
Library Survival Skills

WHAT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT LIBRARIES BEFORE GOING TO COLLEGE

1. Colleges have a large array of databases available. Though high schools often have a core group of databases, the specialist databases provide a wealth of information for academic research. This often proves daunting to freshmen. College students need to know how to effectively access and utilize databases. This includes citing databases and understanding the various types of media available on databases.
2. College students need to know about the different kinds of periodicals, journals, and magazines. Professors require even lower-division students to read and comment on peer reviewed articles. Know the meaning of peer review, journal, serial, periodical, scholarly, etc.
3. It's essential for students Not to Just Use Google for research. Many professors will NOT let students use only non-subscription Internet sources, especially the Wikipedia.
4. College students must know how to evaluate resources and to use the best resources possible. This is more than knowing the difference between .gov and .com.
5. Students also need exposure making citations for at least books, periodical articles, and database resources. Sure, there are citation builders, but they don't always work that well, and it takes practice to do citations correctly.
6. Students must know this difference between styles: MLA, APA, CHICAGO, ETC.
7. Students must know how to IN-TEXT cite (weave in citations, etc.). Most incoming freshmen students just know parenthetical- end of the sentence- citations. This drives professors crazy.
8. Students simply must know enough about plagiarism to avoid committing it. Many colleges have very stiff penalties for all forms of academic dishonesty. This includes understanding nuances of summarizing, paraphrasing, quoting, etc. and that ALL require citations.
9. Most college libraries use the Library of Congress Classification system...most high schools use Dewey. Either way, students need to know what a call number is and how to use a map of the library to find different locations.
10. College libraries employ Reference Librarians! Reference librarians are there to help students to find the best possible resources. Often reference librarians offer chat, email, Facebook, MySpace, etc. as a way to help. Large universities may offer 24/7 reference librarians. Nobody expects you to know where everything is in the library, so just ask.
11. College students need to know what subject headings and keywords are and how to best use them when searching a library catalog, database, or free search browser (Google). Students should know Boolean search terms and how they work (and, or, either, etc.).
12. Students should be comfortable using electric library catalogs to find information. High school library catalogs are often very different from university catalogs.

13. Colleges provide interlibrary loan services- ILL. That means if the book, video, article, etc. that you need is not available in the library, the library will borrow it from another university for you to use.
14. Students may wait until the night before to write their paper, but should start researching early! That perfect source may only be available through ILL and may take several days to arrive.
15. Colleges will hold transcripts and grades for outstanding fees and/or items not returned. Materials can be extremely expensive.
16. There's more in a college library than books. College libraries often have materials on reserve for specific classes, like textbooks and study guides. Many college libraries lend equipment, like graphing calculators, digital cameras, and even laptops. Nearly all college libraries offer online access to articles from magazines, journals, and newspapers; most also offer some books online. A new trend in college libraries is to provide music, movies, and even game nights to help balance work and play.
17. Computers aren't filtered. High schools filter access to the Internet, so this can be a bit of a change. With freedom comes responsibility. Students have access to the entire Internet through library computers, but are expected to behave like adults. Students are held responsible for inappropriate use.
18. College libraries often offer online tutorials and/or orientation classes. Even though it may be overwhelming, take the time to utilize these resources to learn more about the campus library. Most large colleges have several specialty library branches (such as a Science Library) as well as a large general library. While high school libraries may have thousands of books, college libraries have hundreds of thousands of books, several floors, as well as archival storage areas, special collections, rare book collections, music collections, etc. Your tuition helps to fund these resources, use them to your advantage.
19. Many college libraries have quiet policies, but many others have social areas. Be aware of what kind of spaces the library offers for different kinds of activities.
20. If you're eligible for work-study, your college library is a great place to work! You'll get to know the resources available on your campus, and you'll work with people who are focused on student success -- including yours.

These tips from Academic (i.e. College) Librarians were retrieved from the Information Literacy Instruction Discussion List (hosted on the American Library Association server, sponsored by the Instruction Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries).