

Tips for First-Generation Students

How to Succeed in Your First Semester

- **Build your support team.** Find faculty, staff, organizations, and friends on campus who can help you. There is no shame in asking for help. When an experience is new (like starting college), you will have questions. Ask people who know the answers to guide you.
- **Attend your classes.** This sounds like a given, but you'd be surprised how easy the temptation is to skip a class. Unless you're ill or there is a true emergency, attend all of your class meetings. Years of research show that consistent class attendance increases a student's chance of understanding the material and succeeding in the course.
- **Sit in the front of the classroom.** The closer you sit, the less likely you are to get distracted by things around you. This will increase your ability to direct your attention to your professor and the class material.
- **Create a study routine.** Shop around campus during the first few weeks of the semester for a place to study. Consider if you like having noise nearby or need a quiet environment. Develop a routine for how long you'd like to study, the materials that you need, and where you'd like to study.
- **Use a planner.** You can either use a physical planner or the calendar on your phone or email account to plan out the times you have class, work, and activities. Write down when your assignments are due and plan designated times to study.
- **Get connected on campus.** ETSU has an active campus environment and so many ways for students to be involved. Find a club or organization that you are interested in and attend a meeting. Staying active on campus and meeting new people is a crucial part of the college experience, one that improves your chances of persisting in college.
- **Don't try to do too much.** There are so many things to be involved in on campus. While it's great to be connected, don't try to take on too many things at one time. Your primary focus should be on your classes since they are why you are at college. Know your own limits and boundaries, and don't feel obligated to try too many things at the same time.
- **Be professional.** When communicating with faculty and staff members, remember to be professional. Communication (such as emails) are received more positively when students maintain a professional presence.
- **Remember, you're here to learn.** It's easy to stay focused on your major and/or minor and think that those are the only classes you need to try in. The truth is that a college education is meant to make you a well-rounded individual. You will learn about subjects outside of your major and/or minor. Embrace that content and challenge yourself to think critically about subjects you may not have considered before.
- **Remember, you belong here.** It's easy to compare yourself to others on campus and to think that you aren't on their level. Don't fall into this trap. You were accepted to ETSU

because you deserve to be here. You bring something to the table that is our campus community. Trust that you are smart enough and good enough to be here.

- **Prepare for each class.** Read, review PowerPoint slides and all other related course material before each class. This helps your brain anticipate where and how a lecture or presentation of material may progress during class.
- **Presentation of Self.** Students should present themselves appropriately in class. Wearing ear-buds, headphones, the hood on your hoodie, and pajamas during class may seem cool, but it's not! No one is asking you to wear professional attire, but do pay attention to how you're presenting yourself in class to your peers and professors.
- **Ask for help.** When in doubt ask for help. It may seem like everyone else has it "all figured out", but they don't and would probably benefit from you asking your question(s) as well, so ask!
- **Get to know your professors.** It's important long-term to get to know your professors. Building relationships with them by asking questions, being mentally and physically present in class, and visiting them during office hours is helpful to both your scholarly and professional development. Not only will these things help you understand course material better, but they will allow you to develop relationships with your professors that can assist in your post-graduate journey.