

Strategies That Help College Students Learn

A growing body of research evidence indicates that students learn most effectively when:

1. They see **clear relevance and value** in their learning activities.
2. They are instilled with a **can-do attitude**.
3. They are academically challenged and given **high but attainable expectations**, such as through assignments with scaffolding.
4. **Learning activities and grades focus on important learning goals**. Faculty organize curricula, teaching practices, and assessments to help students achieve important learning goals. Students spend their time and energy learning what they will be graded on.
5. They understand course and program learning goals and the **characteristics of excellent work**, often through a rubric.
6. They spend **significant time and effort studying** and practicing.
7. They **interact meaningfully with faculty**—face-to-face and/or online.
8. They **collaborate with other students**—face-to-face and/or online—including those unlike themselves.
9. New learning is **related to their prior experiences and what they already know**, through both concrete, relevant examples and challenges to their existing paradigms.
10. They **learn by doing, through hands-on practice engaging in multidimensional real world tasks**, rather than by listening to lectures.
11. They use their learning to **explore, apply, analyze, justify, and evaluate**, because facts memorized in isolation are quickly forgotten.
12. They participate in **out-of-class activities** that build on what they are learning in the classroom.
13. They can **get support** when they need it: academic, social, personal, and financial.
14. They receive **frequent, prompt, concrete feedback** on their work, followed by opportunities to **revise** their work.
15. They **integrate and see coherence** in their learning by reflecting on what and how they have learned, by constructing their own learning into meaningful frameworks, and through synthesizing capstone experiences.
16. Their college and its faculty and staff truly **focus on helping students learn and succeed and on improving student learning and success**.

Source: Suskie, L. (2018). *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

A. Think of **one** course that you teach. Look through the above list, and think about whether you're now doing this in that course. Write one of the following codes next to each:

- Yes! = I'm already doing this!
OK = I'm already doing this pretty well, but I could do this even better.
Think = I'm not doing this as well as I'd like; I have to think about how to do this better.
??? = I'm not sure if I could realistically do this in this particular course.

B. Share one of your "Yes!" strategies with a colleague: Take 2 minutes (no more) to explain how you're doing this in your class.

C. Share one of your "Think" strategies with a colleague: Take 2 minutes (no more) to brainstorm some ways to do this better in your class.