

New Student-Athlete Guidebook

Welcome to the University of Southern
Indiana Cross Country and Track Team



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PREFACE

The transition from high school to college can be one of the most exciting and intimidating times in a person's life; especially for a student-athlete who has learn an entirely new set of rules for a new environment. The confusion and miscommunication that can stem from not knowing what to expect in your first year of collegiate classes and training can cause irreparable damage to your GPA or to your body. That is why I created this guidebook, to help make the transition from high school to the University of Southern Indiana (USI) seamless for incoming cross country athletes.

This guidebook will cover a range of tips and tricks collected from current student athletes on the team. It will cover anything from how to adjust your course load in classes to how to adjust your training load at practice, because you are more than just another athlete at USI, you are also a student. Although runners on the team may try to work their course schedules around practice times, there are some required classes that just are not flexible and overlap with practice. Overlap is okay. This guidebook will help teach you how to deal with overlapping schedules and balancing schoolwork, practice, and life in general.

KEY TIPS & TRICKS

How to Not Just Survive but Thrive Your First Year on the Team

Time Management

At the beginning of the year, coming off of summer training, we have practice at 6 AM; however, about half way through the season when it starts to get colder and we lose daylight, practice will switch to 3 PM. Let your counselor know that you are a student athlete on the university's cross country team, so you can try your best to plan around these practice times.



Advice from teammates:

"Try to leave the morning open until 9 AM and try to not have classes 3-5 PM as well. This will make running easier so you can actually train with the team."

- Although 6 AM practice may seem like you have a lot of time to get ready on easy days, where runs are only 30-45 minutes long, you also have to account for the longer days. We normally have workouts on Tuesdays and Fridays, with a medium-long run day on Wednesdays. These days will include sessions that can take anywhere between 1-2 hours. Plan accordingly! Give yourself time to shower and eat before having to rush off to class! If you cannot avoid these schedule overlaps, talk with coach and you can run at another time if necessary.

"Use your time wisely! Get used to doing homework immediately when you get free time, because if you start procrastinating everything will pile up when the season gets busy and we get to the midterm point in the semester!"

- College schedules are different than high school. Depending on your course load and schedule, you may find that you have more free time in between classes. Instead of saving everything for the end of the day, try to use these pockets of time to chip away at your work so you have less to worry about later on.
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Course Work

School comes first always. Being on the cross country team can be a great way to enrich your college experience, by providing a form healthy form of stress relief and a way to meet new people, but ultimately you are at college to learn and grow as a student. Now, this does not mean you have to do everything on your own; use your resources and do not be afraid to ask your teammates, professors, or counselors for advice to help you achieve academic success.

Advice from teammates:

"Have a planner and write down all your class due dates so you don't forget something."

- At the beginning of each semester, you will receive a syllabus and class schedule from each of your teachers that will include all of the assignment due dates for the entire semester. Take the time to write or type all of your due dates in your planner so you can stay on top of your school work and get a better feel of when you will be most busy during the semester.

"Be acquaintances with your professors! You will most likely have to miss classes due to meets. If you are already on good terms and open with your professor it makes missing class so much easier."

- We compete on the weekends, usually Fridays or Saturdays. As a student-athlete, you will travel a lot for competitions, and depending on how far away they are, you can miss up to 2-3 days of class. These days will typically be later in the week, like Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. Since you will miss a lot of class, it is vital that you communicate with your teachers early on about your status as a student-athlete. Typically we receive our competition schedule at the beginning of the semester, so it is a good idea to email the schedule to them, and send additional reminders as the competition dates get closer. Communication is key. Communicating with your professor allows them to make accommodations concerning due dates and excused absences.

"Visit academic skills right when you start struggling. If you keep waiting for things to get better, you'll be in an even bigger mess."

- Academic Skills is a free tutoring service on campus. It is located on the first floor of the Education Building and is staffed completely by student tutors. These tutors can help in any subject, and due to the requirements necessary to become a tutor, many of the tutors have already taken a lot of the classes people need help with. Academic Skills is an excellent resource for students and is open 9 AM to 9 PM Monday-Thursday, and 9 AM to 3 PM on Friday.

