

## **Tutoring, Establishing Good Habits and Avoiding Bad Choices (that might not seem bad at the time!)**

Successfully earning a college education makes you a better thinker and a more effective human being, because you grow stronger intellectually and emotionally. Most students gain not only knowledge and greater ability to think and reason, but they also increase in self-esteem, are more likely to earn higher salaries, and are less likely to be ripped off by scammers. We at SWC want you to believe in yourself, and to do the work so that you're believing in something real and not in a fairy tale.

Getting an education will not be easy, and you will probably not do it perfectly, without ever making any mistakes, becoming discouraged, or even failing sometimes. We're human. But HOW you handle your mistakes and emotions makes the difference between long-term success and failure.

### **Avoiding the Big Bad Choices**

#### Bad Choice #1: Don't honestly try.

Make the commitment to your math class during the first two weeks of class. Though it is possible to "save" your grade after a bad start, it's difficult and it's even harder to keep a positive attitude.

There are (at least) two kinds of bad starts.

1. A student starts badly because they didn't really try.
2. A student starts badly because the work was more difficult than they expected.

In the second case – the work was difficult -- there is lots of support to help. See below, under Tutoring.

But the first case – not really trying – is the student's choice. If the student doesn't choose to try, failure is essentially guaranteed. So, let's talk about failure.

#### Bad Choice #2: Pretend that failing a class is okay.

Failing or withdrawing from a six-unit class (like Math 72 or Math 244) is very likely to put you on Academic (Progress) Probation, even if you do well in your other classes. Remaining on Academic Probation will eventually disqualify you from priority registration, end your financial aid, and ultimately kick you out of college.

If you fail (D or F) or withdraw (W) three times from this course, you cannot enroll in this course again at SWC, and you will have to go to a different college. You will be dropped from the class (and earn a W) if you are absent too many times.

Failing is bad and withdrawing is less bad, but it's best if you don't do either one. So how does it happen?

#### Bad Choice #3: Allow misguided family or friends to undermine you.

Students who are the first in their families to attend college often don't know what's required in college. Their families and friends often don't know what's required, either! Consequently, families and friends can say they support you getting an education while simultaneously interfering with you doing the necessary

work. As you learn what you need to do, you may need to educate your family and friends so that they can help you

- Attend class every day, on time, the entire class
- Do homework and study every day in a study space without distractions
- Work an appropriate number of hours at your job to balance financial needs and study time
- Remember that education is an act of *delayed gratification* – something that pays off *later*.

In particular, while many of us have the occasional emergency, some families *frequently* have “family emergencies”, where they demand a student miss class or skip studying to fix problems that have occurred. If your family does this often, you may need to examine this dynamic carefully. As a registered SWC student, you can see a therapist for free! (Go to Personal Wellness, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Cesar Chavez Center.) These professionals can be extremely helpful in addressing personal issues of all types, and will protect your privacy and confidentiality.

The bottom line: Support from family and friends makes a big difference, because it helps us persist when tasks are difficult or we are discouraged.

#### Bad Choice #4: Enroll in an inappropriate class schedule.

Choose class difficulty and overall class load so that you want to and can do the work to succeed. This is college – you must work outside of class. If this class is too hard or assumes too much background that you’re missing, either commit yourself to spending a LOT more time studying for it, OR enroll right away in a lower-level math. Talk to your professor if you need help deciding.

Students who enroll in Math, English, and Critical Thinking every semester, especially at the start of their college careers, are statistically more likely to complete their degrees. If you must drop a class, do your best to keep your Math, English and Critical Thinking classes.

If your class load, life circumstances, or motivation do not permit you to commit to the work needed to pass your classes, drop before the refund deadline (usually end of the second week).

## **Tutoring and Getting Help**

Sometimes we just need help. Don’t delay! The math builds on itself, and a small confusion today could be a catastrophe tomorrow.

- Go to the instructor’s office for tutoring, either during office hours or by appointment.
- Work in the Math Center (Room 60-109), for walk-in tutoring and a place to study, including computers.
- Make appointments with tutors in the ASC (420) or the Library.
- Use online help buttons in your homework website: example, step-by-step, read textbook, video, ask my professor, etc.
- Use the SWC online tutoring (see info below).
- Get tutoring from a peer in the MESA Center, room 60-101.
- Call, text, email, or meet with a friend or family member.
- Search online using the Khan Academy or YouTube videos.

