if they are a slob and you're a neat freak? Believe it or not, rooming situation causes some of the highest stress for first-year college students. You'll encounter bullies, deal with overnight/opposite sex guests, struggle to adapt to different routines (she's an early bird and you're a night owl), deal with theft and invasion of privacy. You may think just because you know your roommate that you won't have to deal with any of these issues, but think again. When you live with someone 24/7, even best friends can get on each other's nerves. Make a plan now for dealing with difficult situations.



Can you handle basic household chores? Can you cook? Can you wash clothes? You may be laughing, but I've seen students arrive on campus who have no idea how to operate the coin-operated washer and dryers you find on most college campuses. If your dorm or apartment is set up in suites, you'll have your own private bedroom, but you'll share a common living and eating area. There will be rules about the appliances you can have and operate. Some of the biggest fights I've seen have been over someone eating food that did not belong to them. Make sure you set ground rules right off the bat.

Can you use a plunger? If not, learn.

Can you make simple automotive repairs? Can you use jumper cables? Do you know how to change a tire? Do you know how to check your tires and tell if they need air? Do you know when your car needs routine maintenance, like an oil change?

Make a budget and stick to it. Whether you're on scholarship, have financial aid or loans, or work to put yourself through school – a budget is going to be your friend your entire adult life. Watch out for credit cards. College campuses are targets for credit card companies. You'll see vendors giving out free t-shirts or water bottles just to get you to fill out an application. Don't fall for it. You'll get the card, then be tempted to use it when times get tough. Just walk away. A free t-shirt isn't worth the 20-30% interest you'll be paying for those concert tickets you just had to have.

Have a savings or contingency plan. Just because you have a budget doesn't mean you won't have things pop up you need to deal with. What if your car breaks down? How will you cover the repair? What if one of your parents lose their job? Will you have savings to help counter that loss of income? Even if you aren't utilizing the financial aid office presently, it's a good idea to go meet them and see what you might qualify for. Grants are great since you don't have to pay them back. Before you drop out when the unexpected happens, reach out and see what options you have.



In the event of an emergency, who will contact your child if you aren't able to?

Who'll fix it when Mom's not there?

*You were the top of your class in high school.
You got that scholarship you wanted.
You've made straight A's all your life.*

Then, something happens. You fail your first test in college. Your high school sweetheart dumps you for a new girl he met in college. You don't get into the Greek organization of your choice. Now what? I'm surprised each semester at how poorly equipped students are at dealing with failure (or disappointment).

No, none of us ever aspire to fail at something; but all through life, failure will find a way to creep into your path. The key is being able to grow from it and to move on. Your mom isn't there to soothe the hurt this time. So how do you move on?

First identify the root of the problem. Did you fail a class because you had poor attendance? Attendance can make or break you in college. You can fail a class simply by missing too many days – even if your test scores are high. Did you fail a test because you didn't understand the subject matter? Each department has a set of tutors; use them. Reach out to the professor. Ask for clarification. Ask if there is extra work you can do to make up for the test grade. A lot of professors will work with you if you make the effort to contact them. Reread difficult chapters or sections of your textbook. Rewrite your notes. Both of these simple tricks can help you retain information more easily. Know your campus forgiveness policy. Don't let one class effect your whole GPA. Many colleges offer you the chance to retake a class and replace the failing grade with the new one.



Don't overwhelm yourself by cramming to many hours into your schedule. It's better to gradually increase the hours you take after you've learned how the campus is laid out, what resources are available, how you handle getting yourself up each day and making it to an 8AM class. Get a planner. Use it. Map out your class time and study time. Add in any other activities you participate in, your work schedule, etc...

Watch distractions. Turn off notifications on your phone and computer if you can't help but check each one that pops up on the screen.

Know your campus drop/add policy. You can usually drop a class without penalty if you do so by a certain date. If you know you are in over your head, this can be a really smart thing to do.

Learn to prioritize and say no. You are in college to get an education. Everything else is secondary. Sometimes you must say no to hanging out with friends when you have a paper due. This is a skill you will use for life. In your work life, you'll have projects due and you'll have to make sure the distractions of life don't interfere with your responsibilities.

One word to parents, colleges are no longer required to send you copies of grades or financial information. The student is in control of that information. If you find out your child has failed a class or classes, I'd suggest you determine if this is a fluke or the sign of a much greater problem.

Have a talk with your student and see what they feel led to the failure. Set some consequences for the action. Make sure they understand how the grade effects their overall college career. Will finances be cut-off or decreased?

