

Massage School 101

Be prepared for what to expect when classes start.



*I'm going to massage school...
And I have no idea what I am
getting myself into.*



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Expectations

Succeeding is easier when you know what you need to do to be successful.

Your massage school's expectations of you are pretty straight-forward: attend class, complete your assignments, practice and succeed. The part you need to be prepared for is **what you should expect** from massage school.

Consider:

1. How long is the program?
2. How difficult is the coursework?
3. What is your class schedule?
4. What other information do I need to be prepared?

The first step when setting your expectations is to consider the program and class schedule you chose. No two schools or massage therapy programs are created equal. For example, the program coursework at School A might be more rigorous than the coursework at School B. And an intensive program - one that allows you to finish classes in a shorter period of time - will have a more demanding homework and practice schedule.

Once you evaluate the program basics, it will be easier to define other expectations.

Other Expectations

If you are a working student, you can expect and prepare for...

It will be challenging to balance school, work and home life. Work is one of the top reasons people drop out. It will get easier as you adjust to your new schedule and commitment, but only if you meet the challenge before it gets to you.

- o **Share your good news!** By telling co-workers, friends and most importantly, family what your massage school plans are and what your schedule is going to be like, you will gain immediate empathy, understanding and support.
- o **Make arrangements in advance** for classes you might miss or assignments you might need more time on. Most massage schools provide the syllabus and assignments on the first day of class, so there is no reason for you not to be able to plan ahead.
- o **Make a calendar** and stick to it. Fill in time when you are at work and school. Schedule study time, special events, vacations and fun. Don't forget to hold yourself accountable.

Other Expectations

If you have been out of school for more than a year...

- o Being good at *going to school* is just as much work as school itself. **Prepare for an adjustment period.**
- o **Give yourself extra time.** Long-time students can estimate how long projects will take to complete. Since you have been out of school and since massage is new to you, it might take more time than you think to complete homework.
- o The key to success at massage school is **practice**.
- o **Do not procrastinate!** It is easy to procrastinate when you haven't been in school for a while. It is very important to keep up with your assignments in massage therapy school because it is easy to fall behind and *not* easy to catch up.

Practice, practice,
practice, practice, practice,
practice, practice...



Class of...

Other Expectations

If you are just out of high school...

- o Your assignments will not be like high school homework assignments. Projects are **assigned in advance**, so you can take days - even weeks - to finish them.
- o Your **peers will vary in age** in massage school. They can be anyone from young stay-at-home moms to established career CEOs.
- o The content, scheduling and grading in massage school is different from high school. Get use to being in class less and **working more outside of class** on your own.
- o Overall, it is important to be aware that in massage school **success is the responsibility of the student**. Though most schools have invaluable support staff, you will need to manage your attendance, assignments and tuition payments.

Frequently Unexpected

Sometimes new students don't expect the obvious: you will be touched.

Often times several important massage school expectations are not discussed in enrollment interviews. The result is new students with little exposure to massage therapy who are *shocked*.

o **You will be touched.** Every massage therapy program includes “trades.” Trades are when one student gets on the table while the other student works on them. Then, the students switch. You will both be undressed at some point, and you will both work on each other. You will be expected to work on and receive massage on faces, scalps, necks, arms, hands, ribs, abdominals, backs, gluts, legs and feet.

o **You will touch different kinds of people.** Because your massage class will include students of all ages, genders, ethnicities and levels of fitness, you will work on many different types of bodies. Often times, just like in the “real world,” you will not get to choose who you work on.

Your instructor should know immediately if there is a member of your class whose touch makes you uncomfortable.

Frequently Unexpected

Sometimes new students don't expect the obvious: you will work closely.

o **You will be naked.** When it is your turn to receive massage, a during trade, for example, you will be on the massage table under a sheet with very little or, preferably, *no clothing* on. Only one portion of your body - the area your partner is working on - will be exposed at a time. Some people choose to wear their underwear during a massage. Usually, massage students get past this in the first week, as wearing underwear inhibits the length and fluidity of several Swedish massage strokes.

o **You will have to be clean.** Out of courtesy to your classmates, bathe, wear deodorant and brush your teeth. You will be working *closely*. Also, you cannot have fake or long nails. Since you work with your hands, nails should be kept as short as possible. Long nails hurt. Strong scents in deodorants, colognes and lotions should be avoided, since many people are sensitive to strong smells. Always use scentless products, if possible.

Be sure to ask questions before enrolling, so you are comfortable with your commitment. If you strongly object to cutting your nails, for example, massage school may not be for you.

Call for Back-up

Get your educational support system in place.



I need help! Help!

In your anatomy class, you will learn the body is made up of several systems - like the circulatory system. Just like your massage school, each of these systems works together to create stability within the body.

In massage school, the most important system is your **educational support system**.

Your educational support system is made up of a variety of smaller systems - tools, resources and people to keep you energized and motivated. These micro-systems also work together, so you can achieve your goals.

Call in the Professionals

School Faculty and Staff are a crucial resource for new students.

Remember massage is brand new to you, and some aspects of school might be hard for you. Ask for help.

The Faculty and Staff members' purpose is to help you succeed, whether it is through providing knowledge or support. In addition to practical application and massage theory, many of your instructors are also massage therapists and can provide insight about the industry. Some instructors offer hands-on tutorials.

Your Student Administrator, Advisor or Counselor can help by advising students struggling with either coursework or balancing their personal lives while in school. It is their job to be accessible to any student who needs to talk.

Communicating with your instructors and administrators is very important and will make massage school easier. If you are willing to put in extra effort it's likely that they will, too.



Talk to me!

Calling all Classmates

Fellow classmates are a valuable asset in your educational support system.

Surrounding yourself with other students will give you ideas about coping with school. They can be inspiring and motivating.

One of the best ways to do this is to **create or join a study group**. Whether you spend your time reviewing course material or venting about your personal life, you will create a lasting bond.

The peer-support system is one that can keep working for you well into your massage career.

**Did you know:
students in study groups often
perform better on tests.**



Call on a Mentor

Massage therapists guides are also assets to your system.

Classmates are peer supporters, but a mentor is also valuable. By pairing with another massage therapist - even a physical therapist or acupuncturist - you will gain additional insights on the wellness profession. For example, if you are thinking about working in a hospital after graduation, **find a mentor** who works in one and will meet with you regularly, and you will instantly have access to what they experience.

If you need help finding a mentor, ask your student administrator to match you with an alumnus or ask your favorite instructor or personal massage therapist.

You are working with a professional...



Answering Your Own Call

The most important piece of the system is you.

In the end, you made the choice to be in massage school. You are the reason you go to class every day. Think of creative ways to self-motivate and hold yourself accountable for your decision when you start feeling burned out.

For example, if working with a positive statement, affirmation or mantra helps you, create one to motivate you during school. Start by singling out the most important reason you chose to go to massage school. Repeat the reason to yourself or write it down on sticky-notes and post it around your house, on your school binder or wherever else you feel you need to see it.

Overall massage school is rewarding, and it takes hard work and determination. Know you are not alone in the process - just like your circulatory system is not alone in running the body. There are many tools, resources and people available to support you. Use the systems put in place for your success and your massage school experience will be gratifying - one you will never forget.



**It is all
about me.**

Resources

You don't have to be a genius. Knowing where to look is half the battle...

Are You Thinking of Going to Massage School? <http://ezinearticles.com/?Are-You-Thinking-of-Going-to-Massage-School?&id=1810876>

Massage - Job or Career? <http://www.massageschoolsguide.com/blog/massage-career/massage-job-or-career/>

Starting Massage School: Get your Support System in Place <http://www.futurelmt.com/articles/massage-student-article.php?id=242>

Study Skills Resource Site <http://www.how-to-study.com/>

Time Management http://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_HTE.htm

Lauterstein-Conway Massage School <http://www.TLCschool.com>