

Sharing Experience! Below are comments from ECE 110 students who took the class in fall 2002.

[1] (Comments from a freshman)

I think I'm a pretty good example of one to share experiences, so I decided to share some. It's kind of long, but you have my permission to cut as you see fit.

Every engineering student in UIUC was probably the highest percentile in his or her high school, which makes the competition very high. Don't be surprised if you fail an exam. I know I never got an F on anything in high school, and I'm betting most of the people that come here never did, either, but the most important thing to understand is that college is NOT high school. While you were in high school, you might have been top dog, but here there's always someone much smarter than you. The best advice:

1. Go to class! Especially go to your major classes [like ECE]. If you skip ECE classes, for instance, you will undoubtedly fail completely! It's so easy to sleep through a class because of some huge party the night before. Don't let it happen to you.
2. Take real notes! Listening to a lecture is not enough. In high school, I never had to study. In college, if you don't study, you won't get it. Also, if you have the option to take notes into your exam, take them. If you aren't sure about something, make sure it's on your notes!
3. Study right! Your first college exam is most likely to be a real kicker. If you study with your music blaring, the PS2 running, and AIM on, do you know how much you will actually learn? Or, if somehow you do learn it, will you remember it in a completely different place with 300 people in a silent room?
4. Do not be arrogant! If you think you know it all, it is highly likely you don't have a clue.
5. If you don't understand it, ask for help! TAs, profs, and even upperclassmen know this stuff, so talk to them if you don't get it. People who go to office hours and exam reviews are about 70% more likely to do better on the exam!!!
6. Finally, do not give up! Only after you fail everything have you truly failed. An F on an exam, even 2 Fs, will not prevent you from possibly attaining an A if you work at it. This is not true of all classes, though, so if you do want that A, you have to at least try to stay on top of your studies. A's are not impossible, but they aren't always easily obtainable. If you really, really want it, it is possible. Just do your best. If you do your best and you get a D in a class, it will most likely bug you, but you passed it, and it's done. (If you do your best, this isn't as likely to happen a lot!) If you do your best and get an F, talk to your advisor, especially if it's a core class. He or she might be able to give you some advice. Don't think that the major you start in will be the degree you leave with, but shoot for it. So, I repeat... DO NOT GIVE UP!

[2] (Comments from a freshman)

I know that most students study quite hard one week prior to the exam, cramming in every possible detail, equations, examples, and all, in order to get the coveted A. This alone is not a bad thing, however, most students are not even close to understanding the material until after that week of cramming. Although, I have been known to engage in this and undoubtedly will in the future, I definitely DO NOT recommend this method of studying to any students. I must have realized this a week ago, but even if you simply take 20 minutes to read the lecture notes the night before the lecture (even if you do not necessarily understand it), the lab procedures before the lab, and so on, you will find that you have gotten so much more out of the class. That is my main recommendation to future students.

[3] (Comments from a transfer student)

I'm not a freshman, I transferred into U of I, but my previous college was very similar to high school so this has been a very different experience for me. Some of the advice I learned at the college I went to before I got here, some has been given to me the first day of classes at every level of education, some (number 9 in particular) I learned here at U of I. most of it is the same thing I was told when I got here. Hope this helps.

Success in ECE110 and any other class:

1. Read the book (pre read so you know what the instructor will be talking about, you'll sound smart when you answer questions)
2. Go to class (every class)
3. Do the homework (all the homework, even the problems that aren't for any credit)
4. Ask questions
5. Study for the test way ahead of time (you know in advance why wait)
6. Read the lab before you get to lab (you only get 3 hours in the lab don't waste 20 - 30 minutes reading it during the lab session).
7. Make the professor work for their salary (go to office hours)
8. Take advantage of your resources. there are tutoring sessions, lectures on topics that might interest you and some really great libraries. The best thing it's all FREE!!!!
9. This next bit of advice doesn't necessarily help with you classes. JOIN A CLUB. U of I has several hundred Registered Student Organizations. You will meet interesting people, have a ton of fun, help with homesickness (we all get homesick) and make you more comfortable with the campus. If you join the right ones it will even help you with you classes, like ACM and the Special Interest Groups. Or it can help keep you in shape like Rugby or Underwater Hockey. There is a club for everyone. Join one.
10. Make the most of you few short years here.

[4] (comments from a transfer student)

Here are a few things that might be useful to future students:

1. When you think you know something, do 5 more problems anyway. If you make a single mistake, do 5 more.
2. Study in groups if you don't understand something, but then go back and study on your own. Because in groups sometimes you cannot see that the whole group is not very prepared for the exam, but everybody kind of splits the guilt and don't notice it.
3. Do every problem in the manual. It helped me to put some of the harder ones on my "cheat sheet", because similar ones appear on exam.
4. Practice until it is no longer hard, but fun!

I hope this will help some people.