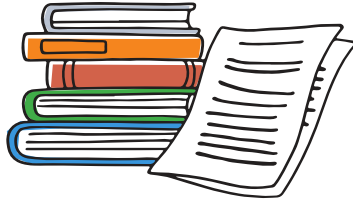


How To Get
Good
Grades

In Ten Easy Steps



WOODBURN PRESS
A STUDENT SUCCESS COMPANY



Dear Students,

When you get good grades, your parents, relatives, and teachers are proud of you, school is more fun, and most importantly, you feel good about yourself. Whether you are an A student, or a student who only dreams of getting As, this book can help you improve your grades!

Throughout this booklet you'll find quotes from a number of high school juniors. These students have some great tips and advice for you!

How to Get Good Grades in Ten Easy Steps

Table of Contents

What Kind of Student Are You?	2
Step ① Believe in Yourself	3
Step ② Be Organized	4
Step ③ Manage Your Time Well	6
Step ④ Be Successful in Class	7
Step ⑤ Take Good Notes	11
Step ⑥ Read to Learn	14
Step ⑦ Study Smart	17
Step ⑧ Be a Good Test Taker	22
Step ⑨ Reduce Test Anxiety	25
Step ⑩ Get Help When You Need It ...	26
Tips for Parents	27
Words to Live By	29



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What Kind of Student Are You?

Put check marks in the spaces that best describe you.

	Almost Always	Sometimes	Hardly Ever
1. I complete my homework assignments.	_____	_____	_____
2. I have everything I need with me when I go to class (book, pencils, paper).	_____	_____	_____
3. I use the time teachers give us in class to start on my homework.	_____	_____	_____
4. I take good notes.	_____	_____	_____
5. I ask and answer questions in class.	_____	_____	_____
6. I'm good at finding information online.	_____	_____	_____
7. After reading a textbook assignment, I remember what I've read.	_____	_____	_____
8. I know how to memorize information.	_____	_____	_____
9. I get along well with my teachers.	_____	_____	_____
10. I am good at taking tests.	_____	_____	_____

Give yourself **2** points for each **Almost Always**, **1** point for each **Sometimes**, and **0** for each **Hardly Ever** response. **Your Score** _____

What Your Score Means

16–20 points: You are a good student. This book will mostly be a review for you. It could, however, help you raise your grades even higher.

11–15 points: You are a student who could be getting better grades. With this book, you will definitely be able to improve your grades.

6–10 points: Your grades are likely on the low side. This book can help you change that. It could even change how you feel about school.

0–5 points: Your grades need serious improvement. But don't give up. This book can help you turn your grades around!

Regardless of your score, this book can help you improve your grades!



Step 1 Believe in Yourself

“To succeed, we must first believe that we can.” Michael Korda, Author

In order for you to succeed, you need to believe in yourself and in your abilities. Here’s a little story to help illustrate this idea.

Two high school athletes are preparing to compete against each other. They are the same size, and they have about the same athletic abilities. Everyone assumes that it will be an exciting race.

The first athlete runs out. He looks confident, and as he waits, he warms up and stretches. The people nearby hear him say to himself, “I’m ready. I can do this.” The second athlete appears. He slowly shuffles out with his head down, and as he waits, he fidgets with his watch. Those nearby hear him mutter, “I’m gonna get killed.”

Two athletes—same size, same abilities. Even before the race begins, everyone knows who’s going to win.

Whether you’re an athlete preparing for competition or a student tackling a difficult subject, it’s important that you believe in yourself. You need to recognize the talents and abilities you have, and you must believe that you can succeed!

In the grid below, list the courses you’re currently taking. Then in the “Grade” column, write down the highest grade you think you can earn in each course this grading period.

	Course	Grade
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		



Think of these grades as your academic goals for this grading period. *Believe in yourself, and believe that you can achieve your goals!*



Step 2 Be Organized

Being organized makes your life run smoother, it saves you time, and it makes you feel like you're "on top of things." Here are some tips to help you stay organized.

