

My Advice to Incoming CHM 4 Students (from Student #3)

This semester I took Chem 4 and it is the first chemistry course I have ever taken. I was extremely nervous before and had heard so many negative comments about chemistry from several people; such as “it is impossible” and “it’s the hardest course I’ve ever taken.” This sent me into the mind set of thinking it was going to be impossible for me, which was not what I needed. That is definitely something I should have never let affect me going into the course. Always go into it thinking positive and knowing that you can complete the course and come out of it with so much more than you went in with. Chem 4 is not an easy class, but it is extremely doable as long as you use your resources, stay organized with your notes, and put the right amount of study time in.

Dr. Paradis gives several resources that you can refer to on his home page, as well as office hours that help wonders. He has print outs that you can refer to that explain exactly how you should study, take notes effectively, manage your time, and learn from mistakes on exams. At first I looked them over shortly and thought that it was a lot of unnecessary reading and I thought the way I studied and took notes would be fine. But after not doing so well on the first exam I went straight back to those print outs and read them thoroughly. They helped me to understand exactly what needed to be done and how to be able to be successful in the course. Also, the office hours were the biggest help for me. I went every week when Dr. Paradis had his office hours in there and the one on one answers to my questions were very detailed and beneficial. I made sure I went in there prepared with questions on the homework or previous exams that I needed clarified. After I began utilizing all of these resources I began to see a huge positive change in my grade.

One thing that I think helped overall was staying organized. I made sure that all my notes were organized, and when I took notes I put questions in the margin and drew arrows to exactly what I was asking about. This helps when you decide to go in and get help during the office hours. I also printed out all of the clicker questions that we did during class and then copied my work from class onto those notes and put them in a separate section for personal reference. It’s important to do that because most of the questions on the exams are very similar to the clicker questions. When I take notes from the book I write out all of the examples that they give and work out the problem in a way I would understand when I look at it again. This helps because sometimes the book can be a little bit confusing and putting it your own words clears your thoughts up a bit. Also, separating your book notes and in class notes with stick notes that say what the notes are on helps when you want to refer back to them in the future. Keeping your notes organized is going to help in the long run keep your thoughts organized as well.

In the beginning of the course Dr. Paradis explains how many hours you should be putting in per week on studying and doing homework. At first I thought that was an insane amount but once the class really got started and I began to study and do all of the homework assignments I realized how much time it really took me. It is no joke the time you have to put in but when you do the efforts show in your exam scores. For me I am a slow learner and have to repeat things many times to understand them so I put in a lot of extra time doing so. Memorizing has also always been pretty difficult to me and there is a lot of that to do in Chem 4. That is one of the most important things to understand straight off in the beginning, because without memorizing what you need to know off of the periodic table and the polyatomic ions you can’t understand the things that he teaches later on in the class. Everything you learn throughout the course eventually ties together and can be used in one question just simply as steps to a complicated problem. So, it is important to keep up with the memorization and hours of studying that you put in.

All in all the hard work pays off and it is a great preparation for the future chemistry courses that are to come. While there are many sacrifices that need to be made eventually it is worth it in the end and it makes you a stronger student overall as well.