

Learning in the post-secondary (college) environment

80/20; 20/80 Rule This is one of the most important concepts students must grasp about the collegiate learning environment.

The 80/20 rule (How learning happens in High School) This rule says that practically all (or 80%) of the information students needed to know to be successful on their exams came from their teacher. The teacher dispensed this information via classroom lessons, then reinforced it through homework assignments and perhaps further by reviewing homework assignments during classes and in test study guides.

This has conditioned students to view the teacher as *the* primary agent of test preparation. The conditioning process of their high school environment has trained them to believe that if they pay close attention in class, record all things that the teacher writes on the board, memorize what is handed out - they will be successful. That is the 80% or the majority of their learning. The 20% consists of a brief review a day or so before tests or information in the text.

This is NOT how learning happens in college.

The 20/80 Rule (how learning happens in college) In college, students must **reverse the 80/20 rule** and begin operating according to a **20/80 rule**. This means they should consider the information the professor provides in class via lectures and study guides as roughly 20% of the content needed to be successful on exams or projects. They must generate the other 80% by synthesizing, grounding, and expounding upon the class information. This work is done outside of class. This means to students, that success in class has significantly more to do with their reading outside of class and how they explore the material.

Daily Implications

The 20% the professor provides is incredibly important, but it is insufficient for test preparation. Unlike the pre-college teacher, the college professor sees his/her role as that of a guide. Therefore, she does not expect to provide students information to pass tests. She expects to guide students as *they* explore and learn the content.

It's not about working harder, it's about working smarter and interacting with the material presented, rather than simply memorizing it. Students need to keep the learning outcomes (usually in the syllabus) in mind while they study, understand and analyze information rather than simply memorize it. While the student is doing the reading, studying and writing – they need to be asking themselves:

- What do I know
- What must I know
- How do I get to what I need to know
- What strategies will get me to what I need to know
- What's the quickest and surest way of getting there

Adapted from The Well (the LearnWell Project)

<http://thewelledu.com/2012/02/06/why-good-students-do-bad-in-college-proven-insights-2>