### Use “Ask My Instructor”

I reply to all e-mail messages I receive from students via the “Ask my instructor” link in MathXL/MyMathLab/WebAssign.

The feature will send me the question you were doing, with the numbers you saw, as well as any answers you provided.

If you send a question right after class, I will usually respond the same day.

Online Tutoring: SWC has a free, online tutoring service. Go to [www.swccd.edu](http://www.swccd.edu), click Student Support, select Tutoring, scroll to bottom and select e-Tutoring, scroll to the bottom and select a tutor with a colored icon.

### Academic Success Center Referral

To further your success, reinforce concepts, and achieve the learning objectives for this course, I refer you to the Academic Success Center learning assistance services. Upon request for tutorial services, you will be automatically enrolled in NC 3: Supervised Tutoring, a free noncredit course that does not appear on your transcripts. Math tutoring is located in the ASC (420), Math Center (60-109), and MESA (60-101).

## **Good habits**

How to do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.

- Come to class every day, on time, the entire class, no exceptions, no excuses. This is a success skill for *life*, not just college.
  - If you can't avoid missing class, plan ahead. You may be able to take quizzes or exams early, or attend another section of the course.
  - If you are absent twice the number of weekly class meetings, you'll be dropped.
  - Being tardy, leaving early, or leaving in the middle each count as half an absence.
  - Students who miss 3-5 classes in the first three weeks of the semester nearly always drop or fail.
- Take notes, pay attention, and ask and answer questions during class.
  - In college, you may not understand everything in class. You need notes to study afterward. Keep taking notes, even when you're not sure what's going on.
  - Most students find that preparing well for exams includes studying class notes.
- Do homework soon after class.
  - People forget most new information 1-3 hours after they see it. Using the information right away helps us remember.
  - Students who do NOT do homework ALWAYS fail.
  - Plan when and where you'll do homework to make it a scheduled habit.
  - Put away your phone, video games, TV, and distractions while studying or doing homework.
  - You may want to do half of your homework using notes and help (the odd-numbered ones, for example), then use second half of homework to test yourself – do these questions without notes or help, for speed, as if it were a quiz or exam.
- Take the daily quizzes seriously!
  - Arrive to class five minutes early to have extra time.
  - Make flash cards of 1-3 typical problems and review them right before class as a warm-up.
  - Look at your graded quizzes when they are returned – you'll have personal notes from the professor.

- Write notes or questions on your quiz before you turn it in, and the prof will answer them.
  - Write down the correct work in your class notes when the quiz is worked in class.
- Understand the class schedule and flow of work.
  - The homework due today is today's quiz, on the lesson *two* classes ago, (not yesterday's lesson).
  - Consult the class calendar before class, keep a personal calendar, and watch for special due dates, like study skills assignments and exams.
- Organize your papers.
  - Bring your past class notes to class so we can refer back to them in class.
  - Use a three-ring binder.
  - Store graded quizzes and study cards in pocket-style dividers.
- Organize your time.
  - Plan time for transportation, meals, sleep, and obligations to family.
  - Set aside time for homework every day.
  - Negotiate with your job or boss to create a reasonable schedule.
- Study for exams.
  - Plan ahead to study, beginning about one week before the exam.
  - Do homework to *do* and *understand* problems, and *extend* knowledge beyond the basics from class. Study to *remember*. These are different.
  - Identify the formulas, instructions, step-by-step processes, and problem types you need to remember.
  - Go to tutoring for anything you didn't get in class, on homework, or on the quiz.
  - Practice problems, and study the instructions and step-by-step processes.
  - Use a method for memorizing: note cards, re-copy, recite aloud, test yourself, trade off testing each other with a friend.
  - Sleep a full night after you study, then review again.
- Many students benefit from a weekly review.
  - Once a week, review the new material from that week and make a study summary – a single page or flash cards, for example.
  - Use these summaries to study for the exam.
  - If you don't understand well enough to write a summary, get help right away. Do not wait until right before the exam.
  - Avoid quick, shallow skimming or thoughts like "This is easy, I know all this".
  - Instead ask: "If I were going to forget something, what might that be?"
  - Sleep a full night after studying; during sleep, your brain consolidates knowledge, connects step-by-step processes and exposes gaps.
- College is a job, and your professors are your bosses. Be professional; your prof may write your letter of recommendation one day!