Could they lose their scholarship? Will they go on academic probation? Will they need to come home for a semester to try and bring up their GPA at a local community college? Whatever you decide, make sure you let the student deal with their professors and university. Never, never feel it is your place to contact a professor on your child's behalf. Your role is not to fix the problem, but to show them how to handle it correctly and move forward.





As far as membership in clubs and organizations the only people who will truly know why you didn't get an invitation are the members of the club. However, there are a few common reasons I can share with you based on my years of working with sorority recruitment.

If you didn't have strong grades coming into college, start there.

A lot of organization are looking for students with a proven track record. GPA cut lines are moving higher and higher. They assume if you struggled in high school, you will probably struggle in college. Many think they are doing you a favor because you would spend your first semesters on academic probation and not get to fully enjoy all the group had to offer.

Rumors and reputation come into play as well. Make sure your social media is clean.

Yes, they will stalk you. If you look like you boozed it up every weekend over the summer, you'll more than likely get passed over for that bid. No one wants someone they have to babysit and could be a potential liability to the organization.

Conversation skills are a must.

You've got to treat recruitment activities like an interview. One word answers don't show a group you have interest in them and it doesn't allow you to show what you have to offer. By all means, don't bad mouth a potential group to another group. Women have friends in all houses and that news travels fast. You may think you are helping yourself out at one house, but in reality, people know if you'll talk about someone else, you'll talk about them too.

Learning to cope with disappointment is a skill that will come in handy throughout life.

There are no participation trophies given out in real life.

You must learn how to deal with things and get past them to move ahead.

SAFETY FIRST

How safe is your teen?



Everyone likes to think nothing bad is going to happen to them. And most of the time, you're right. However, you can also do things that will guarantee you're more likely get home safe each night. Protecting themselves needs to be your teens top priority.

Over the years, I've worked with women who have been raped, robbed and assaulted. I don't want you to be one. This isn't meant to be a scare tactic, it's meant to be a reality check.

- **Know the campus situation.** Research safety statistics on campus and for the town that your students are moving to. Make sure you know what the campus offers in the way of transportation, alert systems, etc. Make sure you know what the campus security policy allows. Can you have a taser? Is it an open carry campus? Are there self-defense classes offered? If so, take one.
- **Always practice the buddy system.** If you go somewhere, take someone with you. If that's not possible, make sure you text and let someone know you are on your way and that you arrived safely. Do this when you leave and head home as well. With the buddy system, if you go with someone, you always leave with them. No one is left behind for any reason.
- **When you hit the bar – yes when (I've dealt with young women long enough to know that not being 21 will not keep you out of the bars) – be smart.** Always go with people you know and never leave with anyone you just met. If you leave with someone, make sure your friends know who you are leaving with and what you are doing. Have a plan if something goes wrong – an SOS, text so they can come pick you up.
- **Pay attention to your drink.** Don't leave a cup unattended. It's easier to slip drugs into a cup than it is a bottle. Never take drinks from someone you don't know. If a really cute guy wants to buy you a drink, walk up to the bar and watch the bartender make it.

- **Be safe online.** You may think you are anonymous, but you aren't. Be careful meeting people online. In a world of swipe left or right, be smart. Never meet in isolated places. Take someone with you. This doesn't just apply to dating. So many marketplaces are online now as well. If you decide to buy something, many police stations now offer an area where you can safely transact online business exchanges.
- **You may think only your friends follow your social media. That's simply not true.** You're safer to think anything you post can be seen by anyone. Your future employers will be looking. People who say they are your friends will take screen shots and try to use them to tear you down. Be smart. Use social media to your advantage. And PLEASE – think twice before posting that you are alone at a location.



Don't let stress ruin the college experience.

Stress can take many forms. Learning to recognize it and develop coping measures will not only benefit you in college, but throughout your career as well.



For some, freshman year can be filled with emotional ups and downs. Maybe you feel like there's so much going on you can't sit still. Maybe you're being pulled in a thousand different directions. There's nothing wrong with wanting to try different things and experience all that life offers, but you've also got to find a way to slow down and listen in class. You've got to develop some patience. Find a way to center yourself and to focus on the work at hand or the project that requires attention. When you are studying, take mini breaks. Get up and walk around the room or walk around the parking lot. While you're moving, refocus your energy on getting the assignment done. Then after about 15 minutes, sit back down and get back to work.

