Great learning in college takes more than just doing your assignments and showing up for class. You’ll make choices every day that impact your how much you learn, how much you enjoy yourself, and how good your grades are. To get the most from your education at the University of Minnesota, check out these tips that relate to the skills and characteristics of successful students.

The successful U of M student possesses responsibility & accountability, so:
- Sit front and center in your classes. Research shows that students who sit in this “action zone” are more engaged in class and learn more.
- Ask questions during class, office hours or via email.
- Answer questions during class. Your faculty ask questions because they care about what you think and want to find out how well you understand the material.
- Get your reading and homework done before classes.
- Managing your time to make sure work is done on time and you have opportunities to become involved in the University community.

The successful U of M student demonstrates independence & interdependence, so:
- Visit your instructor in office hours early during the semester even. Research shows that more learning takes place when the teacher and student share background information.
- Get to know your instructor. Use her name and make sure she knows yours. This may be beneficial in the long run, especially if you need to discuss your grade or get a letter of recommendation.
- Find out about your instructors’ research interests. It may open doors for you to do future research with them.
- Get to know other students in your classes by name.
- Facilitate communication among students or between a student and instructor if you see breakdowns occur.
- Form study groups with other students in your classes. Meet regularly or just for homework and exam prep. (Find out first from the instructor if it’s OK to work on assignments together.)
- Think of your TAs as a bridge between you and the material. If you don’t understand or need clarification, ask for help. They are there to assist you.
The successful U of M student demonstrates goal orientation, so:
- Talk to your advisor early and often to plan and maintain your educational goals.
- Make time to study every night even if only for an hour.
- Don’t worry if you don’t know what to major in. Take classes that interest you and fill the prerequisites to see what subject areas interest you. And remember you can always change your mind. A declared major is not set in stone.
- Use assignment calculator to manage homework, papers and exams.
- Decide for yourself what you want to get out of each class.
- Follow through on e-mails and important messages from instructors, advisors, employers and classmates.
- Stay on track for graduation. Find a balance between hanging out with your new friends, extracurricular activities and your course work.

The successful U of M student possesses self-awareness, so:
- Don’t necessarily follow the crowd. College is a place for self-discovery. Feel confident in who you are and always think for yourself.
- Know when you’re wrong or you’ve made a mistake. Admit it. Take responsibility and move on.
- Don’t be afraid to ask if someone else has a better idea.

The successful U of M student demonstrates resilience, so:
- Be willing to stick your neck out and take risks even if you fall. Failure is part of the learning process. It’s a good way to see what you’re made of.
- Be forgiving if your instructor has a bad teaching day. Come next time with an open mind and a readiness to learn.
- Don’t let one bad presentation or grade bring down your morale.
- Don’t give up. Things aren’t as bad as they seem sometimes.
- Realize that everyone makes mistakes, and that it’s not the end of the world. If you get a bad grade, talk to your instructor to see what you can do to improve.
- Use other sources of information if your professor is unavailable or doesn’t match your learning style (TAs, study groups, tutors, online resources).

The successful U of M student appreciates differences, so:
- Realize that college is a diverse, multi-cultural environment. Not everyone agrees on every issue. Be open to new ideas and courteous when you disagree.
- Be aware of your own cultural biases. Each of us has a culture that impacts how we behave, and how we understand and interact with other people.
- Be inquisitive about instructors and classmates whose culture or language differs from yours. Ask them about their native country or culture.
- Avoid negative responses such as rolling your eyes if an instructor or classmate confuses you. Show empathy and work toward understanding.
- If instructors don’t understand you, be OK with rephrasing your comments and questions.
- Speak more slowly and simply if it will help your instructor or classmates understand you.
- Have an inclusive attitude toward other people’s ideas in groupwork and class discussion.
• Be ready and willing to challenge or defend your own values and beliefs.
• Embrace new ideas and be willing to incorporate them into your way of being.

The successful U of M student demonstrates *tolerance of ambiguity*, so:
• Be ready for college to be more complicated than high school. You may be juggling classes, course work, one or two jobs, extracurricular activities, financial aid, dorm life, new friendships, and more. You probably won’t have someone telling you what to do first, and you will sometimes have to think about an assignment or reading before you actually begin to understand it.
• Recognize that some important questions that will arise in the classroom and in life in general will not always have clear, “black or white” answers.
• Know that it may take awhile to adjust. Be aware of how you are managing yourself and your time in this new environment.

Most importantly…HAVE FUN. You can’t take everything too seriously.

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