



Executive Function Skills for College Success

The biggest indicator of success in college is one's executive function skills. Send this resource to your student to teach strategies like:

- How to Structure Their "Free Time"
- How to Use Campus Resources
- Preparing for the Transition

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What are Executive Function Skills?

Executive function skills are the **complex set of mental processes that allow us to achieve our goals**. Whether a goal is as small as turning in a homework assignment on time or as big as graduating with honors, these are the skills needed to get there:



No one is born with executive function skills. For some people, these skills develop naturally over time. For others, they must be learned.

Signs of Executive Function Deficits

In school:

- Struggle to start schoolwork
- Have many missing assignments
- Have trouble breaking big projects into smaller pieces
- Procrastinate or avoid work in classes they find difficult or uninteresting
- Are surprised by tests, quizzes, and project due dates
- Feel overwhelmed by the amount of work or type of work assigned

In life:

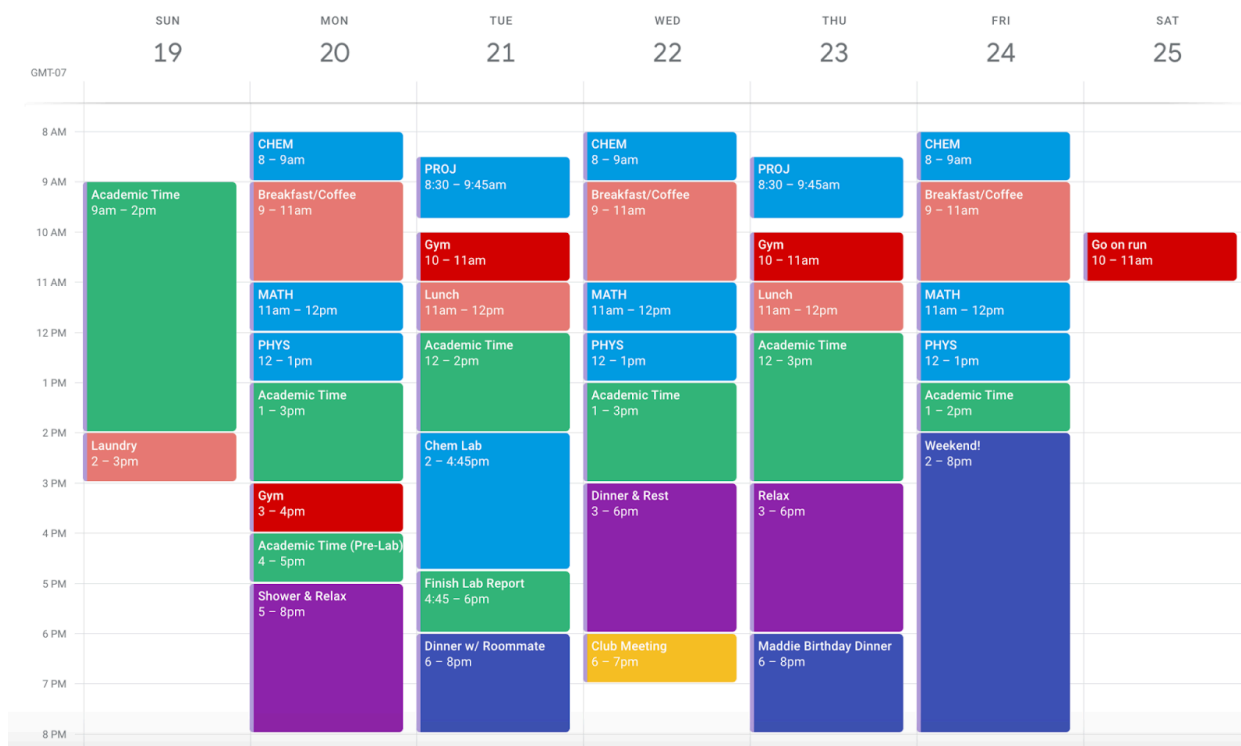
- Have cluttered, messy, and disorganized personal spaces
- Struggle to leave the house on time
- Often misplace or lose important items
- Miss or forget about important appointments and events
- Have trouble predicting the consequences of actions
- Have little to no insight in how long it takes to complete a task

Individuals with executive function deficits may not exhibit all of these signs, and the severity of the challenges can vary from person to person. Supporting individuals with executive function deficits involves **understanding their unique struggles** and **implementing strategies tailored to their needs**.

Structuring “Free Time”

College students struggle with the transition from highly structured days in high school to balancing class schedules, homework, social lives, and chores in an unstructured environment. **Intentional planning** and **effective time management** are essential for academic success, reduced stress, and greater productivity.

Structure creates freedom. A structured week should include your class schedule, extracurriculars, exercise, academic time, meals, and activities that you want to do.



Use the template below to time block your week. You can also choose to time block in an electronic calendar.

