

Advice for 1st Year Students

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This is an evolving document. It will be updated from time to time. Welcome to contribute your problems /ideas through email and I'll try to incorporate them in the document

Introduction

New university students typically find that the pace of the lecture is much higher than those in the secondary schools, and it is hard to keep pace of the course. Moreover, there are fewer examples in the tutorials and in the quizzes, the questions test deep understanding. Learning by memory fails to give good results.

Below are some advices:

Lecture

How to increase efficiency of learning without increasing time spent

1. Try to take some notes during the lecture. When you hear some important points and write it down, it would help your understanding.
2. It is well known that memory is a decreasing curve. After listening to a lecture, try to review it as soon as possible.
3. One can use idle time, e.g. sitting in the MTR, efficiently to read through the material.
4. Try to relate what you learn with something important in your life, e.g. find out why learning a particular subject will be useful to your goal.
5. Lecture material can usually be found in books. Frequently, the books can be found in the course reserve in the library. If you have something which you do not understand, read the book. Also, learn to use the index at the end of the book. It would save you time in locating exactly which part to read.
6. Sometimes, the opposite of 5. is helpful. Try to read more than is taught. Though this would not improve your grade, it gives you a better understanding of the subject and will increase your soft capability in project courses in the future.
7. A good way to learn more is to use the Wikipedia.
8. Do not be afraid to raise "silly" questions in the class. Actually no question is silly; by asking a question, the lecturer can gauge how much understanding you have about what he has taught and is useful information for him to adjust the pace. Alternatively, ask him questions at the end of the class (if possible).
9. With the permission of the lecturer, you may ask to video the lecture. Also, please ask him to use software (e.g. ZoomIt) that allows direct writing on the power point. So you

can review specific parts which you miss or find it difficult to understand. Personally, I think an audio tape is good enough.

Tutorial

1. You should try to answer the tutorial questions by yourselves **before** looking at the answer. If you go directly to the answer, you miss the all-important and invaluable *thought process* – the process by which you arrive at the answer; and you may not be able to reproduce the answer in the quizzes.

Peer Tutoring /Course Tutoring

1. The main idea of these schemes are that a) it is a good idea for students at about the same age that have taken the course to teach students; they can use similar vocabulary and is empathetic with the difficulties encountered; b) it provides another way of teaching & learning, from which both parties can benefit. There is the Chinese axiom: 「教學相長」 (Teaching and Learning grow hand in hand.)
2. While using these services, remember not to neglect to develop your independent thinking. It is good and mind-developing to figure things out by yourselves, though this does not mean that you cannot learn from others (if so then there is no need for teacher or coach.)

Joining Society or the Student Union

1. It is an invaluable chance for you to learn how to work with others, understand other peoples' viewpoint, be a good leader or follower, and widen your vision and horizon. It is also a good way to widen your social network and develop good friendship. It is also a memorable experience when you graduate and look back.
2. Having said that, not a few students get very bad grade as soon as they join one of these. The problem is time management. They devote too much time and energy to it and neglect their academic studies.
3. When joining, you need a superb time management. Think about i) how much time you will devote to it; ii) tell others that this is the amount of time that you are prepared to commit; iii) choose a post that can accommodate i) and ii); iv) Be highly disciplined and stick to i) and ii). v) Have a good time management. If you wish to improve time management, there are courses organized by student development service (SDS) ; you can also find a good time management book to read.