FIRST SEMESTER · FULL REVIEW · STUDY SKILLS

The Semester Survival Guide

Everything from all eight weeks in one place. Each habit is small. Together, they decide how finals week goes.

AFTER THIS GUIDE YOU CAN

- Recall the core skill from each of the eight weeks.
- Connect each habit to how it pays off later.
- Build a personal plan for next semester.
- Know the campus offices that help with each problem.

Key terms

Syllabus	The course rulebook and map. Read it in week 1 and copy every date.
Time blocking	Giving each hour of the week a job, starting with fixed commitments.
Office hours	Free one on one teaching. Bring your attempt and a specific question.
FAFSA	The free federal aid application, filed every year.
Verification	A routine aid document check with a deadline.
Retrieval practice	Self quizzing that strengthens memory more than rereading.
Spaced practice	Spreading study across days instead of cramming.
Boundary	A limit that protects your time and energy.
Plagiarism	Using others' words or ideas without credit.
Backward plan	Working back from the exam date to set daily study goals.
Satisfactory Academic Progress	Grade and completion rules for keeping financial aid.
GPA	Grade point average: each course grade's points weighted by its credits, averaged.

The big ideas

- Week 1: Read the syllabus and copy every date. Weights show where the points are.
- Week 2: Plan the week with fixed blocks first, study blocks next, and rest on purpose.
- Week 4: Use office hours early with a specific question that shows your attempt.

- Week 6: Answer aid emails fast, meet deadlines, and never pay to file or share your FSA ID.
- Week 8: Quiz yourself, space it out, mix topics and sleep.
- Week 11: Watch for overload, say no or not now, and use support early.
- Week 13: Quote and cite, paraphrase and cite, and follow each course's AI policy.
- Week 15: Plan backward two weeks, take practice exams, review misses and protect sleep.

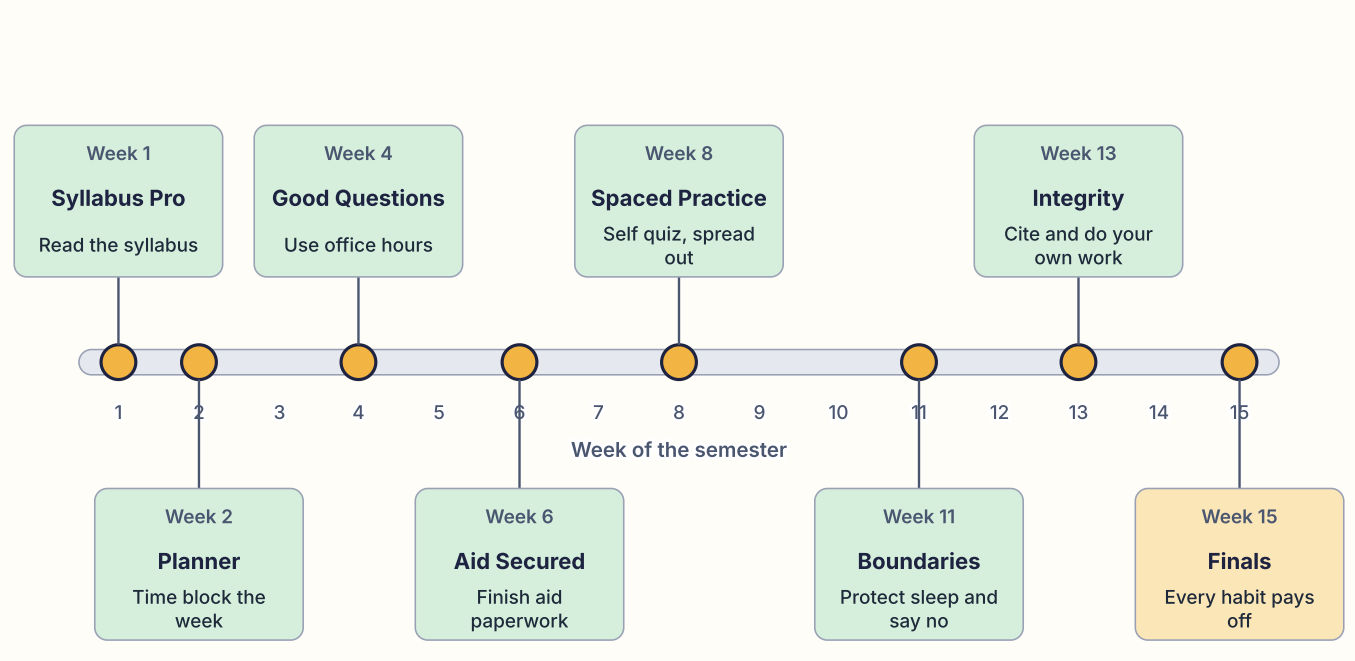

Figure. The semester map: eight weeks, eight habits.

Worked example

Two students, same courses. Alex builds the habits; Jordan does not.

1. Week 3: Alex saw Quiz 1 on the syllabus and reviewed. Jordan was surprised by it.
2. Week 6: Alex finished verification early. Jordan's aid hold blocked spring registration.
3. Week 8: Alex quizzed in short sessions all week. Jordan crammed Sunday night and lost sleep.
4. Week 13: Alex cited every source. Jordan borrowed a friend's old paper and faced an integrity meeting.
5. Finals: Alex walked in rested with a plan. Same ability, very different semesters. Jordan can still turn it around by building one habit at a time.

Common mistakes

- Trying to fix everything at once instead of one habit at a time.
- Using campus offices only in emergencies.
- Letting one bad week convince you that you do not belong.
- Treating sleep as optional.
- Copying a friend's plan instead of building your own.

Check yourself

1. What should you do with the course calendar in week 1?
2. What goes on a weekly plan first?
3. What three things do you bring to office hours?
4. Name two scam warning signs in financial aid.
5. Why does spaced retrieval beat cramming?
6. Name the three features of burnout.
7. Does a paraphrase need a citation?
8. What is the first step of a backward plan for finals?

Answer key

1. **Copy every date into your own planner.** One calendar, nothing missed.
2. **Fixed commitments: classes, labs, work, sleep.** Study blocks fit around them.
3. **Your attempt, the exact problem and a specific question.** Faster, better help.
4. **Any two: fees to file, guaranteed awards, asks for your FSA ID, pressure to act now.** Real aid help is free.
5. **Each spaced recall slows forgetting, and sleep consolidates memory.** Cramming fades fast.
6. **Exhaustion, detachment, and feeling your effort no longer works.** Recovery and boundaries prevent it.
7. **Yes.** The idea is still someone else's.
8. **List every topic and check the exam logistics, about two weeks out.** Then mark topics red, yellow and green.

Help is real. If you or a friend are struggling, talk to your campus counseling center. In the United States you can call or text 988 (Suicide and Crisis Lifeline) any time. Outside the US, contact your local crisis line.

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