

Roadmap to Success For New Students

Plan ahead and prepare for the first semester of your college career.

Imagine Your Ideal Semester

Every journey starts with a vision.
What does your ideal semester look like?

Imagine for a moment: You've made it to your first checkpoint in your college career – the end of your first semester. You've completed your last exam. Your semester was a success, and you're feeling proud of all you've accomplished!

How does that moment feel? What specifically led you to this place?

Identify the top 3 to 5 markers of your ideal semester. Let these be a guide for you as you embark on your college career.

(Ex: submit every assignment on time, get a B or higher in every course, build friendships, improve overall physical and mental well-being, join a club or organization, etc.)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Partnering With Your Academic Advisor

Engage with your academic advisor during this journey.

Connecting with your advisor is the best way for you to stay on track academically. Research shows that a strong connection with an advisor or faculty member during college can make all the difference. RIT also has a team of professionals willing to assist with academic support.

Find out who your advisor(s) is on TigerCenter¹ or SIS²

Advisor Name: _____

Advisor Email: _____

What campus resources are you using, if any?

How has your attendance been in your courses?
Are you submitting assignments on time?

If you have received any academic alerts, how did you address them?

Week 1:

1. Show up and take note!

The first couple of classes are crucial to setting a foundation for success. Good note-taking¹ and studying techniques will aid with this.

2. Stay engaged by listening and looking for cues

“This is important...This is going to be on an exam...”
Pay attention when an instructor starts being animated, repetitious, or starts writing something down.

3. Try to preview materials before class

Creating questions you want to have answered is a great way to stay engaged during lectures.

4. Proactively reach out to your instructors

If you are not sure what to say consider looking at the Office Hours² guide.

5. Be mindful of important dates

Pay attention to when the Add/Drop dates begin and end, as well as the first day to drop a class for a “W” begins.

Weeks 2-4:

1. Test yourself daily

After a class or after reading, test yourself to work on retrieval of information. Use the “Two-Things Rule,” by writing down two things you recall.

2. Make adjustments

Make appropriate adjustments to your weekly schedule, your time commitments, and your study spaces.

3. Make time for study guides¹

Set time aside each week to begin consolidating and forming study guides. Note consolidation methods to retain information. The goal of studying is not just to take in information, but also being able to retrieve and apply it.

4. Seek help early

If you are beginning to feel overwhelmed, consider reaching out to your advisor, a professor, an academic coach, a resident advisor, or wellness peer educator². Also review our Test Anxiety Management Resource³.

Here are some signs you may need support:

- Confused about how to prioritize your time/tasks
- Unsure of what your instructors expect
- Struggling to comprehend course content
- Endless entertainment – streaming shows, playing video games, phone zone
- Trouble sleeping or waking up
- Loss of appetite
- Feeling anxious or hopeless

If you are experiencing more than one of these signs consider reaching out to Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)⁴.

Weeks 4 and Beyond:

1. Consider registering for Essential Studies Techniques¹

Our sections begin Week 1, 5, and 8.

2. Review your first grades

You will get your first big grade back – now what? Consider talking with your faculty, evaluating your study strategies, or seek assistance from the Academic Success Center.

3. Understand Academic Alerts

Academic alerts, sent by professors through Starfish, act as a mirror showing you what you're doing well and what needs to be fixed. Reach out to your professor by attending office hours or sending an email. This is great opportunity to discuss with your professor their expectations and what strategies they recommend. Don't be afraid, professors want to help you!

4. Utilize free resources

Take advantage Academic Coaching² or Tutoring³. You could attempt a different learning strategy or study space.

5. Reassess your time management

Assess if your time management system is working for you or if you could attempt a different learning strategy or study space.

Tips Throughout the Semester

Create a weekly schedule

Regularly update a weekly schedule of class times and co-curricular commitments. Make note of important dates and deadlines (exams, project due dates, your cat's birthday, etc.) on our Semester Calendar.

Reflect on what type of environment you need to effectively learn

Desk vs. couch; private vs. public; morning vs. night; etc. How are you wired? Check out chronobiology¹. Also, explore campus for some potential study spots.

Schedule your sleep time

Research shows that having a regular sleep schedule increases brain activity. Try creating a tentative schedule and adjust as needed.

Designate one day of the week as your “Reset Day”

Use this day to take a step back and update your calendar/planner system and make changes. Map out the week ahead by previewing what is due and other commitments you've made.

Map out your next semester

Begin to plan for the next semester. Review your program requirements. Consider what courses you might want to take. Become familiar with SIS and the enrollment process before your first advising meeting.

Resources:

