

“Academic Success One Semester at a Time” (A Week-By-Week To-Do List for the Semester)

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Are you new to WMU? Are you a returning student? Here are a few important tips and facts about us. Semesters at Western Michigan University move quickly. After thirteen weeks of classes, you find yourself facing final exams. Successful students are those who stay on top of current and future events and issues, the details, plan ahead, and stay organized. Here’s a list you can follow to increase your chances of success.

Three principle University resources you should be aware of are the academic calendar, the undergraduate calendar, and the *Student Code of Conduct*. You can find the academic calendar with specific deadlines for each semester on the Registrar’s web page: <http://www.wmich.edu/registrar/calendar/>. The Western Michigan University undergraduate catalog, complete with policies and graduation requirements can be viewed at <http://catalog.wmich.edu/>. The Student Code of Conduct outlines your rights and responsibilities while you are matriculating at Western. You can find it at: <http://osc.wmich.edu/studentconduct/faq.html>. Being unaware of the student code does not reduce your responsibility for knowing what it contains.

Before the semester begins:

1. Buy a **planner** to keep track of known responsibilities (class, work, recurring activities and meetings). Include travel time to and from each obligation. Be sure to block out study time as well as time to rest.
2. **Print out your “week at a glance schedule”** from **GoWMU**. Remember that **Labor Day** is the Monday of the first week of fall semester, so click on “next week” (upper right hand side of the screen over Sunday) to get your complete Monday-Friday schedule.
3. **Note where each class meets** and the name(s) of the professor or instructor.
4. **Find your classrooms** so you know where you are going the first day of classes. Obtain a campus map from the Office of Admission, Parking Services, or Office of Student Life.
5. **Buy your textbooks** before classes begin. You will be ready for the first reading assignment, which is likely to be assigned the first class. Purchasing textbooks (if available) early, and reviewing them will provide you with some answers to anticipated questions about the course of study.

Week One

1. **Make sure your BroncoNet ID is working.** It is your official identification while you are on campus

2. **Make sure your WMU email account is active and working.** It is the primary means of communication with the university. Be sure to **keep your email box clear of “junk”** If it is full the sender cannot contact you – it is like trying to call someone and their line is busy
3. **Check e-learning (WebCT) to see if any of your classes are using e-learning tools as part of class. You may access e-learning through your GoWMU account (click on e-learning in the upper right corner)**
4. **Have you purchased your books yet?**
5. **Attend all classes.** No matter what anyone tells you, **attendance is important**, especially the first class session.
6. **At the first class, you will likely get a syllabus. Review this document carefully. It is the contract between you and your professor/instructor and is a “blueprint” for successfully completing the course: attendance, projects, class participation, expectations, and etiquette.**
7. You can also use it to:
 - a. **Write in your planner when assignments are due and tests are occurring.**
 - b. **Establish a regular reading and study schedule for each class.**
 - c. Arrange follow-up appointments with your advisor if needed.
 - d. **Learn your professor’s and TA’s names and office hours.**
8. **Make-schedule changes**, so you can **attend classes from the first day.** If you are considering dropping or adding a class, it is a good idea to consult with your advisor. Any change in your schedule may affect your compact with WMU, your financial aid, or your health insurance eligibility.

Week Two

1. You have **attended every class**, right?
2. Sit in the front row of the classroom to minimize distractions.
3. **Check your WMU email account daily.**
4. Check e-learning daily. This week, look for classes and materials not posted last week.
5. **Review your syllabi** and begin preparation for your first tests/exams. Now is the time to schedule blocks of time to work on papers and projects due later in the semester.
6. Obtain contact information from other students in each of your classes. Not only do you have a resource if you miss class, you could connect with other students to form a study group.

Week Three

1. Identify a question or concern you have about each class after the first two weeks and **visit your professor** during office hours. It is a good way for you to get to know them, and more importantly a good way for them to put your face to your name. It also shows you care about your academic success.
2. **Are you keeping up on your reading?** Are you struggling with note taking during class? Are you having problems keeping up with your homework? Don’t let small problems early in the semester become big problems later on! Ask for assistance now! Visit your professor and the Academic Skills Center for help.

Week Four

1. Don't be surprised if your first exams are this week (maybe you even had one last week). You may have multiple exams on the same day. **Schedule study time** in advance. It helps minimize stress.
2. **Look Back:** The first exam always gives you a chance to do a critical evaluation of yourself and the semester so far. Being a full-time student, in terms of time investment (class time, reading, studying, and project time), equates to a full-time job. **If you devote 40-45 hours a week to your classes, you will most likely make the Dean's List each semester.**
3. Are you meeting your academic expectations? If not, visit with your professor or advisor to strategize on how you can improve. If you work full time while attending classes, talk with your advisor about how to manage both responsibilities.

Week Five

1. Have you visited your professor during office hours?
2. Have you arranged for a study companion or a study group?
3. Are you getting comfortable with the rhythm of your schedule?
4. It is important for you to **balance your academic life with meaningful activities outside of the classroom.** How are you spending your time when you are not in class or studying? Are you meeting new people and are you getting experiences that classes don't offer?
5. Have you joined a student organization? Learn about available opportunities for involvement by visiting Student Activities and Leadership Programs (<http://www.wmich.edu/salp>)

Week Six

1. **It is time to prepare for midterms.** (Tip: Forming a study group is valuable for success.)
2. Are you keeping up with class assignments and readings? Are your lecture notes in order?
3. Are your projects on schedule?
4. **Look Forward.** Very soon, you and your advisor will be planning for next semester. Understand that whether your advisor is a professor or professional advisor, he or she has a very full schedule. **Scheduling an appointment now assures that you see your advisor before your scheduled registration time.**
5. **Make sure your student account is free of holds** (financial holds, unpaid parking tickets, promissory notes). By doing so, you can register on time.
6. During week three, it was recommended you visit your professors during office hours. We suggest that you plan another visit to discuss problems you may be having in class-before the mid-term. It would be good to **review graded material face-to-face with the professor or your T.A to find out how to improve.**

Week Seven

1. **Do you feel prepared for midterms?** If not, add study time to your schedule, form a study group, or get assistance from the Academic Skills Center
2. **Check your midterm grades after they are posted.** Contact your professor if you have questions or want to see your exam. It is your right to have your questions answered.

3. Have you made that advising appointment yet?
4. If you had an **earlier exam in a class, review it.** and it can help you to determine how you might improve your performance.
5. Priority registration for spring semester starts this week. **Take full advantage of your priority registration status to get the best possible class schedule.**
6. Make sure your student account is free of holds (unpaid parking tickets, promissory notes)

Week Eight

1. **How's your schedule working** for you? Does it need adjustment? **Do you need more time for class work, or do you need to balance your schedule with a few leisure activities?**
2. Have you taken advantage of on-campus resources that will help you feel successful in your classes (Academic Skills Center, faculty office hours, and study groups, Communication Resource Center, faculty and curriculum advisors, to name a few)?
3. **Is your stress level high?** Consider visiting the Counseling and Testing Center, Sindecuse Health Center, Student Recreation Center to obtain guidance or release stress.
4. **Registration starts this week.** Before you register, check your account through GoWMU for any "holds" that may prevent you from registering.
5. **Mid-term exams will likely continue** this week.

Week Nine

1. **Look Back:** This is a good time for self-assessment.
 - a. Are you **sticking to your study plan?**
 - b. Are you **caught up on your reading?**
 - c. How are those **final papers and projects** coming along?
 - d. Are you getting **enough exercise and sleep?**
 - e. Are there any habits (attending class, studying regularly, working on papers, projects, being in touch with your family/close friends, working out more often) you want to adjust going into the last several weeks of the semester?

Week Ten

1. Review your course syllabi to **make sure you have scheduled adequate time to work on papers and projects.**
2. Meet with your professor to answer your questions, and to **make sure you understand major assignments and grading requirements.**

Week Eleven

1. **Look Forward:** Get ready for finals week.
 - a. **Write down the day, time and location of your finals.** This information should be on your syllabus.
 - b. **Develop a study schedule and plan ahead** for how you might handle more than one exam per day.

Week Twelve

1. Schedule time to finish **projects and papers**
2. Remember to schedule a little **relaxation and family time**

Week Thirteen

1. **Look Forward:** Get ready for finals week.
 - a. Confirm the date, time, and location of the final exam with you professor. Changes do occur.
 - b. Ask your professor about the final exam. Be sure you **understand the format and expectations for the exam**. If your professor provides a study guide, be sure to use it. Final exam study groups can be very helpful.
 - c. As you did with your midterms, **develop a study schedule** and plan ahead for how you might negotiate more than one exam per day.
 - d. Final labs, papers, and projects are often due this week.
 - e. If any student is assigned four exams during the same day, University policy will allow the student to request one exam to be given at the make-up time. Visit the Registrar's website for further information:
<http://www.wmich.edu/registrar/finalexam.html>

Week Fourteen

1. Final labs, papers, and projects will most likely be due this week.
2. Do you know what grade you are earning going into your finals? Now is the time to clear up any discrepancies, missing documentation, assignments, etc.
3. Realistic expectations regarding your final grade and the impact of your final exam score are important. Understand how your grades are calculated, what grades you have earned so far, and what impact the final exam will have on your final course grade.

Week Fifteen - Finals Week and Beyond

1. **Set your alarm clock every day, or arrange for a wake-up call, or both.** You do not want to miss your final because you "overslept".
2. Your professor may require you to purchase an exam book from the bookstore or use a specific type of paper. If so, get these now.
3. Make sure you have **pens, pencils, and anything else you might need for your final exam**. If your final exam is a **speech or presentation, make sure all note cards or papers are in order and numbered so you can arrange them quickly if you "drop" them**.
4. **Bring your WMU ID card and know your WIN number.**
5. **Arrive** to your final **5-10 minutes early** to give yourself a chance to get settled and relax.
6. **Grades will be posted on GoWMU the Tuesday, after the semester ends, by 6:00 PM.** Your **cumulative GPA (on GoWMU) will be updated as well**. Contact your professor, after you have checked your grades, if you have questions or if you want to review your final exam. You may also request to pick up papers, projects, assignments, etc.
7. If you receive a grade lower than expected, seek clarity. Many instructors use the grade book function of e-learning, so you can see how grades were determined.

8. **Students have 60 days after semester end to appeal a grade.**
9. **The only accepted bases of course grade appeal are:**
 - 1). Grades were calculated in a manner inconsistent with the University policy, the syllabus, or changes to the syllabus.
 - 2). The grade(s) was/were erroneously calculated.
 - 3). Grading/performance standards were arbitrarily or unequally applied.
 - 4). The instructor failed to assign or remove an Incomplete or to initiate a grade change as agreed upon with the student.
10. **If you feel you received a grade in error, there is a 3 step process to appeal your grade:**
 - 1) Contact the instructor of record and discuss your grade. The instructor of record has the first opportunity to grant a grade change
 - 2) If you have talked with the instructor of record, and still wish to pursue a grade change, contact the Chair or Director of the academic department where the class was taken. The Chair or Director serves as the first appeal.
 - 3) If you have completed steps “a” and “b”, you may pursue this matter with the University Ombuds. The Ombuds may be reached via phone at (269) 387-0718.

Note: If the instructor of record is the department chair/director, begin with step “b”. If your faculty member is no longer on campus or away from campus for the summer, begin with step “b”.
11. **Declare, or apply for your major or minor if you have successfully finished the required pre-requisite courses.**
12. If you are **three semesters from graduation, complete your graduation audit.** Take your major and minor slip(s) to your curriculum advisor and request a graduation audit.

KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK! START AGAIN NEXT SEMESTER AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS DOCUMENT.