



Harry H. Harrison Jr.

10 POWERFUL SECRETS TO GRADUATING FROM COLLEGE

*How to become one of the most successful
college students on campus and secure your future*



How To Graduate From Any College in Four to Five Years

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CHAPTER ONE

PICK A MAJOR EARLY AND STICK WITH IT

This is simple. You think you want to be an electrical engineer but you failed high school algebra. You think you want to be a dentist but you barely squeaked by high school chemistry. You think you want to major in economics, but reading statistics puts you to sleep.

So here's rule number one: Major in a field where you can actually graduate. But before you choose a major, study the requirements for graduation.

This sounds easy, but so many kids fail out of college not because they're stupid but because they picked majors that require them to be especially strong in those subjects where they are the weakest. Eighty percent of college freshmen have no idea what they want to major in, even though they're required to pick a degree plan. Fifty percent of college students change their major, some three times. And since every time you change your major, you have to start over in classes to earn your major, you can spend years and years in school. No wonder over 50% of students drop out! Because depending on when they changed their mind, they could be facing an additional three or four years of tuition! My freshman year, my roommate was a 27 year old forestry major who had changed his degree plan three times!

After I transferred to a new school, I really wanted to be a writer and major in journalism. Sounds simple. But the school that I chose was just getting their



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journalism department off the ground and for reasons that I'm sure the Almighty doesn't even know, the school only offered a Bachelor of Science degree in journalism. This meant that I would have to take two years of math, two years of science, and two years of a foreign language to get a degree in journalism! No matter how good a writer I was, I was doomed to failure even before I registered. Those were my three *avoid-at-all-costs* classes. My father would have torched an incredible amount of money and I would have been home in sixty days.

So instead of a journalism degree, I investigated advertising and copywriting. That school was located in the Fine Arts Department, meaning I would have to get a Bachelor of Fine Arts to be a copywriter. Fine. The requirements for that degree, outside of the required core classes all freshmen had to take, meant no science, math or language classes! I could focus on my strength – writing – and investigate classes that were related, like radio and TV production, film production, psychology (If you want to manipulate people, start here) and of course English.

These were my strengths!

So in spite of doing a lot of things wrong, and learning some things the hard way, I still graduated with a 3.4 grade point and was a semi-rock star in my little corner of the university.

Now the question, how do you pick a major? Well, let me ask you what do you like to do? Besides sun tanning or playing video games? But wait a minute, there's a fortune to be made in video game production for those with topnotch



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computer skills! And there are hospitality jobs in resorts like Maui or Monaco where great jobs and sun and fun await!

So again I ask you, what do you like to do? To get you started I'm going to enclose a link to an incredible database compiled by the bureau of labor statistics outlining the specifics of over 800 careers! You'll find careers here you didn't even know existed, the education required, how much you can make, the works. Here's the link: <http://www.bls.gov/oco/>

If you start off with a career in mind, you are leaps and bounds ahead of the students who have no idea what to major in, because you know what classes you need to take to graduate. But let's say you change your mind, or you really don't know your strengths – well, that's the purpose of the first two years. Take the math classes, the science classes, the literature classes, the language classes, the business classes – find out what you excel in. You might have a gift for science you never realized because you didn't study that hard in high school. If so, restructure your major. But by your senior year if you've amassed a number of credits in psychology, don't be an idiot and change your major to acting or writing. Finish up your courses and graduate.

So lesson number one, pick a major where you can actually graduate. As early as you can. And don't change your mind three and half years later.



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CHAPTER TWO

DON'T LET LOVE OR MONEY DERAILED YOU

College professors shake their heads when they see high school sweethearts bringing their romance to the same college campus. Or when students fall desperately, passionately in love. Because the odds are great there will be a bad breakup eventually. And when it happens, the odds are also great it will be so devastating, that one or both individuals will crater. Their studies will go to hell, they'll isolate themselves, they'll be argumentative with friends and family, they'll start skipping class, and they'll try to drown their heartbreak with drugs, alcohol or random sex. And eventually one or both will leave school.

