

Seven Suggestions from Professor Tips

For Students



How to develop your learning

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ISBN 978-4-86293-022-4
March 25th, 2008 (the first edition)

Printed in Japan

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Preface

This booklet was originally written in Japanese and compiled by the Center for the Studies of Higher Education (CSHE) at Nagoya University. This English edition aims at showing the status of Japanese practices on higher education to researchers, practitioners and trainers in the world, which would facilitate further discussion.

Seven Suggestions from Professor Tips

The *Seven Suggestions from Professor Tips* is a series of booklets compiled by the Center for the Studies of Higher Education (CSHE) at Nagoya University. The series aim at improving the quality of teaching and learning at the university. Quality of education would be stepped up with tiny improvements of everyday practice by stakeholders, such as students, faculty members, academic and student affairs staff members, university executives, etc. Therefore, each booklet offers each stakeholder suggestions for daily practice categorized by purposes. Moreover, the quality would be much enriched when efforts towards it by different stakeholders are integrated. Accordingly, all the booklets use the same framework of purposes, that is, the seven suggestions for better teaching and learning at university. We named the person who gives the suggestions as Professor Tips, a fictitious character who was first featured in the book, *Learn with the Professor Tips: How to Develop Your Course Design*, authored by members of the CSHE.

For Students

- How to develop your learning

This booklet offers suggestions and specific ideas by which students of Nagoya University can realize quality education. Sample cases gathered through various surveys, compiled in a database and organized based on achievements in the study of learning theories, are summarized and presented in simple expressions. Advice from the senior students of Nagoya University is included here.

The aim of this booklet is not to evaluate your learning attitudes but to provide you with tips for better learning that have been used by earlier students at Nagoya University, and to serve as a framework for disseminating such information.

You are encouraged to read this booklet if you are: confused by the difference in learning style between high school and university; in trouble because you can't perform as well as you expected when you entered the university; if you are enjoying learning at the university and want to get higher learning effects. Why not use the ideas contained in this booklet to make your learning more active? By doing so, you will have a wider vision and enjoy learning, while the effects of your learning will be enhanced.

We made a series of booklets because, in order to enhance your education and make your university life more fruitful, efforts by students, faculty, staff, and executives must be integrated toward one aim. The faculty of Nagoya University is now taking various approaches to improve teaching. The university executives support such approaches. Meanwhile, to make this effort successful and realize good teaching, you, the students, also need to actively participate in classes.

To take the Office Hour system as an example: it has been introduced in many universities, but isn't used by students as much as expected. To increase the educational effects of the Office Hour system, the university administration should not only set up the Office Hour system, but should also provide places and opportunities for instructors and students to freely talk to each other. At the same time, instructors should not only write their office hours in the syllabus but should also demonstrate their welcome by saying "feel free to visit my room" in class or leaving the room door open.

But the office hour system will not be effective unless you take up an active learning attitude, such as visiting your instructors' rooms to ask questions, instead of leaving the questions unsolved in class.

Based on the concept above, seven suggestions useful for students, instructors, staff, or the executives in promoting good teaching are written in short sentences; under each suggestion, seven ideas are offered that can be immediately used in practice. The content of each booklet is related to that of the other booklets, so that the same goal can be achieved from the different perspectives of students, faculty, staff, and the executives.

We hope that this booklet will prove effective for good practice in learning, as well as for reflection on their practice by other stakeholders.

How to use the *Seven Suggestions from Professor Tips*

This booklet can be used as follows:

1. The seven suggestions are written in simple, easy-to-remember sentences. You can use them as a framework to organize and systemize what you usually keep in mind and try to do.
2. The 49 ideas presented may include ones that you have never tried. If you are interested in any of the ideas, why not try them? It may require a little courage and effort, but you can start with the easy ones.
3. You may have better ideas than those contained in this booklet. Why not share those ideas with your classmates and juniors? Please let us know at the Center for the Studies of Higher Education about your ideas for studying. Your ideas will be helpful for the future revisions.

We hope this booklet will be of help to you in realizing active learning and a fruitful college life.

Suggestion 1

Increase opportunities to contact faculty members

You may think that university instructors are too busy to talk with students. But there are many instructors who are willing to have their students come ask them questions, or to listen to their students. If you can find instructors to whom you can talk about various things in your college life, your learning at the university would be that much more enjoyable. As the first step, why not create opportunities to contact your instructors?

- Greet your instructors when you meet them.
- Visit your instructors' rooms using the office hour system.
- Sit as close to the front of the class as possible.
- During class or immediately after ask the instructor any questions or offer any opinions you may have about the class.
- Read the books or papers written by your instructors to know their way of thinking.
- Find an instructor whom you can consult about matters other than classes.
- Invite your instructors to study sessions or events held by students.

