

ESS 110: Intro to Geology
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Tips for Success

For many students, geology is a challenging science. Below are several suggestions for how to succeed in this course. As a general rule of thumb, you should be prepared to invest at least 3 hours of your own time for every hour of lecture—this is about 8 hours per week.

1. Come to every class prepared. You should carefully read the relevant chapter in the textbook before coming to class—or very soon after class. I suggest that you take organized notes while reading, including basic terms and definitions but also, at least as important, the geologic processes described. Include in your notes any questions you have from the reading and feel free to ask those questions during the lecture. You can also ask questions before lecture starts or after class.
2. Take careful class notes—not just on terms, definitions, etc. but also on how geologic concepts are explained (these are the examples and “stories” I use in class to make sense out of what is otherwise generic geology). Include in your notes not only the written text presented in lecture (e.g. terms on PowerPoint slides), but also notes on photographs, diagrams, case study examples, etc.
3. Study on a daily basis—at least before and after each lecture. You should study your class notes together with the text and photos on the course web page as soon after the lecture as possible (preferably that same day). Fill in any gaps in your notes with information that you remember while it is still fresh in your mind. You also want to periodically review the notes from several lectures together to focus on the relationships between earlier material and what we’ve discussed more recently.
4. Use the daily lecture outlines to test your knowledge of the major class topics. A great study technique is to write short essays on each of the key topics—referring to your notes and text if you have to, but eventually without any aids. This is a great self-test of how well you can explain concepts in your own words. You can do this with your notes and text but by the time of an exam you should be comfortable writing these essays without access to other materials. This is a good activity to share with another student and work together.
5. Take advantage of the tutors available at the Learning Assistance Center (lower level of the Lehman Library) and my office hours. This is a good way to review, share ideas, and get some feedback.