Use a student planner. Take a student planner with you to every class and record each assignment under the date it's given. Also write down the date each assignment is due. When an assignment is completed, check it off. Use your planner to also keep track of test dates and activities.

Subject	Monday, September 17
English	✓ Read pages 5-10 - Due Tues.
Math	✓ Do all problems on p. 25 - Due Wed.
History	* Quiz on Chapter 3
Science	✓ Do Review Questions - Due Wed.
Spanish	✓ Vocabulary - page 10 - Due Tues.
	Dentist 4:00
	John's birthday

"When I look at my student planner at the end of the day, it reminds me of which books I need to take home." Maria

"Using a planner helps me get things done on time so I'm not turning assignments in late." Greg

Break down assignments. Large assignments are much easier to do if you break them down into smaller parts. For example, if you have an English paper that's due at the end of the week, you could give yourself these four assignments.

Mon. - Do outline

Wed. - Revise and rewrite

Tues. - Write first draft

Thurs. - Write final draft

Be sure to write your smaller assignments in your planner also. This will help ensure that you do your big assignments over a period of time, not at the last minute.

Use three-ring notebooks for class notes. Have a three-ring notebook for each class, or one large notebook with tabs for each subject. Three-ring notebooks work well because handouts can easily be inserted, and if you do miss a class, you can copy someone else's notes and insert them where they belong. Keep a 3-hole punch in your notebook so that you can hole punch your handouts in class and put them in your notebook as soon as you get them.

Have a plan for papers. Unless your school has gone paperless, you probably have lots of papers to deal with. Whether you use folders or binders, the important thing is that you have a system for organizing your papers. This includes throwing out papers you don't need, and putting those you want to keep in a file at home.

Have contact information for classmates. Make sure that you have a phone number for at least one person in each class. If you're absent or have a question about an assignment, you'll then have someone to contact.

Keep your locker and backpack neat. Never stick loose or folded papers inside books, your backpack, or your locker. Always put them in the correct folder or notebook. Keeping your locker and backpack neat, clean, and organized makes it much easier to locate materials.

Get organized before you go to bed. Each night, put completed homework in the right folders and get everything ready for the next day. If there's something you need to remember to do in the morning, write yourself a note.



Step 2 Be Organized



- ▶ Use a student planner.
- ▶ Break down assignments.
- ▶ Use three-ring notebooks for class notes.
- ▶ Have a plan for papers.
- ▶ Have contact information for classmates.
- ▶ Keep your locker and backpack neat.
- ▶ Get organized before you go to bed.



Step 3 Manage Your Time Well

With good time management, you have time for the things you need to do, and you still have time for the things you want to do.

Use class time and study halls. Always use the time teachers give you in class to ask questions, start on homework, or get help.

“If I use my study hall and the time teachers give us in class, I don’t have nearly as much homework to do at night.” Marcus

Create your own study plan. Some students study best at night; others like to study earlier in the day. While it’s good to have a regular time to study every day, many students have sports, activities, or other responsibilities they need to work around. At the end of each school day, look at how much homework you have, consider the time you have available, and develop a study plan.



Eliminate disruptions. Identify anything that could interrupt your study plan. Then figure out how to eliminate or avoid it.

“I used to check my phone constantly. Now I put my phone away until I’m done with my homework.” Kate

“I can’t start watching TV until I have all of my homework done. If I turn on the TV, my homework probably won’t get done.” John



Step 3 Manage Your Time Well

- ▶ Use class time and study halls.
- ▶ Create your own study plan.
- ▶ Eliminate disruptions.



Step 4 Be Successful in Class

If you follow the advice in this section, you'll enjoy school more and get better grades.

Be in school every day, on time. When you miss school, you miss class presentations, notes, discussions, assignments, quizzes, and tests. It doesn't matter how good you are about making up your work, you can never make up all of what you miss, even if you're out for only one day. *To get good grades, you must be in school every day.*

Unless you have an extended illness or a serious health problem, you should miss no more than a few days of school a year.