For others, they feel immense pressure. A lot of incoming students feel pressure from their parents, teachers, coaches, and friends. While there are times this pressure comes from an actual person, a lot of times students believe it's there when that's not what is intended. It comes from within. You have high expectations for yourself. You are used to succeeding. When you feel the seeds of doubt creep in, you need to address it head on. Look right in the mirror and tell yourself you know the test is around the corner or that it's a huge project. Remind yourself that you've handled this kind of situation before. Then tell yourself you can do it again. You've got all the tools necessary. Your worth as a person isn't defined by one test score or grade. You are so much more.

You can add stress to a situation due to your attitude. Maybe you feel like an advisor or parent pushed a certain class on you. Maybe you think a teacher "hates" you so they partnered you with the most obnoxious person in class. Get over yourself. It's your bad attitude that is creating the internal stress. Think of it as one obstacle. Get through it. Move on. The world isn't against you.

For some being a social magnet is adding unneeded stress to their first years in college. The phone chimes again and again. Whether it's the latest "snap" or a GroupMe or a text, I know, it's hard to not stop what you are working on and pick up the phone to check the latest updates. You can't focus on getting your paper written because you're too busy responding to you many followers. The simplest piece of advice is the best one for this self-induced stress – put your phone in airplane mode or turn it on do not disturb. I know the fear that you are missing out on something is real – but that F you receive for not finishing your paper will have a lasting effect. There's always another party.

By making a plan now, you can deal with stressors before they cause lasting effects to your college years.



Get Your ZZZ's




You can't focus, learn, or produce good work if you aren't giving yourself time to recharge every day.

I know all night cram sessions and frat parties that last until sun up are considered college norms. Your ability to successfully navigate class, work and life diminishes when you are feeling tired and run down. It's important you get enough sleep so that you are sharp and energized for the days ahead.

Lack of sleep not only leaves you feeling groggy and out of sorts it also puts your emotions on edge. Sleep gives you brain a chance to recover from the day. Your mind sorts out problems and find solutions while your body is at rest. In the dream states, we work through issue and things that that have disturbed us. It's the time you do a mental reset. It improves memory.

Lack of sleep can even put a strain on your relationships. If you aren't feeling your best, or if you're grumpy from lack of sleep, you're not going to be fun to be around. You're less likely to miscommunicate or misinterpret information when you have the required amount of sleep. Sleep makes your more patient too.



You've got to make sleep a priority. Just like you plan your class schedule, you need to make sure you are planning for adequate amounts of sleep too. Think of sleep as one of your steps to success. Here's some tips to consider:

- Try to pick a consistent time to go to bed each night. You'll feel better if you get up around the same time each day too.
- Staying on a regular schedule allows your body to perform at its' maximum level of effectiveness. Aim for at least 6 hours of sleep a night.
- Turn off cell phones and devices so that you aren't distracted by the notifications while you are winding down. If you must sleep with a TV on, use the sleep timer so that you don't have the noise or light all night long.
- If you still have trouble sleeping, try diffusing lavender or other essential oils to relax and set the right mood for sleep.
- If thoughts keep you up at night, try journaling before you go to sleep. Getting it all out on paper, can for some, allow them to turn off the thoughts and get a good night sleep.

FINAL THOUGHTS



I surveyed over 200 sorority women the same question, “What do you wish you knew about college before you took your first class?” Below you’ll find their top 14 answers.

1. Be involved. Find a club or group you love or share a belief with and join.
2. It’s ok to miss home. It doesn’t make you seem like a baby. Our families are our support groups.
3. You may lose friends back home. It’s ok because you’ll make new ones in college.
4. Don’t miss class. Set as many alarms as you need. Attendance is a must.
5. Don’t overload. Make sure you have a schedule you can handle. Make sure you have some time for fun too.
6. Have a support system. Maybe it’s other students. Maybe it’s a teacher. Maybe it’s an advisor. Just find people who want to see you succeed.
7. Don’t procrastinate. Finish your papers or projects early. Don’t wait until the last minute to study. All-nighters suck and don’t really work.
8. Trust your gut. In all situations, all of the time.
9. Mistakes will happen. It’s not the end of your life.
10. Some people seem good, but they aren’t.
11. Find a church home.
12. You’ll be surprised how much time you really need to devote to studying and class – even if high school was easy.
13. Suck up to your teachers. Talk to them. It can pay off big time.
14. Learn the community. Get out and explore where you live. Visit the downtown. Lot of places have neat areas near campus. Don’t miss out.