

# Creating Your First Semester Schedule

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**Your success as a student will not happen by accident.  
You must know what you want to achieve as a student ...  
have the commitment to achieve your goals...  
be responsible for your own success.**

Ultimately, your first semester contributes significantly to your overall academic success at **SHIP**. It sets the tone for the rest of your college career. The grades you earn will set your pace for making academic progress towards graduation and influence your ability to remain in or declare a desired major and eligibility for financial aid, scholarships, and NCAA participation. Therefore, it is very important that you create a schedule of courses that offers you the greatest potential for success in your first semester.

❖ ***Many new students find that the academic demands at SHIP are significantly more challenging than what they experienced before. In your first semester, it is important to create a schedule of courses that will allow you to get off to a good start on your path to academic success.***

You will not be left on your own to do this. You will have opportunities to meet your respective academic dean, department chair, and an academic advisor. We will review information with you about university programs, majors and minors, degree requirements, and appropriate courses for a first semester schedule. Faculty advisors will then assist you in registration for your fall courses. We will guide you to ensure that your schedule of courses is appropriate for your first semester in your declared major or, for undeclared students, your area of interest.

Below you will find information you need to be familiar with to be prepared to register for your courses and tips on scheduling for success.

## **Appropriate course load**

### ***How many credits/courses should I take my first semester?***

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Each course is assigned a “**credit**” value that designates the number of class hours the course will meet each week. For example,

- 3-credit courses meet 3 hours a week.
  - 4-credit courses meet 4 hours each week.
- **To maintain fulltime status**, you must enroll in a minimum of **12 credit hours** each fall and spring semester. This is important to maintain financial aid or NCAA eligibility, and if you are on your parents’ insurance policies.

- ***Make it Count.*** To graduate in 4 years, you will need to complete 30 appropriate credits each year. You are encouraged to take 15 credits (5 courses) in your first semester.
- You may not register for more than 17 credits without special permission from your dean.
- If you have earned developmental placement in reading and writing, you will be limited to take 4 courses (including ENG 113 and RDGT 050) in your first semester.
- It is important to remember that **graduation is the goal and not a race.** The key is for you to determine the best course load for you.

**Being a successful student demands a full-time commitment.** To determine what may be the best course load, you should consider such things as other time commitments you have, such as job, family responsibilities, sports, and study time.

**Yes, study time.** Many new students admit that they were never really challenged to study through high school or that they only studied the night before an exam. That strategy will not work in college. Your success in your courses will be proportionate to the amount of time you invest in preparing for the course.

**How many hours should you anticipate having to study to succeed in your first semester at SHIP?** For an answer to that question, you should ask a **successful** student. Most successful students will say:

- They study 2 hours outside of class for each hour in class. So, if you are registered for 15 credits, you may anticipate having to study around 30 hours per week.
- There are some courses (such as Principles of Biology) for which students say they have to study 20-25 hours each week for that one course.
- If you are in class 15 hours a week and spend 30 hours per week studying, you are committing 45 hours per week to being a successful student. That is equivalent to a full-time job.
- ***There are no short-cuts to success in college.***

## Appropriate course selection

### *What courses should I take my first semester?*

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Your first semester schedule will consist primarily of:

- Appropriate General Education courses for your major or area of interest
- Introductory courses for your major or area of interest
- If you have earned placement into developmental-level course(s), you will be pre-registered into the appropriate course(s).

## Appropriate course timing

### *How should I arrange my course schedule?*

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One of the big differences between high school and college is the way classes are scheduled. In college you may only be in classes 2 to 3 hours a day with your class periods spaced throughout the day.

- The amount of time you spend in class will be determined by the credit hours for the course and how many days a week it meets.
- When you look at the schedule of courses, you will note:

#### **Most courses meet on MWF or TR**

**M = Monday; T = Tuesday; W = Wednesday; R = Thursday; F = Friday**

- MWF classes are 50 minutes long with 10 minute breaks between them  
[8:00 – 8:50; 9:00 – 9:50...]
- TR are 75 minutes long with 15 minute breaks between them  
[8:00 – 9:15; 9:30 – 10:45...]
- MW classes starting at 2 pm are 75 minutes long  
[2:00 – 3:15]
- Evening classes may meet one evening a week for 2 ½ hours  
[6:30 – 9:15]

### ***Suggestions for arranging your class schedule:***

- ✓ Balance your semester schedule with MWF and TR classes.
- ✓ Do not schedule your most difficult courses back-to-back.
- ✓ Consider amount of time you need to comfortably get from class to class.
- ✓ Do not schedule more than one evening course.
- ✓ **Schedule your courses when you are at your mental and physical peaks.**

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### **When you come to Orientation**

If you have completed AP or CLEP courses for college credit, bring your test scores.

If you have earned college credit through another institution, bring a copy of your unofficial transcript that records your grades in those courses.

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