Overview and Purpose
This instructional document outlines strategies that should be used early in the semester to insure academic success. The “Ten Tips” are practical but often overlooked. The second and third sections contain suggestions for preparing for reading and writing assignments throughout the semester.

TEN TIPS:

1. **Purchase textbooks before the first day of the semester:** In most courses, the instructor will assign readings to be completed by the second class session. Delaying the purchase of textbooks could result in your getting behind in reading assignments.

2. **Resolve all registration problems before the first day of class:** Adding classes during the first week will almost certainly result in your getting behind and remaining behind.

3. **Start off right by completing the first reading and writing assignments by the due date indicated on the syllabus.**
   Starting off right will help you establish effective academic strategies.

4. **As your instructor goes over the course syllabus in class, take notes and re-read the syllabus before the second meeting.**
   If you have questions about your responsibilities/assignments, seek clarification from your instructor early. Feel free to ask questions about scheduled assignments, but refrain from arguing or negotiating with your instructor about reducing requirements. If the course’s requirements seem to be too much for you to handle, consider taking the course when your overall workload is not as demanding. Remember, if you choose to enroll in a particular course, it is your responsibility to complete the requirements.

5. **If the course syllabus indicates that there are points given for participation, begin to participate by the second course session.**
   If you delay, it will be harder to offer oral responses as the semester goes on. As a means to participating in class discussions and offering meaningful input, think about what you can say while you are reading or completing your homework assignments and as you are listening to the lecture. Think about participating by asking your instructor a question about the concepts, characters or issues that you read about the night before. You can even consider participating by making connections between what you have read for class and what relevant issues are happening in the news, in your discipline, and in other related academic fields. Just remember when you participate, in addition to earning credit, you are taking an active role in your learning. A few meaningful responses and questions carry much more weight than endless, rambling comments.

6. **After you receive your first written exam or essay back from the instructor, make an appointment with him/her to go over the paper.**
   Make sure you understand all of the instructor’s written suggestions and corrections and try to obtain specific suggestions from the instructor that will improve your performance.

7. **Sometime during the first week of the semester, create a daily and weekly calendar based on the due dates for assignments indicated in the syllabus for each of the courses in which you are enrolled.**
8. **For longer written assignments, create more detailed calendars that allow you to divide the project into phases.**
   Under no circumstances should your calendar simply indicate that an entire project can be completed in one or two days or nights.

9. **Before you have completed the first week of the semester, you should review all the work required in your various courses and ask yourself if, given your other commitments, it is reasonable to think that you can complete all requirements.**
   If you think that your overall workload (home, work, family, school, etc.) is too much, you must prioritize and decide what you have to wait on in order to be able to maintain all your responsibilities.

10. **Exchange phone numbers and e-mail addresses with a fellow student in each of your classes during the first week.**

**How to Get Started on Reading Assignments**

1. Familiarize yourself with the organization and layout of each of your textbooks: preview the table of contents, chapter titles and headings, appendices, graphs, and index.
2. Ascertain the length of time it takes you on the average to read a given number of pages; note the average length of assigned readings; plan for a realistic amount of reading time and your daily and weekly calendars.
3. If in the first few assigned readings, you experience difficulty comprehend terms or concepts, consult library reference works and make an appointment to see the instructor.
4. Figure our whether lectures are wholly or partly based on reading materials or contain different information.
5. Organize a study group with whom you can review the readings before major exams.

**How to Get Started on Writing Assignments**

1. Make sure that by the end of the first week you know exactly how many written assignments you must complete and the number of pages or words each assignment requires.
2. Divide the semester into units of writing assignments. You should plan to devote at least several days to the preparation and writing of each paper.
3. During the first week, discuss major assignments with your instructor and ask questions in class so that you know exactly what is expected of you.
4. Arrange your daily and weekly calendar so that it shows exactly what phase of the writing task you are working on during a particular writing unit.
5. Find a fellow classmate with whom you can brainstorm writing assignments outside of class.
6. Set up a schedule of appointments with your university’s Tutoring Center.