Suggestion 2

Cooperate with other students in learning

At first it may take courage to actively communicate with your classmates. But once a relationship has been established, it will help you enjoy participating in class. By mutually accepting and complementing the differences in learning styles and ways of thinking, your understanding of the course content can be deepened. You may meet some invaluable friends during your college life.

- Try to remember the names and faces of other students.
- When a group study assignment is given during class, actively work on it.
- Voluntarily make groups with other students to work on assignments.
- Compliment other students' good opinions or achievements.
- Give constructive opinions on mailing lists or electronic bulletin boards.
- When asked by other students about matters they do not understand in class, teach them or think about the answers with them.
- Organize study sessions with other students on a regular basis.

Suggestion 3

Learn actively

Good study results can't be expected from a passive learning attitude of simply listening to lectures without thinking. In university, you are required to take an active attitude toward learning. Try to participate in class aggressively and to study relevant issues voluntarily, even without instructors' instructions. This will make your learning in university more enjoyable and fruitful.

- Prepare sufficiently before class.
- Be active in giving opinions; ask questions in class.
- Learn a note-taking method suitable for undergraduate classes.
- Critically examine the ideas of instructors, other students and textbooks.
- Search for reference literature or study groups relevant to your courses.
- Tell your instructors any suggestions or ideas you might have on how to make the class better.
- Participate in study groups or internship programs relevant to the course subjects.

Suggestion 4

Review your study progress

Confirming how far you have progressed toward the goal of the course provides you with information important for your subsequent progress. One important point in regard to reviewing your learning progress is to conduct the review immediately after a learning activity. Another important point is to confirm your level of understanding based on the results of the review and to re-study the parts you could not learn adequately.

- Tell your instructor if you could not understand the class content.
- Take all assignments and small tests.
- Carefully elaborate and review assignments before submitting them.
- Prepare a notebook to summarize what you have learned in class.
- Review good and bad points in your exams, papers or assignments when you receive the instructor's feedback.
- Immediately after an exam, check the correct answers for the problems you got wrong.
- Keep copies of papers you have submitted, so that you can re-view them at any time.

Suggestion 5

Emphasize time on task

Since the styles of learning and life in university differ from those of high school, many of you may find it difficult to arrange your time for study. Effective use of time is an extremely important factor that affects your achievements. By learning how to manage your time for study, your college life, including aspects other than study will be fruitful.

- Start working on class assignments class as early as possible.
- Attend all classes and be on time.
- Set aside time for preparation and review of classes on a regular basis, even outside the exam season.
- If you feel that you may not be able to keep up with a course, talk to your instructor about it as soon as possible.
- When working on a big task, set several steps and decide due date for each step.
- Rehearse by yourself before making a presentation in class.
- Do not waste other students' learning time by private conversation during class or last minute canceling of presentations.

Suggestion 6

Have ambitious goals

For students with ambitious goals or high motivation, a university is a wonderful environment. There are many specialists in various fields, as well as facilities providing abundant learning resources. You are encouraged to make effective use of these human and material resources. If you show a high motivation for learning, instructors and the university will provide you with various forms of assistance for learning.

- Set your own ambitious learning goals.
- Do your best in every class you take.
- Read academic journals relevant to your class.
- Try advanced literature or assignments recommended by instructors.
- Tell the faculty that you want to observe graduate school classes.
- Apply for scholarship programs or competitions targeted at well-performing students.
- Participate in study groups or academic meetings on themes relevant to your course.

Suggestion 7

Respect different ideas and backgrounds

Vitality can be generated in a university by accepting the fact that various students have different learning styles and characteristics. It is important that you respect such diversity without prejudice against students whose ways of thinking and backgrounds are different from yours. By actively communicating with various students, you will learn various opinions and values, and thereby broaden your views.

- Take in the good points of your friends' learning styles and attitudes.
- Examine without prejudice opinions that differ from yours.
- Express your opinion aggressively, even if it represents the minority.
- Try to form groups with classmates holding different opinions from yours in class.
- Point out any discriminatory or offensive expressions or attitudes against race or sex in class, whenever you notice them.
- Give consideration to the disabled or the socially vulnerable.
- Participate in classes or study sessions to understand different cultures or values.

Notes

The original Japanese edition had notes as shown below;

1. Your feedback regarding impressions of this booklet, suggestions for improvements, or important ideas not included in this booklet, is always welcome.

E-mail info@cshe.nagoya-u.ac.jp

2. A website (in Japanese) is available for those who are interested in ideas that could not be included in this booklet and the contents of the other booklets.

URL <http://www.cshe.nagoya-u.ac.jp/seven/>

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Illustration

Skhole Co., Ltd.

Printing

DAITEC Co., Ltd.

ISBN978-4-86293-022-4



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