

# Success in Introductory Microeconomics and Macroeconomics

Academic Success Center  
Iowa State University

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Students committed to learning will find many possible paths to success. No path is perfectly error free, but the path best for you may not look like the same path as any other student. For this reason, students should continuously assess their progress in courses and adjust their academic strategies accordingly.

While there is no magic formula, the following suggestions may improve your ability to succeed in introductory economics courses and increase your retention of knowledge.

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**Go to class.** This is like stating the obvious, but there is some content in economics classes that may be presented to you for the first (and possibly only) time in class. If you skip, you will never know what you missed.

**Use the online resources.** Economics textbook publishers typically have online resources that will allow you to self-test your knowledge in numerous ways. Many instructors will expect you to use these resources to complete assignments. Familiarize yourself early with these resources.

**Think like an economist.** Many human behaviors do not follow what would be economically justified behaviors. Pull yourself out of your personal behaviors to think like an economist.

**Commit to understanding the theory and principles.**

**Develop personal examples.** Your understanding of theories can be enhanced if you can create your own memorable examples of theories. Reproducing any theories in your own terms tests your knowledge of vocabulary.

**Understand graphs.** Many economics principles include a cause-effect relationship that can be depicted visually. If you can understand these relationships in graphs, you will enhance your learning and retention.

**Build your own diagrams.** While reading or listening in class, attempt to summarize conclusions in your own diagrams.

**Grasp the big ideas.** Economics has a few big ideas from which most other principles are created. Make sure you understand these big ideas, then understand the relationships of other principles to the big ideas.

**Develop repetition through multiple means.** Learning in econ requires vocabulary practice, understanding concepts, application of concepts, problem solving, examples, etc. Use all means whenever possible.

**Read ahead of lectures.** If you are frantically taking copious notes during class (or are lost) you likely are not reading enough before class. You can control your reading pace but you cannot control your instructor's lecturing. Hence, make your "first contact" with new course material be under your control by reading before class. You will find that reading ahead allows you to focus on new details in class that you might otherwise have missed.

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1060 Hixson-Lied Student Success Center ❖ 294-6624 ❖ success@iastate.edu