Tips for Being Organized

Being organized will make a world of difference in your success as a student. Not only will it keep you less stressed, but being organized can help motivate you to study. Taking the time to prepare yourself before the semester begins will place you in a positive frame of mind that will carry over into your work. Here are a few tips on how to get organized. Try a couple, or try them all. But remember that it takes time and energy to get organized and stay organized. Don’t get discouraged though. There will be times that you may not be very organized. Just take a deep breath and get things back in order. By having a good foundation to start with, it will be easier to get back to an organized state. So start a good system for yourself early on in a semester. Also, don’t be afraid to tailor some of these ideas to fit your own style of doing things. You know yourself best. You know what will work and what doesn’t work for you. Take responsibility for your organization and you’ll go a long way.

Be Prepared

You should always try to get your books ahead of time. Most instructors need to start covering material the first day of class, which means that you will more likely have homework. By getting your books ahead of time you ensure that you won’t get behind in the homework.

Get a binder

A good reason for keeping a binder over a spiral notebook is that a binder allows you to easily remove and put papers into it. This is helpful when you need to turn in homework. If you have a spiral notebook, you can’t put the papers back in, but with a binder, you can. This makes sense for handouts and other materials that are given to you. Also if you miss a class and get the notes from another student, you can easily place the notes into your binder in the right order.

Get dividers

If you are keeping a binder, it’s a good idea to invest in some dividers as well. Typically, you need dividers for: notes, homework, and handouts. You should have this set-up for every class you are enrolled in.

Always have your supplies

Pens, pencils, erasers, correction tape, and paper are obvious, but you should also have your textbook, highlighters, and back-up pens and pencils. Not to mention, other supplies that are specific to the type of class you’re taking, such as a calculator for math. If you know you will need a Scantron, get it ahead of time. Take these items with you to your classes. By having everything you need with you at all times ensures that you will have an effective use of your time if you get the opportunity to study or do homework.
Date your notes

Not only should you try to put titles and subtitles on your notes, but you should date them as well. This will help in a couple ways. First, if you miss a class, you know what day it was, which will help when trying to get the notes from another student. Second, dating the notes will help when you are trying to locate information and you have a vague idea of what day or week you are trying to find the information from.

Keep all your papers

Never throw your graded papers away. You never know when your professor may accidently record something incorrectly. Saving your papers will allow you to show them your correct grade. Not only that, keeping your old tests and quizzes give you a great place to go back and study from. You can learn from your mistakes. Nothing helps you realize a consistent (and therefore correctable) mistake you are making then comparing your graded papers side-by-side. Bonus, you can keep track of your grade in the class.

Have a basic calendar

Of course you can get a nice and fancy organizer for this, but placing due dates and test dates on one master calendar can be invaluable when preparing and planning. With so much technology out there, there are several ways you can do this. Most cell phones have a calendar, Microsoft outlook has a calendar, and even websites such as Yahoo offer you a calendar to record dates on. Perhaps you would benefit from a printed calendar. Microsoft Publisher offers an easy print calendar (with lots of design options) as do many other programs. Or you can find a free one on the internet like at http://www.printfree.com/Calendars.htm that you can print out and write on.

Other Resources

There are some other great places to read up on getting organized, as well as specific tips on studying.

• http://www.totallystressedout.com/
• http://www.studygs.net/ (comes in multiple languages)
• http://college.cengage.com/collegesurvival/downing/on_course/4e/students/assess/index.html
• http://www.studytips.org/