

Improving My Commitment to Obligations

We are defined as individuals by the commitments we choose to keep. Knowing what a person is committed to tells us a great deal about that person. We have all met people who are committed to having fun. We know people who are committed to religious, civic, or political causes. What are you committed to?

There are several problems related to commitment:

1. Are you over-committed? Do you have so many commitments that you can't get them all done?
2. Do you lack the self-discipline to start early and work consistently on your assignments?
3. Is your commitment to coursework weak? Are other activities more important to you?

The first problem, over-commitment, is common for college students. College offers many wonderful opportunities, and it is difficult to decide in advance how many commitments you will be able to handle. If you feel you are over-committed, read "Identifying and Setting Goals" and "Setting Priorities." Carefully decide which commitments you will be unable to keep, based on your long-term goals, and withdraw from them.

Do you lack self-discipline? College offers learning opportunities, but provides much less structure than high school. If you are having trouble using your time effectively, read the Study Skills tools and check out "Avoiding Procrastination." You may need to find other ways to learn. College tends to emphasize lectures and assignments, but some students need to seek out other ways to reinforce their learning, such as a tutor or a study group. It is also possible that you haven't found the right major. If you find the coursework dull or boring, check out "Planning for My Career/Choosing a Major."

For some people, the commitment to college coursework and assignments is not very strong. Consider these aspects of commitment:

- **Choice:** Did you make a conscious choice to attend college? Was this a goal you chose for yourself, or are you attending college to satisfy others? When we feel as if we have very little choice, we often make a half-hearted commitment to a goal. Did you choose the courses you are now taking, or are they required courses? You may be committed to college in general, but have a hard time getting excited about some of your courses.
- **Intention:** If you have chosen to attend college, it's time to examine your intention. Do you intend to put in the effort necessary to do well? Some students intend to stay in school (not flunk out), but little more. Others intend to lead a balanced life, and the balance they have chosen prevents them from giving priority to studies and coursework. Do you intend to learn as much as you can while in college, or is your intention somewhat less?

- **Determination:** Determination to stay focused in spite of distractions is often the most difficult. Many of us want to do well, and intend to study, but our friends or favorite TV show beckon to us. Many college professors don't check attendance, so why go to class? No one reminds you to study, and you are surrounded by interesting people. It can be very distracting. Choosing to ignore the distractions and put the necessary hours into your coursework can be very difficult. There is no easy way out; it takes a lot of determination.

Most of us find that our commitment level is mixed much of the time. When you notice your commitment weakening, evaluate the above aspects of commitment by asking yourself the following types of questions:

- Have you chosen this commitment, or are you trying to please someone else?
- Do you fully intend to keep this commitment?
- Are you determined to ignore distractions or are there previous commitments that might get in the way?

A commitment is a promise, and you will be judged by the promises you keep. It is important to be aware of your level of commitment and be honest with others about it. This honesty will help you to feel good about yourself, and will allow others to have more confidence in you.