Now then, I'm not against college romance. Just go in with your eyes wide open. Don't become dependent on just one person for your happiness. Make friends with everybody. Don't push away potential friends of either sex. Join organizations and clubs no matter what the other person says. Because the more connected you are, the better able you'll handle a breakup. Yes, you'll still have a hole in your heart but you'll have friends to fall back on. People to share your feelings with. Even people of the opposite sex to talk to. These are big deals. So yes, fall in love, have study dates, make plans for the future, do all the things young couples do. But don't, don't depend on one person for your happiness. Because when that one person leaves, you will really and truly be alone.

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Now about money. Lack of it is one of the major reasons people leave school. Here is a list of don'ts.

- Don't go to a school you can't afford. If you have to work 40 hours a week to afford college, you're going to fail out. Twenty hours is admirable, it says you're a responsible person. Anything over that says you'll be home before Christmas. Don't worry about going to a cheaper college. A degree is a degree.
- Don't buy anything stupid. I know one son of a dentist who went to school with a paid for truck and \$400 monthly allowance for food and extras. Imagine his dad's reaction when his son called him to announce he had just traded in his truck to lease a new one. For \$399 a month! "I can afford it!" it he told his stunned father, forgetting there would be no money for gas, food or anything.
- Don't go to school without a budget. Your life will be much more simpler if you take the time write down how much you'll spend on food every month, partying, gas if you have a car, and other incidentals. Then stick to your budget. It's really a grown up thing to do.
- Don't borrow thousands of dollars if you don't commit to graduation. So many kids drop out of college owing thousands of dollars that they can't hope to pay back. So be wise. Borrowing money to go to college is a great idea *if you have the fortitude to stick it out and graduate.*
- Don't try and keep up with the rich kids. College is where the facts of life become obvious. And one fact of life is that some people have a hell of a lot

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more money than other people. It doesn't matter if it isn't fair. It just is. If you have to use your credit cards to hang with this crowd, find another crowd.

- Don't sign up for any credit cards. Credit card companies see college kids coming a mile away. Charging for that beer you can't afford seems harmless, but soon you are charging for a new iPhone then one day you open a statement demanding \$2000 and that's the day you have to leave school to pay it off.

Lesson two in a nutshell: don't let anything keep you from thinking about your studies. Not a girl, not a boy, not paying the bills. Stay focused. Graduate.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE FIRST TWO WEEKS OF SCHOOL CAN DETERMINE YOUR NEXT FOUR YEARS

One of the greatest mistakes a college freshman can make is underestimating the importance of the first weeks of school. This is the time 500 to 1000 freshmen are wandering around just as lost and dazed and confused and excited and lonely as you are. This is the time when you choose your classes – setting the stage for your major. This is the time when every club on campus wants you to sign up. This is the time when professors are handing out syllabuses, assigning homework and launching into lectures. This is the time to learn about your campus – in other words how far apart is the English Lit building and the Science building.

But incredibly, this is the time many freshmen hide out in their dorms, reluctant to make friends and make the fatal mistake into believing that everything seems so easy, they can wait a couple of weeks to get serious about their studies.

So let's look at how you can capitalize on the first two weeks of school to set the stage for graduating with honors.

1. Make as many friends as possible right now, because it will never be easier. People don't care who you were or weren't in high school. They only want to make friends. Stick your hand out to everybody the first two weeks. Introduce

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yourself to the blonde in chemistry, or to that boy in history. Being able to say “hi” to people on your way to class is a proven way to keep your spirits up and you engaged with your classes.

2. Join as many clubs as you can, especially the ones that might impact your major. Here’s the deal with clubs: you can make more friends. And two, incredibly enough, the people in these clubs tend to be smart and could prove extremely valuable over the next four years. Plus many clubs like the International Marketing Club bring in senior executives meaning you can be networking your butt off while your other classmates are getting drunk at the pub. Sure quit the clubs you don’t like. But you’ll still have the friendships.

3. Get to know the campus as soon as you arrive. Learn if it’s possible to schedule a 9 AM English class then a 10AM History class, or if the buildings are too far apart. Learn where the cafeteria is, where your counselor offices, where the best places to study are. The more you know your campus, the more at home you’ll feel.

4. Meet your counselor before registration. Let your counselor tell you what classes you need to fulfill your core requirements as well as your major requirements. Counselors have been known to be able to open “closed” classes to students who meet with them early.

5. Register early and carefully. As a freshman, you may be limited in your choices of classes, but if you delay, you could find yourself in an 8 pm science

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class three days a week. And this is the time to choose the electives that propel you to your major.