Learn how to adapt to different teachers. In the classroom, the teachers are in charge and they make the rules. You might have one teacher who counts you as late if you're not in your seat when the bell rings, and another teacher who considers you on time if you have one foot inside the door. It doesn't matter whether or not you agree with the first teacher's rule; it only matters that you are in your seat when the bell rings.

Remember, part of your education is to learn how to adapt to different sets of rules, personalities, and teaching styles.

"It's really important to know what your teachers want and how they grade. Do they want you to ask questions? Do they give points for participation? Do they grade homework?" Brad

Be prepared for each class. Have everything you need with you when you go to class (books, paper, pencils). *Also have all of your homework done.* When you've done your homework, you get more out of the class, the material being taught makes more sense, and you can participate in discussions.

Being prepared also means that you come to class well-rested and ready to learn.

Know how you're doing. If your teachers post grades online, check them often. If they don't, keep your own record of your homework, quiz, and test grades for each class.

Be aware of your body language. This counselor's story illustrates the importance of body language.



“One day a student named Jason complained to me that his English teacher always picked on him. Jason told me that he never talked out in class, he always did his homework, and that he did everything his teacher asked him to do.

The following week, I went into Jason’s English class to talk about scheduling. Jason, who was sitting in the back, never spoke out of turn, never talked to his neighbors, and he did everything he was supposed to do. Nevertheless, as my presentation went on, I became more and more irritated with him. Why? Because of his body language.

Throughout the period, Jason would look at his friends and roll his eyes, or he’d slump his shoulders, let his head drop back, and then he’d sigh. Jason’s behavior was clearly saying to me, ‘This is stupid and boring, and I don’t want to do this.’ I found Jason’s behavior distracting and annoying. Of course, I also found out why Jason and his English teacher weren’t getting along.

The next day I called Jason into my office and explained to him what I had observed the previous day. Jason was truly surprised that I had even noticed him in the class.” Ms. Johnson, School Counselor

What Jason didn't understand is that when teachers are up in front of a classroom, they see everything. They know who is paying attention, who's taking notes, and who is listening to the class discussion. They also know who's doing homework for another class, writing personal notes, daydreaming, and "napping" (even when students think they have their hands and books set up to hide it).

If you choose to do these things, don't kid yourself into thinking that your teachers don't notice, even if they don't say anything. If you want to get good grades, make sure this is the message your body language is sending. Sit up straight, be alert, and look at your teachers when they are talking.

Always do your homework. Don't look at homework as something you should do. Think of homework as something you *must* do. Since a large portion of your grade is usually based on homework, your grade drops every time you miss an assignment. Complete all of your homework on time, and whenever possible, do extra credit work.

"If you don't do your homework, it kills your grade!" Brad

Have good computer skills. The use of technology in the classroom continues to increase. Teachers expect students to have basic computer skills and be able to locate information online. If you're struggling with technology, talk to your teacher or counselor and get some help. Don't let your lack of computer skills hurt your grades.

Be a good group member. Knowing how to work well in a group is a very important skill. Whether you're working on a school project, involved in an extracurricular activity, or working at a job, you need to be able to get along with the other members of the group.

Whenever you're involved in a group project, do the following:

- 1) Do your share of the work and do it well.
- 2) Try to be open to new ideas.
- 3) Be positive and support the other group members.



Participate in class. Participating in class makes the class more interesting, and it helps keep your mind focused. Ask and answer questions, and get involved in class discussions. Many teachers give participation points, so participating in your classes can also help you get better grades.

"If I tune out, the class goes on forever. If I participate, the time goes a lot faster." Kate

Treat others with respect. Treat your teachers and classmates the same way that you want to be treated. Be polite, look at your teachers when they're speaking, and listen when others are talking. Also, be very aware of your tone of voice. The same words, in a different tone of voice, can communicate a very different message.

Involve your parents. When your parents ask what you did in school, tell them something about your day. For example, “Well, in English we started reading this new book about...” Your parents will like the fact that you’re talking to them about what’s going on in school.

