

# NCLD'S 'TOP 10' TIPS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

by Dr. Sheldon H. Horowitz  
Director of Professional Services, NCLD

All students, including those with learning disabilities (LD) are faced with a unique set of challenges as they approach the transition from high school to college. It is especially important, however, that students with LD understand their areas of strength and weakness, and manage their transition to college by planning carefully and lining up the right kinds of services and supports that are essential to their success.

The following is a 'top 10' list of ways for students with LD to orchestrate a successful transition to college. And remember: self-insight, self-advocacy, flexibility and perseverance are all important factors in the transition process.

**1. Know your strengths and weaknesses and be able to share them with others.**

Talking about your LD in ways that can be understood by professors (and even fellow students) is very important. It's best to assume that people are not familiar with the challenges posed by LD. Be sure to be specific about the nature of your LD and the accommodations that will help you succeed.

**2. Get to know the college campus and the resources and activities it has to offer.**

Knowing your way around campus can make a huge difference, especially at the start of your college career. Whether it's scoping out the perfect nook in the library, finding the quickest route to the cafeteria, or locating the Student Support Center and the campus health center, having a good sense about where things are in and around campus can save time and avoid confusion later on. And don't forget to target the laundry room, late night pizza places, and the campus book store while you're at it.

**3. Identify task demands or situations that could prevent you from achieving success.**

Lots of term papers? Long reading assignments? Taking notes during a class lecture? Preparing for quizzes and exams? These are not going away any time soon! Know what to expect in each of your classes, and make a special effort to discover any and all unexpected demands so you're not surprised and overwhelmed when they arise.

**4. Be proactive, anticipate problems and be prepared with solutions.**

Make a wish list of the types of help you will need to be successful, and don't waste any time putting them in place. For example: if you know that writing essays does not come easily, check out the campus Writing Center (often very helpful, and almost always free of charge!) or get feedback from someone before submitting. You can also ask professors to review your work and provide comments before assigning a grade, allowing you to resubmit with corrections (most professors are more than willing to accommodate this request). If reading is an area of weakness, consider a subscription to Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic or other sources that read texts aloud.

**5. Know where to go for help BEFORE you need it.**

On campus and off, there are lots of places you can turn to for help-- parents, counselors and therapists, and friends are all possible sources. The key is not to wait until it's too late and you have to "catch up" with deadlines or use up valuable time figuring out the best source for help.

**6. Keep your emotions in check.**

Getting upset or angry at yourself, professors, parents, or friends will drain energy and attention better spent getting work done. Being in a college environment means juggling all kinds of emotions, and there are times when this will seem like a monumental task. Don't be reluctant to seek help when sorting out your feelings! Everyone needs someone to talk to, and you don't earn extra points by suffering alone.

**7. Balance school demands and social time, without letting either one be all-consuming.**

All work and no play is a prescription for exhaustion and aggravation. All play and no work is a fast road to failure in school (and in life!). Set reasonable goals for yourself, make sure to devote enough time and attention to schoolwork, and rather than "winging it," try to schedule down time to relax and be with friends.

**8. Don't forget to eat well and get enough sleep.**

An endless array of foods (some better than others) and all kinds of social distractions await you in college. Don't underestimate the importance of a healthy diet and getting enough rest. Everyone's internal clock for sleep is different and some people do just fine with less sleep and frequent power naps. Some people enjoy frequent snacks and small meals while others need more substantial meals on a regular basis. Know how you function best, and be thoughtful about building these important activities into your schedule. (And no, this is not a message from your mother!)

**9. Think and plan ahead.**

Routines are worth their weight in gold during your college career. Think about how you would like to spend your time, whether you prefer classes in the early hours or later in the day, clustered on a few days or spread throughout the week, and do your best to organize your schedule accordingly. Don't wait until the last minute to speak to professors or submit class requests to avoid being closed out of your top choices. And to paraphrase the poet Robert Burns, "the best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry." Routines are great, but when they need to be changed, try to rethink your needs and priorities without delay. (And again, don't hesitate asking for help working out new options).

**10. Don't assume!**

In high school, parents and teachers are monitoring your progress via report cards, reviewing IEP goals and other informal channels of communication. Once you are in college, YOU are the one in charge! If you want something to get done, don't wait for someone else to do it. And always follow up to ensure that it happens.

For more information about these and other important topics, visit the *Living with LD* section of NCLD's web site at [www.LD.org](http://www.LD.org).