

Overcoming Learning Difficulties

Learning difficulties can stem from many causes. These include lack of preparation, lack of effective study skills, learning disabilities, disorganization, or misplaced priorities. They can also include lack of motivation, procrastination, inability to concentrate due to stress, and many other causes. One of the first steps in overcoming learning difficulties is to understand the causes underlying the problem. Taking the [Pathways to Success Student Assessment](#) can help you begin to identify the obstacles to your success.

Once you have identified the obstacles to your learning success, you can begin to address them. For instance, if you have not yet developed effective study skills, or have forgotten the ones you once had, you can take FYE 102, a two-credit class in which you will improve your skills in note taking, test taking, time management, computer skills, information use and other related skills.

If you are having difficulty understanding the content of a course, a good first step is to meet with your instructor to see if they can help you. Instructors have office hours for this purpose, and if you are unable to meet with them at the posted time, they may be able to set another time for you. Another good step is to visit the Learning Center in Room 1519 in the library building to work with a student tutor or the professional writing tutor.

Many students have difficulty passing tests when they feel that they've mastered the material but cannot remember it during the test. This can occur when you haven't moved the information from your short-term memory to your long-term memory. Studies have shown that this is best done through a combination of repetition and recall, activities that make you retrieve the information rather than simply repeatedly reading it. For suggestions on how to do this, see our page on [memory](#).

Some students genuinely know that material but are unable to access it due to test anxiety. For suggestions on overcoming this condition, see our page on [test anxiety](#). The counselors at the Counseling and Advising Center also work with many students on resolving this condition.

Sometimes a lack of academic success can be the result of procrastination. If you are an excessive procrastinator, a good first step is to ask yourself what underlies this habit. Do you feel such a need to do the assignment perfectly that you are unable to get started? Do you feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task? Do you feel forced to do the task and therefore resentful? When you think of doing the task, do you visualize deprivation? A counselor at the Advising and Counseling Center can help you sort out the reasons for procrastination and make a plan for addressing them.

Sometimes learning difficulties are caused by an inability to concentrate due to stress. For ideas on addressing this, see our page on [stress management techniques](#) or see a counselor to discuss your stress and the issues underlying it.

If you feel unmotivated because you don't know why you are in college, you can take advantage of the opportunity to get free career counseling through the Advising and Counseling Center. Career counseling is a guided process for clarifying the interest themes that run through your life and identifying careers that align with those themes. You can also take the Strong Interest Assessment to help in this process.

Instructors, TRIO staff members, the Learning Center staff and the counselors are all experienced in helping students overcome obstacles to learning success. We encourage you to seek out the help you need.