

My Advice to Incoming CHM 4 Students (from Student #1)

Good day, I'm not a particularly gifted guy by any means, but I was able to fare decently well in Dr. Paradis' Chem. 4 class- Chemical Calculations. Many of you who read this may be chemistry or biology majors, or not- maybe you're taking this class to fulfill some other requirement- whatever the case may be, let me assure you that this class is indeed passable. It certainly is not guaranteed to be easy, but with diligent work, patience, and perseverance, it can be done.

I guess I'll share some of the things that helped me this semester. First, I decided that in order to completely be able to understand the content of this course, as with any class, it'd be crucial that I actually pay attention to everything that's taught in lecture. I found that if I showed up to class a little early and prepared myself for the lecture and class material, then I was generally more focused and attentive to what was said- and therefore was able to more fully understand the material.

This next point corresponds directly to the one previous. I once had a geography professor who told me something that, to this day, I hold very important. He said something to the effect of, "I had perfect attendance all throughout college- I was afraid that if I missed a class I'd be missing something that could be on the exam." And that's true- things that are taught in class show up on the exams. From that point on, although I haven't been perfect at it, I've put a lot more energy and seriousness into being at all classes. This semester I set a goal to be at every single class, no excuses. Needless to say, I missed one class toward the end of the semester due to sleeping past my alarm, but, hey- we're all human, right? Let's not forget that we're going to make mistakes here and there, but the key principle is that we try our best in our efforts and with our goals in life, be they of academic or of any other nature.

Homework is another huge part of this course. It may or may not be different for you this semester, but we usually had a homework assignment after every class period that would be due before the next. The homework would usually involve reading a few sections out of the required textbook, and completing an online assignment that coincided with the reading material. As with being prepared for lecture and being there day in and day out, in the same way, doing each homework assignment is vital to success in this course. From the very beginning of the semester, you'll notice that it takes off real fast- you'll be learning and applying lots of new stuff- and it's important to stay on top of it all because the principles of chemistry build upon each other. Toward the start you'll learn about essential concepts that you'll use and build upon throughout the course of the semester. One can't construct a pyramid without starting with the larger, foundational building-blocks that will support the rest of the structure. If those basic pieces aren't there, there's no pyramid. In like manner, if you don't have the basic ideas of chemistry down, there's no passing grade. So, you've got to stay on top of any and all homework assignments from the beginning- it's all stuff that you'll need to know in order to pass the exams, and, ultimately, the class.

A few last reflections- One thing about Dr. Paradis is that, aside from having a command of the subject matter, and being a great teacher/lecturer, he wants to help you pass. He provides the class with all kinds of aids and resources that are beneficial to those who take advantage of them. Listen to what he says and recommends- it'll help you get that passing grade; Don't be afraid to ask questions. It's normal not to understand everything right away. I've found that classmates are generally very kind in offering help or feedback in classes like this- they want to help you, and maybe even in return you can help them with something with which they're having a hard time; Sometimes you've just got to do it- this semester will assuredly be hard- but if you make the decision now that you're going to do well, and that you'll do anything it takes to do well, who's stopping you? You can do it- it's possible.

These have been a few thoughts and things I've seen that helped me pass this class with a decent grade. Please understand that there are thousands, if not millions, of individuals who currently, like you, are taking this class. They'll be able to identify with many of the feelings, breakthroughs, and other experiences you'll have. With the right attitude, amount of effort, and levels of patience and perseverance, anyone can pass this class. Please don't allow yourself to get discouraged when something doesn't go right or as planned- like a lower grade than expected on an exam- keep on going- lift yourself up, surround yourself with good, positive things, and you'll be ok. You'll unquestionably find that this semester will be a learning experience- and you might even find it to be enjoyable in many respects. Take care and best of luck on your road to passing this class!