I. Attitude: what does it mean to be a student?
   1. INTEREST IN A COURSE. Some courses interest you more than others, some topics within a course interest you more than other topics. But, no matter what your level of interest, you enroll in a course to LEARN...often in preparation for later courses or to apply later.
   2. FOCUS ON LEARNING.
      a. Prepare yourself for class mentally by being aware of the topics to be covered on a particular class day, reading ahead, preparing questions ahead – get yourself ready for class.
      b. Prepare yourself for class physically by trying to get the rest you need, eating nutritious foods before class, and finding a seat in the classroom where you will be able to concentrate and feel engaged.
      c. Recognize that every class day is important, miss class only when necessary.
   3. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY. Don’t try and trick yourself into thinking that your learning, and therefore success, in a course is someone else’s responsibility. Your success rests on your shoulders and is a direct result of your effort and ability. That said, there are plenty of services and materials available to help you succeed. If you don’t access them, they will not help.

II. Getting started
   1. PREPARE TO USE THE COMPUTER. If you don’t have a regular access to a computer with Internet access off campus, get acquainted with the Technology Learning Center (computer lab) on campus. Make sure you know what your username and password are.
   2. LIST IMPORTANT CLASS DATES IN A PERSONAL ORGANIZER OR PLANNER. Review your syllabus and course schedule. Transfer due dates and test dates to your calendar or day planner. If you have a Blackberry or other electronic organizer, take the time to enter important class dates into them. Set electronic reminders to bug you to study for upcoming tests.
   3. OBTAIN A COLLEGE-LEVEL TEXTBOOK FOR MAJORS. It is always best to get the textbook assigned to the course. However, if this is not possible, borrow or purchase a comparable book and plan to USE IT regularly.
   4. SELECT DAYS AND TIMES TO DEVOTE TO STUDYING. You have to make a commitment to the class. Set aside days and times each week that will be used to study. Consider your personal, work, and academic schedules and set aside ten hours to study outside of class each week (16 hours in the Summer Semester). If you cannot commit to this level of effort, you will have difficulty succeeding in your Biology course.

III. Daily activities
   1. GET MY PRESENTATIONS AND STUDY GUIDANCE AT CLASS WEB SITE. Consider printing them for use in class.
   2. ATTEND CLASS AND TAKE ADDITIONAL NOTES BASED ON TOPICS PRESENTED IN CLASS.
      a. pay special attention to topics I emphasize, and
      b. diagrams from the textbook that I specifically review in class
   3. READ THE TEXT AND TAKE NOTES ON READING.
      a. Always take notes when you read. You can combine these notes with my lecture presentation slides or your own classroom notes.
      b. Read for Comprehension.
         i. avoid passive reading (reading without concentration)
            1. always read and study in an environment free of distractions
               a. turn off the…
                  i. phone
                  ii. TV
                  iii. tunes (except for music without words like jazz, classical or other instrumentals)
            ii. check yourself frequently – after you complete a section ask yourself “now what did I just learn?” Try and put together some key words that will trigger your memory later
            iii. tell others about what you are reading, teach others!
      c. Complete end of chapter questions.
      d. Locate the textbook author’s website and print the “fill in the blank” outlines located there – complete them during or immediately after reading
      e. Work to gain understanding, don’t just skip sections you don’t understand.
   4. SPEND AT LEAST 2 HOURS OUTSIDE OF CLASS FOR EVERY ONE HOUR SPENT IN CLASS.
      a. use the time for studying, reading, organizing information, preparing for class
      b. some of you may need more
   5. IDENTIFY VOCABULARY THAT YOU DON'T ALREADY KNOW – prepare a list or note cards to organize your study of vocabulary.
   6. PREPARE CONCEPT DIAGRAMS – graphically (visually) link the individual concepts of a complicated process.
7. ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN LAB – don’t waste this important time or leave early thinking you will make up the time later.
8. GET PROPER REST AND GOOD NUTRITION – tiredness due to lack of sleep or poor nutrition greatly affects concentration. Lack of concentration wastes your time!

IV. Prior to the test
1. Condense all notes into a very tight outline.
2. Memorize your outline and have someone quiz you.
3. Change your surroundings and see what you can remember.
4. Consult instructor, fellow students, and outside sources to answer questions, obtain more information.
5. Form study groups and work together to come to a consensus on complicated topics. Teach each other.

V. After the test
1. Correct test errors.
   a. Determine whether error is the result of lack of knowledge or the result of not carefully reading the question and available answers.
   b. Determine if there is a type of question that causes you more difficulty and develop a strategy to improve your performance with that type of question.
2. Don’t dwell on past performance – seek to improve on next test.

Good Luck and Best Wishes,

Lou Rifici