Sleep/Recovery

Training hard and studying hard are important for achieving athletic and academic success, but neither of them will amount to anything if you push yourself to the point of burnout. Being a good athlete and a good student does not mean pushing yourself to the limit 100% of the time. The best way to prepare yourself for success is to be intentional in everything you do, and that includes how you recover.



Advice from teammates:

"Make sure you prioritize sleep; it'll make you a better runner and student."

- One thing that makes the difference between a good runner and a great runner is sleep. Collegiate training can be hard on the body, especially at first when your body is not used to it. Do your best to prioritize sleep in order to optimize recovery. Prioritizing sleep will help to refresh both your mind and body, to keep you at your very best every day.

"When choosing between an extra hour of cramming for an exam or an extra hour of sleep, choose sleep 9 out of 10 times."

- Part of the time management discussed earlier directly affects your sleep. If you are not using pockets of time during the day to lighten your workload, then you are sacrificing a few hours of necessary sleep and recovery during the night. Save yourself the stress and allow your body proper recovery time.
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"Make sure you take your rest days! Sometimes people get so caught up in reaching their mileage that they ignore their rest days but they are so important for recovery."

- Coach suggests that everyone on the team take a minimum of one rest day every two weeks. Some people take one full rest day or light cross-training day once every week. It is important that you listen to your body and figure out what works best for you.

"Set aside time for yourself and don't neglect sleep."

- Recovery can equate to sleep, which is extremely important for our academic and athletic health, however, recovery can also equate to taking time for yourself. Every once in a while it is good to step away from your academic identity as a college student and your athletic identity as an athlete, to participate in a hobby you truly enjoy. Personally, I enjoy baking. Find whatever sparks your passion and do it as often as you can, so you do not get too wrapped up in everything else.



Training

One of the biggest adjustments from high school to college will likely be training, either in the technicality of the workouts, in volume, or both. This transition can be one of the most challenging for new collegiate runners. The harder training can either cause you to push yourself too hard because you feel you have something to prove, or cause you to second-guess your abilities as a runner

because things are not as easy as they were before. It is going to take time to adjust, so just remember to give your mind and body the space to do just that.

Advice from teammates:

"More isn't always better; progress takes patience."

- It might be tempting to jump up in mileage so you can be the same as everyone else on the team, but everyone's body is different and reacts differently to various weekly mileage volumes. Slowly work up to mileage, then adjust based on how your body feels, and do not be afraid to decrease mileage if a certain volume does not feel right. More than anything, be patient with yourself, it takes time to find what works best.
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"Mileage is just a number, hit it if you feel good, but ultimately listen to your body. If something hurts, there's probably a reason. Don't run through pain just to hit an exact number. Your health is more important."

- Mileage goals and training plans are great references to keep you on track to reach your goals, but they are not set in stone. Try not to push yourself beyond your limits just to meet a certain number. And if you feel any pain do not dismiss it! You must listen to your body! It is always better to be safe rather than sorry when it comes to pain while running.

"Development is a process and being flexible with where your coach wants you is a trial and error process. You will even see non-running-related setbacks sometimes as well. But once you find that training level, it will be 100% worthwhile. Trust your coach's plan and vision, and do what you can to be your best every day."

- The biggest lesson you will learn in your transition to collegiate training is one of grace. No one can get a personal best performance every time they run. It's important to trust coach and the process of progressing in the sport.

Final Advice

"ASK QUESTIONS! No one on the team wants to see you fail so if you are confused about training, ask an upperclassman. If you are confused about homework, ask around because the odds are that someone has taken that class before. There usually isn't a question that at least someone can't answer guide you to someone who can find an answer for you!"

"SHOW UP! Show up to practice. Show up to volleyball. Show up to dinner in the loft and sit with the team. Show up to teammates' houses to hang out. Get to know your teammates well, and the team itself will be more well off."

"Enjoy every moment of it. College really goes by fast and pretty soon you will be in your last semester wishing you had more time. Don't overload yourself with other obligations so that you do have time to have fun and be with those who make you happy because when it ends you never know when again you will be around the people that have become a second family to you. So spend time with those that make you the happiest!"
