

# Success in Introductory Microeconomics and Macroeconomics

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Students committed to learning will find many possible paths to success. No path is error free, but the path best for you may not look like the same path as another student. For this reason, students should continuously assess their academic progress in courses and adjust their academic strategies accordingly.

While there is no magic formula, the following suggestions may improve your ability to succeed in economics and increase your retention of knowledge.

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1. **Read ahead of lectures:** If you are frantically taking copious notes during class (or are lost) you likely are not reading enough before class. You can control your reading pace but you cannot control your instructor's lecturing. Hence, make your "first contact" with new course material be under your control by reading before class. You will find that reading ahead allows you to focus on new details in class that you might otherwise have missed.
  - a. **Use the SQ4R method of reading:** Reading a book and studying a book are two different things. Before you read, **S**urvey the chapter. **Q**uestion while you survey by turning the title, headings and learning objectives into questions. When you begin to **R**ead, look for answers to your questions, re-read captions and study graphics. **R**ecite by orally asking yourself questions after each section. **R**elate what you have already studied in class – how are these new concepts similar/different? How do they build on one another? **R**evise is an ongoing process.
2. **Go to class:** This is like stating the obvious, but there is some content in economics classes that may be presented to you for the first (and possibly only) time in class. If you skip, you will never know what you missed.
3. **Use the online resources:** Economics textbook publishers typically have online resources that will allow you to self-test your knowledge in numerous ways. Many instructors will expect you to use these resources to complete assignments. Familiarize yourself early with these resources.
4. **Think like an economist:** Many human behaviors do not follow what would be economically justified behaviors. Pull yourself out of your personal behaviors to think like an economist.

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5. **Learn by doing:** You can learn some facts and figures by reading, but the best way to learn economic models is by “playing” with them. You have to manipulate them, think about their assumptions, tweak them, and really get inside them to figure out how they work. The best way to do this is by working problems, drawing pictures, asking questions, and answering your own questions. At the end of every study session, you should have a big pile of scrap paper at your feet with your scribbles all over.
6. **Commit to understanding the theory and principles.**
7. **Develop personal examples:** Your understanding of theories can be enhanced if you can create your own memorable examples of theories. Reproducing any theories in your own terms tests your knowledge of vocabulary.
8. **Understand graphs:** Many economics principles include a cause-effect relationship that can be depicted visually. If you can understand these relationships in graphs, you will enhance your learning and retention.
9. **Build your own diagrams:** While reading or listening in class, attempt to summarize conclusions in your own diagrams.
10. **Grasp the big ideas:** Economics has a few big ideas from which most other principles are created. Make sure to first understand these big ideas, and second, understand the relationships of other principles to the big ideas.
11. **Develop repetition through multiple means:** Learning in econ requires vocabulary practice, understanding concepts, application of concepts, problem solving, examples, etc. Use all means whenever possible.