

Gear up for student success with the essentials, extras
By: Gretchen Adams

So, you have made it to the next level in your educational journey. As in every journey, you will need the right gear to make it easy and successful.

To be successful in elementary school, you were given a list of supplies. In college, your professors tell you what textbooks to buy, but purchasing those textbooks does not guarantee your success in the class (it would probably help, however). You will need some other items to enable you to achieve your goals as an Oklahoma State University student.

Now, let's be honest. Everything you bought for school was not a necessity ... do you seriously need that scooter or flat-screen TV? That's what I thought. Let's break this survival list (compiled by asking OSU College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources students) into two sections: essentials and extras.

The 2005 Alloy College Explorer Study determined 16 percent of all college students regard "themselves an early adopter of electronic devices and gadgets."

"Electronics keep students on the cutting edge," said Andi Canseco, an animal science senior. "Students always have the upper hand when they have technology at their fingertips."

The essentials

To ensure your success at OSU, it is important to have the following items.

Alarm clock – you don't want to be late to a test or oversleep and miss class.

"Alarm clocks are essential for college students," said Justin McConaghy, a senior agricultural economics and agricultural education double major. "The key to passing a class is going to the class every day."

Computer/laptop – helps a lot with class work. The average student will type multiple papers and gather research information on the Internet. Professors post homework and class notes on the Web. Connectivity is important to many students, and many colleges across the United States, including OSU, offer wireless Internet hot spots on campus. Instant messenger and e-mail allow students to be connected at all times. Web logs, social networks and personal Web sites allow students to keep track of their friends.

"Computers help by having resources on the Internet right there," said Brody Buzzard, a biosystems and agricultural engineering senior. "You don't have to go to the library to look stuff up."

Calculator – this tool will be helpful in math, science and engineering classes.

"We've become so dependent on calculators to speed things up," said Pam Turner, a plant and soil sciences senior. "You should be able to do [problems] in your head and by hand, but just to speed the process up, a calculator is most important."

Cell phone – Forbes.com listed the Sidekick II as the new cell phone students have in their possession. Cell phones connect students to each other and to the Internet, and they can serve multiple purposes such as an alarm clock, watch and calendar.

The Alloy study found 85 percent of college students own a cell phone.

"Three-quarters send and receive text messages, and nearly two-thirds play games," according to the Alloy study. "Sixty percent can access the Internet through their phone, and 36 percent can take, send and receive pictures."

Jump or Flash Drive – a plug-and-play portable storage device using flash memory. Many times you see these devices attached to key chains. A jump drive replaces floppy disks, Zip drive disks and compact discs.

"Flash drives are quickly becoming very helpful tools," said McConaghy. "I find them extremely useful for things like group projects where you may need a lot of rewritable storage that you can carry with you to computer labs and then back home."

Mortar Board calendar – you will need a calendar to keep track of all your assignments, tests and events. Any calendar will work, but the Mortar Board is more than just a calendar. It gives vital information like club and organizational meetings, blood drives, school holidays, ticket purchase dates, athletic events and intramural sporting events.

"My Mortar Board is my lifeline to Oklahoma State University," said Canseco. "It has all my tests, events and assignments. Everything!"

Backpack/book bag – you will need to carry around the textbooks your professors suggest you purchase and other supplies like notebooks, paper, calculator and writing utensils. Backpacks are improving along with technology by creating pockets for cell phones and MP3 players. Many bags have protected areas for laptops and are even improving ergonomically (designing of items to be used most efficiently and safely by humans) while following the latest fashion trends.

Orange T-shirt – show your Orange Pride and support for your Cowboys and Cowgirls at least every Friday.

The extras

These items would aid in your education or make things easier but are not necessary.

iPod/MP3 player – a small portable device that can store up to 20,000 songs. The iPod also can record and store class lectures, as well as store photographs.

"It's an easy way to keep my music with me at all times," said Canseco. "Music keeps me relaxed and, in turn, allows me to focus on my class work."

Palm Pilot – a digital calendar allows you to set alarms for reminders and has Internet capabilities.

"Sometimes I will forget to check just a regular calendar," said Turner.

Digital camera – a few classes will require the use of photographs in presentations and other assignments.

"It keeps you connected with your friends," said Canseco. "It holds lasting memories. Many classes are now requiring you to take your own photos for class projects."

All-in-one printer – a printer, copier, scanner and fax machine.

"All-in-one printers are becoming more economical," said McConaghy. "If you need both a scanner and printer, the all-in-one printer would be the way to go."

With the use of technology in the classroom, a lot of money is spent on electronics to aid in the success of the student. The total cost of back-to-school purchases was \$34.4 billion with \$8.2 billion spent on electronics and \$11.9 billion spent on

textbooks, according to the 2005 Back-to-College Consumer Intentions and Actions Survey conducted by the National Retail Federation. The NRF discovered that college freshmen spend \$1,151 each on electronics.

New trends for multifunction devices are gaining speed in the college age group. Apple has created a device to convert the iPod into a voice recorder, the iTalk, and an iH5, the iPod alarm clock. Writing tablets are becoming more popular with the plug-and-play connection Apple, Dell and Hewlett Packard computers offer. The user writes what needs to be typed instead of typing it or uses the tablet like a touch screen.

Many cell phone companies have phones that are digital cameras, digital video cameras and voice recorders. Cell phones have Internet capabilities, as well as instant messaging. A survey preformed by M:Metrics in 2005 found "42 percent of employed college students are more likely to use mobile e-mail" than the average user. College students use mobile e-mail 23 percent more than full-time workers.

Times change and in the world of electronic tools, they change fast.

"By the time we have graduated, our computers we bought four years earlier will be out of date," said Canseco. "Technology is always changing."

Most parents used slide-rules when they were in school, and students today use graphing calculators. What will your children use?

Pistol Pete enjoys his gadgets while studying for class or relaxing in his room. (photo by Gretchen Adams)