

## Top 10 Tips for ECE Student Success\*

\* Not in order of importance, and actually there are 11

1. **Know yourself.** People have different learning styles (visual, aural, etc.) and knowing your preferred method can help you learn most effectively. See the Learning Styles web link on Blackboard. Knowing your strengths and weaknesses allows you to devise a strategy that best suits you. For example, you may be able to crank out a 5-page paper in an evening, but a test puts you in a panic; your roommate may be the opposite. How the two of you spend your study time would not be the same.
2. **An engineering textbook is not a novel.** If you skim through an entire chapter of your circuits book, chances are not enough will sink in to do you any good. Go slow! Work through the examples; don't just read them. Do lots of problems, check the solutions, and redo the problems that you had trouble with. These are skills that you learn by doing and practicing, not by observing or reading.
3. **Use study groups ... or not.** Some very good students find it more efficient to study on their own, but for most students it helps to study in a group. The most effective way of learning is to teach, so explaining a concept to your group will cement it in your mind better than any other method. The social interaction and teamwork experience is valuable as well. If your group is not working for you, don't give up on the whole idea but find another group.
4. **Don't procrastinate!** Find your classrooms and get your books/parking/housing sorted before the quarter starts. Start your assignments when you get them, not as late as possible before they are due. Know your exam schedule and plan your study schedule accordingly. Quarters go by very quickly, so organize – your time, your notes, your life – or you can really find yourself in trouble.
5. **Use professors and TAs.** Go to office hours and recitation sections. Don't be embarrassed to ask questions, and if you don't understand the answer, say so and get more explanation. Besides helping you succeed in a particular class, having a professor know you personally is an advantage when you need a recommendation for an internship, scholarship, grad school or a job.
6. **There is a difference between being a success and being perfect.** You should strive to do a good job, but being too much of a perfectionist will drive you crazy. Be realistic about taking on too many credits and too many work hours – you don't want to set yourself up for failure. Remember the rule-of-thumb is two hours of study outside of class for each hour in class. Think about priorities – should you study for a test worth 30% of your grade, complete the last part of a lab experiment worth 2% of your grade, or try to do both and not sleep? Take care of yourself – eat well, sleep enough, exercise and relax once in a while – or you may just burn out.
7. **Pay attention to “soft skills” such as writing and public speaking.** These skills have more impact on your grades and are more prized by employers than you might think. Understanding something in your own mind is only half of learning it – you have to communicate that knowledge to someone else, whether professor, client or employer. Even if you know the subject well, expressing yourself with poor grammar and spelling mistakes will make you sound ignorant.

8. **Really learn the basics.** Software programs like Spice and MATLAB, how to use the lab equipment, topics in your lower division classes – these you will use over and over again. If you have trouble in basic subjects like circuit analysis or calculus, don't just carry on and ignore it. The lack of a good foundation will cause you problems all the way through.
  9. **Be honest!** The consequences of cheating far outweigh any short-term advantage. It may be tempting to copy on a test or let someone copy from you, turn in someone else's lab results or let someone else use yours, cut-and-paste from an online source, etc. – but don't. If caught, consequences for cheating escalate from getting a zero on an assignment to being expelled from the class, the department or the university. If you are not sure if something constitutes cheating or not, ask about it.
  10. **What goes on in class matters.** Even if it seems like the professor is lecturing straight from the book, the topics emphasized in class are reflected in exams. Go to class, take notes, go over them after class, and work through class examples. Know at least one reliable person in each class so that if you miss class, you can ask them for notes and announcements. If you ask what you missed and the person says "nothing" – ask someone else.
  11. **See your advisor – early.** You do not want to be a senior and find that you have taken three unnecessary classes but that there is a 200-level class you still need to graduate, or decide to drop a class one day too late to get a refund. Get all the information about requirements, deadlines, etc. from an informed and reliable source – i.e., your official faculty advisor rather than your friends.
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