

Crib Sheet on Preparing for University:

1) Take care with your reasons for attending...if you study just for a job, then study itself, perhaps too easily, just becomes a chore. Certainly, attend for gaining a qualification/profession, but, be sure to study other subjects of interest, for your own pleasure and education, then, an amenable profession will be a handy spin-off. **Take care of your education, and your job/profession will take care of itself.** The best libraries are Uni libraries, and there is always a great ambient mix of brains, open lectures, and other Disciplines, as part of University intellectual life. **All value for money, plus Degree(s), re any Student Loan....!**

2) Certainly, best to have a year or so of work after leaving school, but, do keep up with reading, discussion, and personal research, so that you continue to maintain your concentration span, and this also applies to long holidays during the study span.

3) Always best to actually write notes, and then just type your assignments for legible assessment. The act of writing notes, precis, et al, will make for better detailed memory of your studies. Concentration span, always, **maintain concentration span.....**and ill-considered use of electronic media, especially social media, will always be deleterious to this end.....

4) Go to all lectures, labs, field trips and/or tutorials, and, do not be shy, get under your lecturers'/tutors' noses, but, never actually up them. Keep the company of fellow students who are interested in what they are doing, avoid the company of those always on the phone or social media, plus, good quality tutorials and peer discussions will bring worthwhile results at exam time. Find a similarly motivated study-buddy in each of your chosen courses, who can take good notes, if ever needed. Remember that Uni should be a good test of your abilities for dealing with the outside world, whether full-time or part-time, so, always meet your challenges and deadlines, instead of ducking them. Note that mature students will always have a head start, even if age means more revision..!

5) Accommodation....avoid halls of residence, find a quiet flat, with similarly inclined students, or, best of all, a bedsit/studio where you can be undisturbed, and, your study desk is always just as you left it, plus, your hours are always your own.... Be ahead of the rush, to secure your accommodation, if required, whenever and wherever possible, for optimal peace of mind whilst studying.

6) Be aware, in the Southern Hemisphere, that the middle of the second year, being winter, is the main dropping-out hazard, and, SAD may well be the reason, so, re-affirm personal study efforts, motivation, and curiosity....plus, make sure your mental life is free of any distracting elements.

7) Be sure to eat properly, sleep well, and take adequate exercise. Join a Club such as hiking, mountaineering, canoeing, or caving, for physical fitness, change of environment, and, to be in the company of motivated and interesting people. Social clubs are never about intellectual motivation, and a University experience should never be regarded as just a Kindergarten Finishing School...

8) Extra money may be needed during study, thus, in that case, a job on campus is first choice, to avoid wasted travel time, and also, to remain in a familiar intellectual environment. Next best choice would be an outside part-time position that reflects your post-Uni career plans.

9) In the digital age, your IT equipment need not be expensive, **both laptops and PCs do not have to be all new, especially if you employ Linux as an OS.** Staying off the crest of the IT wave this way will conserve \$\$\$\$. Drives are swappable between most major Linux systems, and, Linux OSs themselves are not resource-hungry. Just ensure that your University, and respective Departments, all are aware of, and technically support, Linux OSs. See also <http://nofrillstech.net/MiniLinuxFactfile.pdf> Just remember, as well, whatever OS and system you do propose to utilise, re data security and safety, **if not backed up 3x, then not backed up at all.**

10) **For those who intend to be post-grads,** and want an early start on the skills and protocols that will be required, including those needed for studying and researching in this new digital age, the following notes, contributed by a PhD graduate, will be of great interest and value, viz:

Think about the software tools you will use to take notes and write assignments with an eye towards how you should do '**backups**' and '**version control**'. **Backups** are more to deal with loss due to hardware failure, and your files not being accessible on your primary platform of choice, in contrast,

version control is more about protecting you from yourself, eg, accidentally deleting a couple of pages from an important assignment but not immediately noticing this.

Note that a lot of software, used for '**backing up to the cloud**', has basic version control functionality, in that it automatically keeps a number of older versions of files that you can revert back to, if necessary. However, there is also software involved that specifically handles **version control**, (most designed with coders in mind), and it can have a lot of nifty functions like comparing two versions of a file, and finding the differences. A lot of this additional functionality **assumes the files are simple text files**, so, if you think you might want to make use of this specific function, think ahead, and save your files in an appropriate format. For example, if you write up notes in LibreOffice or MS Word, etc. **save them as .rtf (rich text format)** rather than the native .odf or .docx format.

Specific to higher level research, you also need to think about how to keep track of references, notes on other people's papers, and, citations for a large numbers of papers. An Open Source program, **Zotero**, is highly recommended for this purpose: <https://www.zotero.org/>

Finally, note that Technical Colleges also have a wide range of courses, as well as Degrees and Diplomas, on a par with any University, plus, also managing the added demands of the Digital Age. Thus, in general, the preceding 10 points definitely do apply toward obtaining a Higher Education qualification at these institutions.

So, best of luck, wherever you attend for Higher Education, plus, apply sound planning and a good work ethic, and all will be well. Once again, take care of your education, and your job/profession will take care of itself.

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-writing-by-hand-is-better-for-memory-and-learning/>

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