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Psychology students' best friend

## Top 10 Tips for Becoming a Successful Psychology Student

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Psychology is one of the most interesting fields of study imaginable. However, it's not always the easiest subject matter. I've seen many smart students struggle, often unable to grasp even the basic concepts.

In the [AlleyDog.com Guide To Success](#), I provide a full method for succeeding in psychology classes. In this guide, I'll share just a few basic tips that, if you follow them, will help you become a successful psychology student.

### 1) Go To Class

I know what you're thinking-, "DUH!, No Brainer". Yes, it's completely obvious, but you would be surprised by the number of students who skip classes on a regular basis. Yes, being at a university can be a big party at times and, if it's a big class, like introductory psychology classes usually are, then you can skip all the time without anyone even noticing.

But you want to be successful, you need to decide if you're in school to learn and get a degree, or party (of course a balance between the two is always good).

No one is going to make you go to class so you need to make the commitment to attend every class. You're spending good money to go to university so why skip classes.

### 2) Attend Class Well

It's not enough to just attend class, you need to attend well. What does "attend well" mean? This means that you don't hide off in the back of the class. Sit up front and participate. As an instructor, I can tell you this also has a positive

influence on how your professors perceive you – and don't you think it's better if your professors have a positive view of you? 😊

If the class seems boring, keep in mind that the more you participate or get engaged in the class, the less boring it will be.

Try to read the lecture material before the lecture takes place. This will help you understand and retain the information from the lecture.

While you're in class, make an effort to take good notes. This doesn't mean write down everything the professor says but definitely try to capture the main points - note any theories mentioned and write down any definitions that are given.

If a word is used that you don't know, write it down and look it up later (of course, use the [AlleyDog.com](http://AlleyDog.com) Glossary).

Give yourself some time to think about the lecture after it's finished. If possible, talk to other students about the lecture and what they thought of it. Review your notes to make sure that you got all the relevant points and that you understand what was being discussed.

### **3) Be An Active Student**

What is an active student? Active students participate in their education. They don't just sit and write notes, they ask questions and search for answers to problems that they don't understand.

In very big classes, it can be difficult to ask questions or ask for further information about a topic, so you need to track down the professor or a teaching assistant after the lecture and find the answer.

Most professors have office hours during which they answer questions and spend extra time explaining concepts. Take advantage of this opportunity – one-on-one time with your teacher goes a long way! This also helps you become more than just one of the faceless masses taking Introductory Psychology. The professor will see you as an interested student who makes an extra effort to learn material.

Don't leave questions until the last moment. Quite often, classes are built upon one another. If you don't understand a concept from a previous lecture, you may have trouble in the following lectures. Also, the longer you leave off seeking answers the less likely you are to follow up and find them.

#### **4) Do Extra Reading**

I know, there's already a lot of required reading. However, even a few minutes extra reading can help quite a bit.

Don't just focus on the textbook. If you discover a topic in your psychology class that is interesting, take some time to explore it further. Ask your professor for some recommendations of other sources like journals and books that you can read.

A lot of information is online and you can easily explore topics of interest. For example, you can read the latest news on many psychology topics on [Top Psych \(http://toppsych.alleydog.com\)](http://toppsych.alleydog.com).

Quite often a professor will hand out an optional reading list. Try to find the time to read these books. It will give you more insight into the course material and as an added bonus some of the test material may come from these books.

#### **5) Challenge Authority**

No, I don't mean make a placard and march around campus yelling "Down with the Administration". What I mean is, don't just sit in class and accept everything at face value. Think about the information the professor is presenting and try to make connections with other lectures. Think about possible problems with what is being presented.

This is especially important in psychology. There are many competing theories that can contradict each other.

Many professors will espouse certain theories in class but that does not make them the only theories available. Learning different theories is important and helpful (and necessary for tests) but you need to critically assess the theories for yourself.

This is something that people (not just student) don't do enough. In fact, some studies have shown that forty-five percent of university graduates have not shown any increase in their critical thinking skills after four years of university. Be one of the fifty five percent instead.

## **6) Map Out Your Career Goals**

There are a lot of branches of study when it comes to psychology. During your introductory psychology class pay close attention to the areas of study that may interest you. This will help you decide which classes to pick in the coming years.

Once you have some idea of the type of psychology you are interested in, you can look at the classes you need to take. You may decide to focus on research psychology, clinical psychology working with children or maybe you only want to focus on adults.

You should carefully pick your classes to match your planned area of work. For example, if you think you would like to work with children then taking a course in developmental psychology would be helpful.

## **7) Volunteer / Be a Research Assistant**

It can be difficult to find time to volunteer but it will be extremely helpful when it comes to investigating the area of psychology you want to specialize in (and even more important if you want to go to graduate school). If you want to specialize in research psychology, then talk to your professors about volunteering in their research labs.

You may have to do some grunt work, but you may also be given a chance to run some experiments and see how a real lab is run.

If you want to work with troubled children, do some volunteer work to see if you actually like dealing with children. Volunteering will help give you an idea of what it would be like to work in a certain area of psychology.

Volunteering also looks good if you plan on applying for graduate school and it's always good to get in with your professors.

## **8) Make Some Friends**

Look for other students who are in the same program as you and try to develop a friendship with them. Look for people who are as committed to learning as you are.

Once you have some friends in the same program, you can discuss the various lectures, reading material and even set up a study group.

If for some reason, you do end up missing a class your friends can help you cover the material that you missed. A couple of friends can also help to make sure that you make it to class.

## 9) Study Everyday

Now this doesn't mean that you have to spend five hours a day studying, but try to spend at least an hour or two studying the course material everyday.

This way, you won't feel the need to panic when exams come around because you will have already spent a lot of time studying. Spend time trying to understand the psychological concepts that your professor is talking about in lectures.

## 10) Have fun

Now this tip is at the end but it is also one of the most important. Life at a university should be fun as well as educational. Make time for socializing and going out with friends.

University life is more than simply studying and going to class. Of course, you need a balance but you will actually do better at university if you have some fun every now and then.

One fun thing you can do is to watch shows like "[What Would You Do](#)". These shows all deal with social psychology issues and make human behavior fun and interesting. Search for new and novel ways to learn the material.

Look [online for interactive ways to study](#) or get involved with study groups. Studying and learning doesn't have to be boring.

If you follow these ten steps you will be well on your way to becoming a successful psychology student. Decide that you want to be a good student and take steps to become one. It can take a lot of work to succeed but you will definitely benefit from the hard work.

Don't forget that AlleyDog.com has everything you need to succeed in your psychology courses, such as:

- Psychology Glossary
- Class Notes
- Psychology Flashcards
- Psychology Quizzes
- Question & Answer Board
- Psychology Degree Information
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