

## Things Seniors Should Know Before They Go To College – advice from current students

**You don't have to go to college:** Seriously, most people don't have their stuff together at 22 (roughly when you graduate), and/or are just starting to get their stuff together around their junior year. That's tens of thousands of dollars they wasted either partying and failing classes, or not meeting people, or being in the wrong major.

Not sure what you want to do? Not really all that in to school in general? Take a year or two; get your head on straight. If you decide to go at age 20 or 21, no one will think much of it.

**Your professors are not your parents:** Professors are there to teach the material and help your understanding of the material. They are not there to tell you that you're special, that you can do anything, or spoon-feed you answers.

**You won't be who you were in high school:** The day after you graduate high school, your social standing in the class hierarchy no longer applies. It's a clean slate, decide for yourself who you want to be and be it.

**Go to as many networking events as possible:** This is just as important as going to class will be for the rest of your college career. Seriously, friendships are forged and memories are made at these stupid things. You'll still be talking about these events four years later at graduation.

**Invest in your professors:** I think getting to know professors is something most people don't realize is as beneficial as it is. This isn't just a 'know their names' because I had those. But I got close with a few teachers, and even though I wasn't an A student, they gave me good letters of recommendation. And their office was always open to me for advice, chatting, or homework help for other classes.

**Get an internship:** I interned for three out of my four years and had so many job offers after college it was insane. It gets you knowledgeable in your field, typically gives you money (don't settle on unpaid internships, they're a joke), and can give you 1-4 years of work experience which will influence your paycheck and job offers right out of college.

**Or get a job:** I studied engineering, but while my other classmates were excelling in class and getting way better grades than me I held a job for 2.5 years (as a videographer), joined a service fraternity, and lead a local volunteer group, and got a 3-month internship.

**Learn how to write:** A great idea and thesis doesn't mean a thing if you can't communicate the message. Seriously, learn to write well. It will help you the rest of your life for any white-collar career.

**Research and understand how college loans will affect you:** Student loans are no joke. If someone had impressed upon me the reality of starting my adult life with \$100k in debt, and specifically what the monthly cost of that debt vs. what my realistic salary expectations would be, I'd have completely reconsidered how I approached college.

**Take your scholarship seriously:** If you lose it, you are screwed. I knew exactly what grade number I needed in each class every semester to keep my 3.25 average and not lose my scholarship.

**Get up when your alarm goes off:** Put your alarm on the opposite side of the room. It forces you to walk when you wake up in the morning, and by the time you get there you should realize you need to stay awake.

**Always go to class:** Go to class. You have to take responsibility for your own future now. It's up to you whether you want to sleep all day or be successful in life. Make the right choice, even if it's the hard one.

**Try new things:** Do things that you never would have done in high school. Do things that fall way outside your

comfort zone. Do it because you can and because you'll never know what you love if you don't find it. And you find it by doing new things. I grew up with a mindset that you either did something perfect or you didn't do it at all. And I was scared to try new things. Go out and do new things. This is very sound advice.

**Make new friends and be social:** College classes aren't like high school classes. They can be hard. You need to have friends in your classes to study with and to help you out when you don't know what you're doing. This can be vital.

**Personal Care Stuff** - Know how to:

- Wash, dry and iron clothes
- Decide if/what/when to take clothes to the cleaners
- Cook basic meals, as in boil or fry eggs, make spaghetti, cook hamburgers or other favorite foods
- Brew a cup (or pot) of coffee or tea
- Buy toiletries

**Practical Life-management Stuff** - Know how to:

- Organize and keep safe personal and academic records (medical, insurance, academic, etc.)
- Keep track of all Internet accounts, including logins and passwords
- Handle a personal checking account, including writing and depositing a check and reconciling bank statements (*It's useful to set up a bank account either at a local bank or one that has branches in the city where your college is located.*)
- Responsibly use a credit card, including how to pay bills so that you don't build up debt (*It's useful to get a credit card and begin using it before you leave for college rather than sign up for one on campus.*)
- Live on a fixed budget
- Research, purchase and/or return goods and products
- Tip people, including how much and when
- Handle yourself at an upscale restaurant

**Professional Stuff** - Know how to:

- Address an envelope (*I know it's hard to believe, but many young people have never done this*).
- Write thank you notes
- Put together and use a resume
- Write a cover letter

**Transportation Stuff** - Know how to:

- Use public transportation, including buses, trains, trolleys and metros
- Find, hire and use a taxi, when needed (and tip appropriately)
- If you have a car, get it serviced and/or repaired and not be taken advantage of
- Put gas in a car, change a tire, understand when a car needs oil, water, air in tires
- Arrange bus, train and/or air reservations to and from college
- Use a shuttle to get to and from an airport, train or bus station

**Your Own Personal Stuff** - Know how to:

- Ask for help
- Say no respectfully, and when to say yes
- Make a doctor's appointments, and have the names of a recommended dentist and/or doctor if you need to go off campus