



STAYING ACTIVE

LIFE OUTSIDE CLASS

As a high school student, your life is relatively full—in fact, the whole notion of “free time” may be a foreign concept. Between school, homework, sports, friends, jobs and family, your time is pretty well occupied. College changes your understanding of time. Firstly, you have more of it. Classes and studying account for part of your day, but not all of it. Secondly, you are responsible for organizing your time. Your parents won’t be there to tell you what to do and when to do it.

Passive activities such as surfing the net, watching TV and taking naps become boring fairly soon. And let’s face it; constant partying affects your education—the real reason that you or your parents paid all that money for college. There are more constructive alternatives that can make your college years more satisfying and exciting, but the first step is always the same: get active. Here are a few options:

Join a club. There are many clubs you can join “just for fun”—such as chess and choral groups—as well as organizations that are oriented around professional interests such as health care, business and advertising. Become a deejay for the campus radio station. Participate in an archeology project. Join the environmental club. Write an article for your campus newspaper. Try as many different activities as you can and find what you like the best.

Become a leader. Clubs and student government organizations need committed planners and organizers. On many campuses, the Office of Student Affairs offers special leadership training that builds self-confidence and interpersonal skills. Keep in mind that leaders are very attractive to future employers.

Get involved in the arts. The arts are not just for the elite or experienced—especially in college. Campus dance and theater productions will welcome your talents and enthusiasm, both onstage and backstage. Artists-in-residence can introduce you to new electronic art forms or encourage you to paint, sculpt, or take and develop photos. You never know if you’ll have time to do these things once you’ve graduated.

Volunteer. Helping those in need can be one of the most rewarding experiences of your college years, and can set a pattern of lifelong service. You can build houses for Habitat for Humanity, provide food for the homeless, mentor younger children, sponsor parties for low-income youth, organize blood drives and volunteer for senior citizen programs. In most cases, these outreach activities are sponsored by your college or university, but you can also work with volunteer organizations in the local community.

Get physical. Energy creates energy. Every college or university has facilities or programs designed to keep you in shape. Aerobic exercise, intramurals, weight training and running can be scheduled as essential activities during your week, not just as afterthoughts. Or exercise outside—provided you take safety precautions. Hiking, running, climbing or walking energizes you and helps keep you in shape. You can also combine your encounters with the great outdoors with great friendships. Student clubs can take you skiing or snowboarding, or teach you scuba diving. If there is no club that corresponds to your outdoor interests, then get some friends together and form one.

Be curious. This is the heart of the matter. Make the most of the city or town near your college—check out the shops, cafés, galleries, historical sites, theaters, sports events and concert halls. Take unfamiliar directions in the arts, recreation, travel and community service. College is an absolutely unique time to explore the new, the different and the engaging. All you have to do is get out of that dorm room and get active.

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