6. Treat the first two weeks of classes as important as you would treat exam week. This cannot be stressed enough. You cannot blow off the first two weeks and hope to catch up. After your first class, go to the library and study it for an hour. After your second class, do the same. Put at least an hour of study into every hour you're in class. If you've done your reading, start on your paper. Always assume there will be a pop test. After two weeks you'll be cementing your future while literally half of your classmates will be torpedoing theirs.

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CHAPTER FOUR

SKIP YOUR WAY OUT OF SCHOOL

This next tip is so effortless, so ridiculously easy you might think I'm kidding. But I'm dead serious. Students who go to class graduate. This sounds too simple to be true, but 50% of your fellow freshman college students will fail out and one of the main reasons is that they won't go to class. Their reasons are many and varied.

1. They get behind in their homework, so they don't want to be embarrassed. So they don't go to class.
2. They're hung over, they think they're going to throw up, so they don't go to class.
3. They're tired, they were up all night cramming for a test, so they don't go to class.
4. They have to work, so they don't go to class.
5. The professor is a dork, he hates them, so they don't go to class.
6. They want to go skiing for a long weekend, so they don't go to class.
7. They have nothing clean to wear, so they don't go to class.
8. They're having a fight with their boyfriend, so they don't go to class.

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9. They hate class. So they don't go to class.

10. They feel bad, they have a cough and a runny nose so they don't go to class.

Here's the deal: underline this fact and paste it to your forehead. *Professors take not only take roll. They take it personally when a student consistently fails to show up.* It tells the prof that the student doesn't care about her class. And now many schools require a professor fail a student after 15% of classes missed, excused or not. Which they're only too happy to do.

Besides the obvious advantage of learning the subject matter in class, you can learn other things as well. You can learn the professor has changed the syllabus, so there will be a pop test in two days. You can learn an exam has been posted on the professor's web site and you now have two weeks to get the answers. You can learn the specific points he wants you not to cover on the next paper. In other words, you learn things besides the subject matter. Things that help you pass the class, stay in school and graduate.

So resolve to yourself that there is nothing more important than class. If you're drunk, you're going to go to class. Even if you're girlfriend wants to talk to you about missing her period, you're going to class. Even if the professor makes fun of your hair, you're going to class. Even if you're totally unprepared and know you're going to fail the test, go to class. Even if your job is on the line, go class. If you're not dead, go to class.

And then you'll graduate.

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CHAPTER FIVE

YOU ARE WHO YOUR FRIENDS ARE

This is a lesson college freshman, college seniors and those ten years in the workforce need to learn and never forget. If you hang out with losers, you too will join the club. If you hang out with smart, ambitious, honorable people, you will find yourself becoming smart, honorable and ambitious.

If your boyfriend is a drug dealer, chances are real strong you'll be delivering drugs one day across state lines for him. If your girlfriend has a gambling problem, no doubt you'll be spending weekends in a casino.

Look, you learned this in high school. Jocks tended to hang out with jocks, the smart kids tended to hang out with the other smart kids, and the kids who smoked weed out by the fence had their own group.

So no matter what group you hung out with in high school, this is the time to decide you're going to hang out with smart, brilliant kids who study like they want to go to medical school. Because you want to make their kind of grades. *And remember this key fact, 50% of the kids you enter your freshman year with will not graduate in four years, 40% won't graduate at all!*

So choose your friends wisely. But how to do so? What hope do you have if your new roommate is a recently paroled convict? Or if you know nobody in school because home is 1500 miles away? Ok, here's what you do.

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1. First, as we talked about earlier, join clubs. Hardy partiers, drug users and heavy drinkers really look down on college clubs for the weird reason that they think the kids in there are nerds, when in reality the kids in there are future Fortune 500 CEOs.

2. What's your interest? I can flat guarantee there are no losers in the Management Information Systems Society, the China Business Association, the Energy Finance Group, the Entrepreneur Society, the Young Republicans or the Young Democrats.

3. Form a study group in every class. A study group is great because you combine socializing with graduating. Plus that cute blonde will keep you showing up to your biology study group. Just ask people if they want to be in a study group. You'll be amazed how many say "yes."

