

10 Tips to help you get the most out of your American education

As Saned Raouf has discovered in his freshman year at Yale University, college life is demanding. The sheer volume of work coupled with the time constraints makes it difficult to manage your time, let alone fit in extracurricular activities. But it can be done. Just put these 10 tips to the test.

1. **Get fit.** College life is physically and mentally demanding. To excel, you need to eat well, exercise regularly and get adequate sleep. Ideally, you should aim for nine hours of sleep each night as well as four 30-minute cardiovascular workouts per week. Initially, eating well may be difficult. It can take time to adjust to American food and to find sources of familiar menu items. To the best of your ability, avoid processed foods and make sure fresh fruits and vegetables form part of your diet. If you do so, you will be more mentally alert. You will also be better able to alleviate stress than some of your peers.
2. **Get support.** During orientation, find out what support services and programs are available. At any time during the year, do not hesitate to ask for help if you need it. This includes one-on-one English as a Second Language tutoring, peer mentoring, financial counseling and various other services designed to help you succeed mentally, physically and emotionally.
3. **Strive for balance.** Make time for enjoyable, healthful activities. Students who take time away from their studies to participate in sports, social events and volunteer opportunities enjoy school more than those who do not. They are also less likely to become discouraged or suffer from stress-induced symptoms like headaches, fatigue and anxiety.
4. **Time management.** As Raouf points out, time management is critical to your success. Use a daily planner designed for students to keep track of your classes, exams and social activities. If you need direction, consult your academic advisor to see if there is anyone on campus who can help you learn how to manage your time effectively.
5. **Stress management.** If you feel anxious, it may help to learn a few stress management techniques such as meditation, yoga or journaling. It can also help to exercise regularly and limit your consumption of caffeine and alcohol. And, do not forget to laugh. This is one of the cheapest and easiest ways to beat stress.
6. **Make friends.** A supportive group of friends can help you maintain a healthy attitude about school. In addition to reducing your sense of isolation, they can encourage you to participate in fun activities and alleviate any anxiety you may be feeling.
7. **Speak up.** Let people know when you are struggling. Whether you need someone to help you prepare for an exam, manage your finances or speak English more clearly, do not wait to ask for help.
8. **Identify your strengths and weaknesses.** You will enjoy college life much more if you have an accurate sense of your strengths and weaknesses. Take pride in your accomplishments and recognize when you need support.
9. **Stay connected.** Students who stay connected to friends and family members in their home country find it easier to adapt to life in the US. It can also help to find members of your culture and faith in America. That way, you can participate in familiar holidays and rituals. In general, international students find traditional holidays the most difficult times to be away from home.
10. **Be curious.** You are not just getting an education, you are on an adventure. Do not lose your sense of curiosity or excitement. Explore the heart of America. Approach every new opportunity with an open mind and a willingness to learn something new.