College Survival Skills: An Example of an Individualized Study Skills Curriculum
Katherine A. Smith, Christy Horn, and Laura Thompson Jacobson
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Class Topics
The College Survival Skills course contains the following topics taught over 13 weeks:

Self-Advocacy         Goal Setting
Motivation            Time Management
Preparing for & Taking Exams Textbooks & Lecture Learning
Writing Papers        Mood and Effort
Assistive Technology  Study Environments

Core Class Content
The course consists of five core classes for all students, seven individualized instructional meetings, weekly mentor meetings, and weekly study hours.

Introductory Class: This class focuses particularly on dispelling myths about learning, understanding the characteristics of successful learners, dealing with academic anxiety, and the value of setting goals.

Notetaking and Studying: This class teaches note-taking skills, strategies for maintaining attention and concentration, learning while reading textbooks, and learning from in-class lecture.

Exam Preparation: The focus of this class is on effective preparation for all types of tests (i.e. essay, multiple choice, etc.), test-taking strategies, and relieving test anxiety.

Paper Writing: This class includes strategies for different types of college-level writing and appropriate planning, writing, and editing skills. We also discuss academic honesty including plagiarism.

Assistive Technology: This class provides an overview of assistive technology including short demonstrations of computer software technology, assistive note taking devices, writing assistance technology, and assistive furniture. When students require training to use the available assistive technology, further meetings are scheduled with the Accommodation Resources Director.

13-week Design

5 weeks of core classes       7 weeks of individualized instruction
Term Begins                  Term Ends
13 weeks of mentoring and study hours
Suggestions for Developing Study Skills Courses for Students with Disabilities

1. Tailor content, format, or overall structure to your students’ needs. Our design is labor intensive and requires more instructor time than a typical course, which is impractical for many schools. Consider other possibilities for individualizing instruction and build a good database of referral contacts for mentoring, tutoring, and support.

2. Be creative with course requirements when necessary. Because we wanted our course to be a low-risk, supportive environment for students, we don’t have assigned readings, we hand out notes on everything we discuss in class, and our assignments are all completed in the context of students’ other courses (e.g. note taking practice, creating test preparation materials).

3. Obtain a current assessment of students’ skills. We strongly recommend using the LASSI because of its focus on both strengths and weaknesses, however it does have to be purchased. Free informal assessments are sometimes found in study workbooks.

4. Emphasize assistive technology as a tool for all students with disabilities. All students need to know about assistive technology and what it can and cannot do for them. If they learn about assistive technology early in their postsecondary education, it can give them the time they need to learn to use it appropriately and increase their chances of academic success.

Resources We Use to Teach Study Skills


About the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI)

The LASSI is an 80-item self-test of study and learning strategies. Scores are organized in ten scales divided into three components: Skill (information processing, selecting main ideas, and test strategies), Will (Anxiety, attitude, and motivation), and Self-Regulation (concentration, self-testing, study aids, and time management). The LASSI provides a profile of student’s strengths and weaknesses that they can use to improve their learning strategies and study skills.

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