4. The Greek Society. I know you would think that all Greeks do is drink and party and while that's true, there are those kids who put studying ahead of drinking. Stick with these kids. Plus the Greeks tend to have GPA requirements.

The bottom line is that college is a great place to meet some of the coolest, lifelong friends you will ever make. But the quality of these friends will dictate the success of your next four years.

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CHAPTER SIX

HOW TO PARTY AND STILL GRADUATE

Up till now I've beaten on you about the importance of going to class, choosing smart and responsible friends, doing your homework and joining the right clubs.

So now let's get real about partying.

It's wildly fun. You'll have some of the most memorable times and times you'd like to remember the next four years but well... can't. And just because you've put studying first doesn't mean you should avoid the good times college offers and hide in your room polishing your term paper. In fact, that's not what I'm saying at all.

I want you to have fun. I want you to go to the wild fraternity and sorority parties, I want you to tailgate on Saturday afternoons, I want you to let your hair down, and go to the clubs, go to the after parties and join your friends for a weekend on the beach. It's important to your sanity to have fun, in fact it's doubtful you'll graduate if you don't get wild and crazy every now and then.

So how do the successful college students pull off partying all weekend and still acing their exam on Monday?

First, they don't party during the week.

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Secondly they don't party all weekend.

Third, they're so prepared that they could take a pop test at 2 am in the college pub because they have been studying all day.

My first semester in college was a disaster. I partied night and day (seemingly) and eked out a humiliating 1.75. I even failed typing! The second semester, faced with colossal embarrassment and an enraged father I changed some things. One of the most important was my study habits. I decided that before *I did anything*, I would study every subject until I finished and understood the next day's assignment *and* review what I had learned so far. I also committed to starting scheduled papers the day they were assigned. I took time the second semester to schedule all my classes in the morning and committed to studying five hours a day every day. Even Fridays.

Sometimes, if I had a paper due the following week, I would even study to six or seven o'clock on Fridays. I didn't go out until I knew I was prepared for the next Monday. Then I would go party my head off.

The result was a stunning turnaround, from a 1.75 to a 3.5! In fact I missed a four point by three exam questions. I learned I was smarter than I thought. That with enough studying I could indeed take road trips, have two girlfriends and be thought of as the smartest kid in class.

So, I want you to party. I want you to raise hell, have fun, get stupid and go to Mardi Gras. But only after you've put in five hours of studying a day. Six or

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seven on Friday. And made sure you've finished your paper three days early so you have the writing center review it.

The result will be while half your class parties themselves to a cashier's job at MacDonald's, you'll be dancing to graduation.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

BE ABLE TO WALK TO CLASS

Why do you want to live on campus? Why do you want to put up with a new roommate who doesn't bathe? Why do you want to live in a space basically the size of a Mini-Cooper with possibly the opposite sex living across the hall? Why do you want to even deal with the possibility of a communal shower?

Because people who live on campus tend to graduate at higher rates than students who don't.

Note this from the University of Colorado:

"Research has shown that living in student housing during the first year has numerous benefits for students both academically and socially. Students who live on-campus their first year experience:

- *higher graduation rates than students who live off-campus.*
- *a higher level of satisfaction with their college experience.*
- *a higher level of involvement in clubs and activities on campus.*
- *more frequent interaction with faculty members and peers."*

<http://bit.ly/wlUULk>

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But this fact is true at every college in the country. Living on campus connects you to the campus. This is so important in so many ways. It forces you to eat in the student cafeteria... where you meet people! Who might be in your class! It forces you to walk across campus and see people. It forces you to make friends with the two or more souls who have been crammed together in your dorm building.

It forces you to think first about school. It means you can not only walk to class (so you'll be sure and never miss) but also walk to college clubs so you can stay involved with the campus. All this walking means you'll occasionally bump into your professors. It means you'll find places to study in the library or the commons or the student coffee shop where other kids are studying.

There are other benefits: living on campus is the bottom dollar cheapest housing around campus. Eating on campus is so cheap an unemployed freshman can successfully gain weight. There are no transportation or parking costs. And it's much easier to meet a cute redhead who lives only six doors down.

Ok, a quick word about students who go to school in their hometown and are thinking of commuting. Or go to community college where there are no dorms. Or who are juniors and seniors and now believe they are too cool to live on campus.

Graduation rates tend to decline the further away you sleep from your college.

