

Name : _____

**Conquering College, Lab 1 : Schedule to Succeed
by Jeff Anderson**

In many colleges in the United States, almost [half of first-year college students do not make it to graduation](#). Stop and think about this for a minute. Our current US higher education system is designed in such a way that it kills the dreams, hopes, and aspirations of almost 50% of the students who enter through its gates. As you meditate on this reality, let's run a related thought experiment. What would you say about an airline company that designs and flies planes that kill 50% of its passenger? Would you buy a ticket from that company? Would you support letting that company maintain the status quo?

To me, when I think about how our current policy choices fail to support so many students, I see a need for major reforms. However, I want to avoid blaming students for this failure. Instead, I believe that each one of us should learn to focus our collective energy on policy changes to better support students in our local communities in creating significant learning experiences in college and beyond. Such policy changes will require decades (if not centuries) of sustain activism at the grass-roots level.

In the meantime, if you are part of the current generation of college students, I want to help you develop and refine system-navigation skills so that you can thrive in your education. Specifically, let's define *system navigation* as the process of protecting yourself against harmful policies that you encounter in your formal education so that you can accomplish your academic and career goals without internalizing the harm you suffer along the way.

One of the first steps in developing your system navigation skills is to learn how to conquer college. You know how to *conquer college* when you can earn any grade you want in any class with any teacher. In other words, you conquer college when you can look at any class you want to take, state your desired grade in that class before the term begins, and then successfully earn that grade by the end of the academic term. Let me be clear: [I believe we should STOP using letter grades as proxy measurements for student learning](#). The process of assigning letter grades is dehumanizing, inaccurate, nonscientific, and uninspiring. We're going to do a lot of work together to help you learn how to measure your learning on your own internal metrics for your education rather than on the arbitrary grading system that we use today.

The reason I advocate for you to learn how to conquer college is that I want you to have more control over your future. Far too many college students get weeded out of their degree because they struggle to earn the grades they want. The moment you can control your grades in college classes, you enjoy an increased sense of freedom in your academic life. You can engage in your classes without worrying about failure and instead focus on creating the types of experiences you want for your college career. Another reason to learn how to get the grades you want is that many scholarships, fellowships, and internships have minimum GPA requirements. For example, you might apply for a scholarship that requires a 3.0 GPA or higher. As you deepen your ability to conquer college, we'll move onto more advanced system navigation techniques and help you learn how to get paid to learn. First things first: I want to help you be effective and efficient in working to earn the grades you want.

1. Create Your First Draft of Your Weekly Schedule

This first activity is dedicated to helping you set a foundation for deep learning and strategic studying throughout this academic term. One of the most important skills you can develop to earn the grades you want is to schedule your academic life very carefully. So much of successful studying comes down to building habits. One of my favorite quotes about habits goes as follows:

Bad habits are easy to form but hard to live with. On the other hand, good habits are hard to form but easy to live with.

Learning how to schedule to succeed is complex and depends on deep thinking. But, if you can do this well, you can set yourself up to thrive in your courses and to engage in deep learning for the topics that interest you most. Importantly, you can also make time to have fun, socialize, and get adequate rest. Great scheduling is all about balancing your various commitments in a proactive way so that you have more control over how you spend your time and what you do to thrive in your classes.

A. Please read more about the fudge ratio and the four fudge-ratio scenarios.

- (1.A.i) Read the blog post : [Schedule to Succeed: Plan to Fudge It Up](#)
- (1.A.ii) Fill out questions 1 - 8 on pages 1 - 4 of the following document:

[Schedule to Succeed : Plan to Fudge It Up Worksheet.](#)

B. Please make a first draft of your weekly schedule for this academic term

- (1.B.i) Read the blog post : [Schedule to Succeed : Draft Your Weekly Schedule](#)
 - (1.B.ii) Watch the following video:
 - (1.B.iii) Make a draft of your [Weekly Schedule](#)
 - (1.B.iv) Using your draft weekly schedule, fill out your [Weekly Schedule Analyzer](#).
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C. Beware of Scheduling Traps

- (1.C.i) Read the blog post : [Schedule to Succeed : Beware of Scheduling Traps](#)
- (1.C.ii) Fill out questions 1 - 6 on pages 1 - 3 of the following document:

[Schedule to Succeed : Beware of Scheduling Traps Worksheet.](#)

- (1.C.iii) If needed, edit your draft weekly schedule to create more flexibility.

2. Create Your First Draft of Your Term-Long Calendar

This second activity is designed to help you get all your important dates in written form by drafting your term-long calendar. This document will be free up your mental energy so you don't have to stress about remembering important upcoming commitments. You can also use your term-long calendar to anticipate important deadlines, plan ahead, and make strategic scheduling decisions to stay on top of your work.

A. Please make a first draft of your term-long calendar for this academic term.

- (2.A.i) Read the blog post : [Schedule to Succeed: Create Your Term-Long Calendar](#)
 - (2.A.ii) Make a draft of your term-long calendar.
 - (2.A.iii) Using your draft calendar, fill out your [Term-Long Calendar Analyzer](#).
 - (2.A.iv) If needed, edit your draft term-long calendar to address scheduling conflicts. Be sure to keep this document handy. If you do this work well, you will be updating this calendar many times each week as you make new commitments and navigate your current commitments. The goal here is to make a first draft so you can refer back to this document throughout the quarter. In that way, this is a live document that will be edited, updated, and changed many times as your academic term progresses.
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What you should include in your learning portfolio to show you've completed this activity:

- Your responses to questions 1 - 8 on the [Schedule to Succeed : Plan to Fudge It Up Worksheet](#).
 - Your first draft of your weekly schedule
 - A print out of your entries on all tables in your weekly schedule analyzer
 - Your responses to questions 1 - 6 on the [Schedule to Succeed : Beware of Scheduling Traps Worksheet](#).
 - A copy of your first draft of your term-long calendar (keep the original for yourself)
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What are the next steps?

I like to say that in order to earn the grades you want, it is necessary but not sufficient to set up really strong scheduling systems at the very beginning of the quarter. In other words, if you're not thoughtful about your schedules, it's almost impossible to conquer college. But, just because you set up really great scheduling systems doesn't mean you'll get the grades you want. In Conquer College Lab 2, we will explore a lot more about how you can set up effective and efficient study routines to accomplish your academic goals. Just as important as setting up your scheduling systems is learning how to make the most of the time you spend studying. That is exactly what we focus on in our next lab exploration together.