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To Do

For this activity, create your own definition of success. Dictionary.com defines success as “the favorable outcome of something attempted.” For many students in college, success means passing a class, earning an A, or learning something new. Beyond college, some people define success in terms of financial wealth; others measure it by the quality of their relationships with family and friends.

Here is an example of a brief, philosophical definition of success:

To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty, to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded. –Ralph Waldo Emerson
Ultimately, before we can know if we are successful, we must first define what success means for ourselves.

Develop a 200-400 word journal entry defining what success means to you in college and beyond. To help you write this entry, consider some of the following:

- Find a quote (or make one up) that best summarizes your definition of success. Note the author of the quote, and use quotation marks as appropriate.
- Why does this quote best represent your personal definition success?
- What people do you consider to be successful and why?
- What is your definition of success?
- What will you do to achieve success?
- What is the biggest change you need to make in order to be successful in college?
- How will you know you’ve achieved success?

Worked Example

Journal entry assignments tend to be more flexible than other types of writing assignments in college, and as a result they can be tailored to your own experiences as long as they answer the primary questions asked in the assignment.

One model of a successful entry about this topic can be found below. Feel free to include your

own experiences and examples from real life as they pertain to the issue at hand.

Habits for Success Journal Entry

by Sandy Brown

I found this quote online, and I thought it was both funny and true: “Success is often the result of taking a misstep in the right direction” by Al Bernstein. I’m not sure exactly who Mr. Bernstein is, but he hit the nail right on the head. It seems like the best things in my life have come from some initial screw-up or unintended action on my part.

I enrolled in college the first time right after I graduated high school, but it just didn’t work out for me. My dad offered me a job instead, when he saw how miserable I was, since his office manager had just quit. I’d been helping out at his place all my life, but I didn’t know anything about managing the books. I made some silly mistakes, and some sort of serious ones, but I figured things out pretty quickly.

Now that my dad is looking towards retirement, I’ve come back to school to get formal recognition of the work I’ve been doing for the past fifteen years. I originally thought I just wanted to get a Payroll Accounting certificate, but my adviser here talked me into pursuing a full AA degree. I’m glad I made that decision, but it’s been hard. I came home everyday the first week too exhausted to speak to my family. Withdrawing from a couple of classes was the right thing for me to do, even if it means I’ll only be a part-time student for now.

For me, success will be getting my first accounting job after I graduate with my degree and pass the certification exam. I want my future employer to recognize not only the years of experience I have but also the formal education I get with my AA. Success is also being a good role model for my daughters. I don’t want them to just settle for “good enough” like I did when I became an adult, and want them to work hard in order to get to a place where they’re comfortable.

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