1. **Non-negotiables:** classes and other obligations that have a set time like work, club meetings, etc.
2. **Basic needs:** sleep and wake times that allow for enough sleep, meals, movement, and hygiene.
3. **Academic time:** studying, assignments, and other academic tasks.
4. **Free time:** Netflix, hanging out with friends, video games, self-care, etc.

For this schedule to be the most effective and helpful, check and update it every week.

My Routine and Schedule							
Time	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
8:00 am							
9:00 am							
10:00 am							
11:00 am							
12:00 pm							
1:00 pm							
2:00 pm							
3:00 pm							
4:00 pm							
5:00 pm							
6:00 pm							
7:00 pm							
8:00 pm							
9:00 pm							

Using Campus Resources

Students who struggle with executive function typically require more support than their peers. Thankfully, campuses have plenty of free or low-cost resources for students. Being proactive and knowing what resources are available and when to use them could significantly affect students' **stress levels** and **academic success**. There are usually four types of resources on campuses.

Academic

Academic resources are crucial for providing support for coursework, facilitating research, and developing study skills. They're typically found in the campus library, writing centers, tutoring services, and academic advising offices.

Mental Health

Mental health challenges can affect academic performance and overall quality of life. Mental health resources can usually be accessed through the campus counseling center, wellness programs, and health services. Some campuses also offer peer support groups, workshops, and telehealth services for mental health.

Social

A healthy social life fosters a sense of community and belonging among students, enhancing their college experience. Social resources are often available through student life offices, clubs and organizations, campus events, and recreational centers. Many colleges also have dedicated spaces for student gatherings and socializing.

Physical Wellbeing

Physical wellbeing resources promote students' health and fitness, contributing to their stress, focus, and mood. These resources can typically be found at the campus recreation center, gymnasiums, athletic facilities, and health services offices. Many campuses also provide wellness programs and health education workshops.

Before arriving on campus, you should spend time researching their campus's academic, mental health, social, and physical wellbeing resources.

Make sure you understand when and how to use the resource and if there are any costs or limits (e.g. students may get 3 free appointments, then any additional meetings must be paid for).

Academic Resource	Purpose	Website URL
<i>Ex: Writing Center</i>	<i>Helps with writing projects from any subject and at any stage of the writing process. Also assist with self-editing and citation.</i>	<i>Insert Link</i>

Mental Health Resource	Purpose	Website URL
<i>Ex: Counseling Services</i>	<i>Provides individual therapy. They see students every 2-4 weeks.</i>	<i>Insert Link</i>

Social Resource	Purpose	Website URL
<i>Ex: Involvement Fair</i>	<i>Day at the beginning of the semester where all the student organizations provide more info on how to join.</i>	<i>Insert Link</i>

Physical Health Resource	Purpose	Website URL
<i>Ex: Fitness Classes</i>	<i>Free fitness classes in the rec center.</i>	<i>Insert Link</i>

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Starting college is an exciting experience with a lot of new challenges. There's plenty to do before you even move into your dorm! Use this checklist for a smooth transition to college life:

Academic

- ☐ I can log in to my student portal(s)
- ☐ I accessed my school email and checked for messages from my professors and advisors
- ☐ I memorized my course schedule and/or placed it somewhere I can see throughout the day (like my phone lock screen)
- ☐ I know where my classes are on campus and how long it takes me to walk to and from each class
- ☐ I printed, read, and highlighted important information on all my syllabi
- ☐ I looked up resources on campus like the writing center and peer tutoring

Personal

- ☐ My parents and I discussed my finances and budget
- ☐ I bought school supplies, dorm essentials, and groceries/snacks
- ☐ I know how to access the dining halls and what my meal plan includes
- ☐ I know where and how to do laundry in my dorm
- ☐ I researched clubs and extracurriculars on campus that interest me
- ☐ I established a daily routine for myself to keep my sleep schedule on track

Organization

- ☐ I know how I'm going to keep track of my assignments and due dates (planner, desk calendar, electronic calendar, etc.)
- ☐ I created electronic folders for each class on Google Drive or OneDrive
- ☐ My student portal, email, and university website are bookmarked
- ☐ I ordered my textbooks or reserved them for pickup (you can find course specific textbook information on the school bookstore website or your syllabi)

Accommodations (if applicable)

- ☐ I registered with disability services
- ☐ I submitted all necessary documentation to disability services like my 504 plan and official diagnoses from my doctor
- ☐ I met with a disability services advisor to discuss my accommodations
- ☐ My professors know I have accommodations because I've emailed or set a meeting with them

Tips for a successful first week!

- ☐ Leave your dorm room open when you're there for more opportunities to meet people on your floor
- ☐ Get the phone number of at least one person in each of your classes
- ☐ Go to office hours to get to know your professors
- ☐ Sit in the first three rows of your large lecture halls
- ☐ Attend your school's involvement fair and pick at least five events, activities, clubs, extracurriculars, or organizations to learn more about



Email Questions to Emiko at
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