Ask someone who's graduated. Your diploma will be found on campus.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

LIFE PRESERVERS TO HELP YOU GRADUATE

Your college wants you to graduate. In fact, by their sheer acceptance of you, they're saying they believe you are the kind of student who can graduate from their college. So they didn't accept you to be nice or kind, they accepted you because they want you to graduate and five or six years love them so much, you will send them money for no reason at all. This is called *Alumni-Giving*. And only graduates feel compelled to send their college some money after they graduate.

So to make sure you do graduate, all schools, even tiny ones offer the following life preservers. Only a fool wouldn't take advantage of them.

1. **Writing Centers.** There is absolutely no excuse to fail a college paper ever again. Writing Centers are a gift that can turn a stultifying ten page term paper on "*Socrates and Plato and Hegel and Marx: A Discussion of Revolutions*" into an A for the semester in English Literature. Your college's writing center won't write your paper for you, but they will critique it every time you bring it in, including spelling, sentence structure and the all important, does your paper even make sense. It's on campus, it's free, it will help you graduate.

2. **Counseling Centers.** College can make you crazy. College boys can make your crazy. College girls can make you crazy. Your profs, your parents, your

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roommates, your Biology final – on the right day these can all team up to make you think about killing yourself, or worse dropping out. Go to the counseling center. They want to listen. They won't tell your parents. They have one job – to keep you so emotionally healthy you'll graduate.

3. **Wellness Centers.** These go by different names at different college. Yours could be called the The Clinic, or it could be a full hospital. Whatever, it's free or almost free so there's no excuse to let a cold turn into pneumonia or an STD to turn into something life threatening. Think like an adult. Go to the doctor. Sick students drop out. Healthy students graduate.

4. **Libraries.** You should visit your library the day you hit the campus. Walk around it. Get to know it. Learn how to check out a book. Find a place you'll be comfortable studying for two or three hours at a time. Talk to the librarian about how to use the library databases, which hold the answer to virtually any question even the most demented college professor might pose as a term paper.

5. **The Registrar's Office.** These are the people who will decide if you have enough of the right credits to graduate. Don't take any class without talking to them.

6. **Academic Advisor.** This is the first person you want to meet on campus. This is the person who will help you choose your classes, select your major, who will be your mentor and guide when times get rough. Your advisor is

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the most important person to talk to if you want to change majors, if your grades are dropping or if you need financial assistance. Students who don't talk to their advisors often are the ones who feel like their college doesn't care about them.

7. **Financial Aid Office.** The money goes to those who seek it. Relentlessly. This office is the source for loans, grants, scholarships, work programs and more. Getting to know these folks has kept many students on their degree path.

8. **Tutors.** Maybe the best kept secret in college. Study your student manual and it's quite likely you'll find free tutoring by upper classmen in chemistry, economics, mathematics, physics, biology, general chemistry, general physics, calculus, microeconomics, macroeconomics, organic chemistry and biology. The hardest thing you have to do is show up.

The point is this: your college wants you to graduate. They have a list of programs and services to help you graduate. Stupid students think they are too smart to take advantage of them. Smart students use them... and graduate.

And then become money-giving alumni.



DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY. SERIOUSLY

Students quit college for all kinds of reasons. One of the major ones is depression.

But it's not as simple as they get depressed, then they quit. It's more like they get depressed, start having lots of casual sex, doing drugs, get knee walking drunk, then they start skipping class, drop out of their social circles, don't show up for study groups, then fly home to mom and dad stating they don't care how much their parents have destroyed their 401K to send them to school, they want to quit.

How did it get to this? You need to remember several things about college, happiness and graduation.

1. You're as happy as you make up your mind to be. This is why two people can have the same problem and one overcomes it. The other starts sniffing Xanax.
2. The alternative to staying positive and upbeat throughout the crush of homework, writing papers and college heartbreak is prolonged depression, suicidal thoughts and being asked to take a voluntary leave of absence.
3. If you're depressed, see the campus shrink. And don't be embarrassed about it. On some campuses, seeing the shrink is a mark of status.

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4. This is when all your friends become so important. Talk to them, hang out with them, study with them. Tell them what's on your mind.

5. Volunteer. Do things that make you feel good about yourself. Feed the homeless, teach children, drive meals on wheels. Get out of your misery.

