Basics suggestions and prerequisites for academic success.

Origins of this document. I designed this document to remind the student of some basic, common-sense actions likely to increase the student’s probability of success. However, note that the items in the list below do not necessarily guarantee success; they position the student to be successful. Ultimate predictors of success are often aptitude and work ethic.

1. **Attend all class meetings.**
2. **Pay attention** in class. Turn off, silence, or put away electronic devices and other potential sources of distraction.
3. **Take notes.** Very commonly, students do not thoroughly understand all information presented in lecture. Therefore, the student should review notes regularly. They often contain important examples. It may also help to rewrite the notes, possibly in the student’s own words.
4. **Consult the text.** The student should either buy or rent the required or suggested text. Examples in the text supplement those from lecture; explanations in the text reinforce the lecture. The text may also provide alternative explanations. It often contains statements of problems assigned for homework. The student may also want to consult other texts covering course material from the math library.
5. **Do all assigned homework. Do not fall behind.** Do as many problems as is necessary to gain facility with concepts and techniques. The student may need to do extra problems beyond those assigned or suggested by the instructor. Sources of extra problems include unassigned text problems and problems from other books.
6. **Recognize weaknesses early.** Which problems and concepts are difficult? The student should try to identify these quickly and should not delay in seeking help.
7. **Ask questions.** It is the responsibility of the student to (proactively) seek help on whatever he/she finds to be difficult. Sources of help include: the instructor, math tutoring centers on campus, classmates, friends with relevant background,....
8. **Get to know other students.** Work with classmates on homework; study for exams with classmates.
9. **Get to know the instructor.** This can be as simple as stopping by the instructor’s office during office hours to introduce yourself. This will expedite the instructor’s ability to identify the student by name and by sight.
10. **Use feedback constructively.** It is important for the student to be in class when quizzes and exams are returned. If the student is not in class on these days, it is the student’s responsibility to inquire on his/her quiz or exam performance. Graded quizzes and exams are useful study tools. Specifically, the student should carefully review mistakes he/she made by studying the correct solution (if provided) or by actually working out the correct solution.
11. **Know and understand class policies.** The instructor typically briefly highlights the key points of the syllabus on the first day. Thoroughly read and understand the syllabus. It should include details such as exam dates, how the instructor will calculate the grade, policies regarding homework and quizzes,... Make sure you know how to access the syllabus quickly; you may need to refer to it later. Bookmark online course materials such as the course webpage (if there is one).
12. **Be prepared.** Only take courses (1) for which you have completed the prerequisites or (2) into which placement test scores put you. Prerequisites and placement test scores must be taken seriously.