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ways to achieve success for university and college students with ADHD

1. **Register to your strengths.** The right class schedule can make or break any student. Investigate the course that you are considering taking, meet your professors, determine the common class size and read through each syllabus. Take a reduced course load and/or tackle overly difficult classes one semester at a time.
2. **Stay on top of your treatment.** ADHD is not static and may change over time. Routine reassessments with your doctor, psychologist, or studying coach will better help you determine if your symptoms are changing and if you need to adjust your treatment plan accordingly. For instance, new longer-acting treatments are available that may be better suited to your college or university studying schedule.
3. **Get up and get started.** Getting up and out the door late can cause the rest of your day to fall behind. Make sure you start your day on time. Set two alarms to go off in sequence, one across the room so you have to get out of bed to turn it off. Know how long each morning task takes you (getting dressed and eating breakfast) and set reminder alarms so you know when it's time to move on. Remember, people with ADHD are not good at estimating time, so try some practice runs before the first day to develop a time log, and then add some time as a contingency.
4. **Get organized.** Being organized is key to staying on top of assignments or studying for exams. Dedicate one binder for each class, using dividers to create sub-sections according to the syllabus. File papers away as soon as they are given to you or use a zippered binder with pockets. Keep your room and desk tidy, always putting items back where you took them. Create an area near your exit door for the things you will need before you leave (backpack, keys and cell phone). You may have to ask someone who is a natural organizer to assist you with organizing your work desk and/or living space.
5. **Tech Time.** Time management is extremely important. Use an electronic calendar or Smartphone to organize your schedule and keep track of classes, assignments, projects and exams. Plan time for each of your daily "to do's", include breaks and eating. Again, timed practice runs are very helpful in scheduling required time for each activity. Set electronic reminders so you don't lose track of time. Bring your planner with you wherever you go so you can instantly add or change items.

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6. **Learn how to learn.** It sounds obvious, but figuring out how and where you learn best can really make a difference in your success. Read out loud or while standing up, to keep you focused and less likely to drift. If being alone is too boring, form a study group or find a more stimulating location. You may have to leave your home environment to cut down on distractions and find a more suitable study space; like the library or study hall.
7. **Set up accommodations.** A documented diagnosis of ADHD is still considered a disability after high school. This may allow access to specific accommodations, like, a special needs advisor to help with time management, additional time for assignments and exams, accessing extra notes, taping lectures, and even alternative testing. Get your documentation to the appropriate office, well before school begins, and get connected to an advisor. You may never have to use your accommodations but if a problem does come up, you will already have the structure in place.
8. **Social Network.** Don't be afraid to reach out for support. Stay in touch with family and friends that recognize your ADHD and how it affects you. Seek out or start a group with other students at your school who are affected by ADHD. This will give you the opportunity to discuss, learn and share with people that understand where you are coming from. Something as simple as a weekly conversation over coffee can be extremely helpful and comforting.
9. **Be your own advocate.** Become knowledgeable about your disability and both confident in and adept at describing it and your related needs to others. When researching schools to apply to, also research their policies and resources for students with disabilities. There's no need to be ashamed at being different or asking for help.
10. **Don't forget to play.** Physical and social activities make for a balanced lifestyle and add to any learning experience. Exercise has also been shown to help with brain functioning, helping you stay focused for other activities throughout the day. Make sure to assign time in your schedule for sports or outings - taking your mind off school and releasing any pent-up energy.

Many people with ADHD are highly intelligent and creative, but remain hindered by their symptoms – a proper diagnosis is the first step towards

Reaching your full potential

The Center for ADHD Awareness Canada (CADDAC) is a national, not-for-profit organization providing leadership in education and advocacy for people affected by ADHD. To learn more about ADHD in college and university, its symptoms and how you can overcome them, visit www.caddac.ca