6. Don't forget, no matter how depressed you are, go to class.

7. If you don't have a spiritual life, this is an excellent time to develop one. God doesn't hate you. You just don't know him.

8. If you can't pull yourself out of it, talk to a campus doctor about going on medication.

9. Don't make the mistake of thinking you're the only one on campus having a difficult time. Put up a sign in the student center announcing the formation of a "Depression Club" and watch 200 students show up.

10. Remember life is difficult. It simply isn't going to be fun and games and college parties all the time. The point is to learn how to handle life's difficulties. And there's no better place for that than college, where you have so many people willing to help.

Let's bottom-line this: you want to graduate. And you can't graduate miserable, stoned and friendless.



CHAPTER TEN

TO GRADUATE YOU NEED COLLEGE PPO INSURANCE: PREPARATION, PRIORITIZATION, AND ORGANIZATION.

Here's why so many 4.0, gifted, intelligent, driven students fail out before the end of their freshman year. They don't read the syllabus for each class because they can't find the syllabus for each class. They spend two nights studying the wrong chapters for a test. They show up in class without the ten-page research paper due that day because they thought it was due next week. They start studying for an exam at 2am the night before because they had a hot date that night. They don't work on homework due tomorrow but are totally fixated on the paper due next month. They forget to charge their computer at night. They go to the writing center but leave their removable hard disc in their dorm room so they have nothing to work on, then they go back to their dorm and can't find their removable hard disc, so they frantically check their computer files only to learn they've erased that file, so the next morning they're in tears to an unmoved professor who gives them a 0 for failing to turn in their paper.

This happens every minute of every day in every college. The failure to prepare, to prioritize and to organize separates the students who don't make it past December from the students who graduate. And quite often, it's the

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smartest students who do the dumbest things.

So consider the following rules to graduate:

1. Every day after class, rewrite or retype all your notes and file them either in your computer or in a folder.
2. Put your class syllabus in front of each folder so it's the first thing you see when you open it.
3. Make a study schedule, so you know what subject you're studying when. For instance, every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, between 12 and 2 pm, you're studying English Lit. Between 2 and 4 pm, you're studying Biology. Between 4 and 6 pm, you're studying Algebra. Then stick to it.
4. Start your papers a month early. Schedule a visit to the writing center three week from the due date of your paper. Then two weeks. Then one week. Then every day until your paper is done. Do this after you meet your study schedule.
5. Back up everything to a removable hard disc that doesn't leave your dorm room.
6. Make sure all homework is done two days before it's due so you can review it the night before.
7. Make sure all homework is stuffed in your pack before you leave for class. Assume nothing.

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8. Use a scheduler that you will use: a paper monthly desk calendar that's the first thing you see when you sit down, a calendar on your smart phone, whatever. Just use it. A great electronic one is Bento. Check it out here

<http://www.filemaker.com/products/bento/mac.html>

9. Realize studying comes before partying. Say this fifteen times. Studying comes before Facebooking or YouTubing or napping or drinking or anything. There's a beer party every night around campus. There's one chemistry exam in two days. Get your priorities in order.

10. Get plenty of sleep, don't get fragmented or in a hurry. Make a list due everyday and don't stop until you've finished your list.



EPILOGUE

Graduating from college is hard. But the steps are easy. You and your parents are about to sink a small fortune into your future. And over half of your classmates will fail to graduate in six years meaning fortunes are wasted every year. And futures are blown.

But you can be different. You can graduate. You can secure for yourself a massive slice of the American dream. Just to review:

- 1. Pick A Major Early And Stick With It.**
- 2. Don't Let Love Or Money Derail You.**
- 3. The First Week Of School Can Determine The Next Four Years.**
- 4. Skip Your Way Out Of School.**
- 5. You Are Who Your Friends Are.**
- 6. How To Party And Still Graduate.**
- 7. Be Able To Walk To Class.**
- 8. Life Preservers To Help You Graduate.**
- 9. Don't Worry, Be Happy. Seriously.**
- 10. College PPO Insurance: Preparation, Prioritization, Organization.**



It's normal to feel lost, dazed and confused. But it's an achievement to graduate.

You can do this. I know you can do this. Just follow the above steps and while half of your other classmates leave with their tail tucked between their legs and a massive debt, you'll leave with a degree. And a future!