A good way to involve your parents is to ask them for help once in a while. You could, for example, ask a parent to listen to a speech, read over a paper you’ve written, or help you study for a test. You’ll get better grades, and your parents will see that you’re really trying to do well in school.

If you ever have a problem with a teacher, class, or another student, let your parents know. They can help you deal with any situation.

Take responsibility for your grades. If you get a good grade on an assignment or test, be proud of your accomplishment. If you receive a poor grade, don’t make excuses. Take responsibility for your grade, and then figure out how you can get a better grade the next time.

Always do your own work. You’ll learn more, and your grades will be something you can really be proud of.



Step 4 Be Successful in Class

- ▶ Be in school every day, on time.
- ▶ Learn how to adapt to different teachers.
- ▶ Be prepared for each class.
- ▶ Know how you're doing.
- ▶ Be aware of your body language.
- ▶ Always do your homework.
- ▶ Have good computer skills.
- ▶ Be a good group member.
- ▶ Participate in class.
- ▶ Treat others with respect.
- ▶ Involve your parents.
- ▶ Take responsibility for your grades.





Step 5 Take Good Notes

Tests usually cover material that's been presented in class. It is, therefore, important to have good notes to study from.

Be an active listener. In order to take good notes, you must pay attention and actively listen to what your teacher is saying.

Kylie is listening to music while she's getting ready for school. When her new favorite song comes on, she stops getting ready. She sits down and listens carefully. Kylie tries to hear every word so that she can understand the meaning of the lyrics.

In this scene, Kylie went from passive listening to active listening. When you're actively listening in class, you aren't just hearing the words the teacher is saying, you are also thinking about and trying to understand the information that's being presented.

Take notes to help you pay attention. You can think much faster than anyone can talk. This is one of the reasons that your mind sometimes wanders when you're in class. When you take notes, however, your mind has something additional to do, and you don't have time to think about anything else.

Taking notes helps you stay focused. It also shows your teachers that you are paying attention, and that you're interested in the class.

Recognize important information. You can usually tell when a teacher is saying something that's important for you to know. Teachers often speak louder or slower, or they repeat information. They also give clues by saying things like "*the main point*," "*the most important outcome*," or "*the biggest reason*." Of course, anything a teacher writes on the board or overhead should be considered very important.

In your notes, underline or put a star beside the most important information—you'll then know to give it special attention when you're studying.

"I highlight anything in my notes that's really important." Marcus

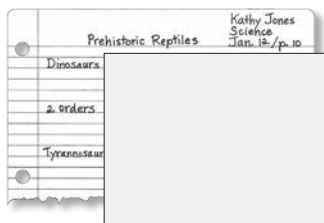
Take notes that are easy to read.

- ▶ Put the name of the class, the date, and the page number at the top of each page of notes. It will help keep your notes organized.
- ▶ Put the subject of your notes at the top of the page.
- ▶ Skip lines between topics and only use one side of the paper. Your notes will be neater, and they'll be easier to read. You will also have space if you want to add something later.
- ▶ Use symbols and abbreviations to help you take notes faster. Here are some of the most common abbreviations.

=	same or equal	↑	up or increasing	w/	with
≠	not equal	↓	down or decreasing	w/o	without
>	greater than	→	resulting in	w/in	within
<	less than	*	most importantly	b/c	because
~	approximately	eg	for example	v	very
∴	therefore	ie	that is	esp	especially

- ▶ Don't worry about grammar or punctuation.
- ▶ Leave a wide space or margin on the left side of each page. As you're taking notes, listen for **key words**. When you hear a key word, write it in the left-hand margin. Key words (topics, people, places, events) help you organize your thoughts, and they make your notes easier to understand.

Key words can also help you review for a test. Just cover up your notes, look at each key word, and test yourself to see what you can remember about that topic, person, place, or event.



Go over your notes as soon as possible. While the information is still fresh in your mind, take five minutes to go over your notes. Fill in the spaces, rewrite anything that's confusing, and put a ? by anything you don't understand. Also, make sure all of your key words are written in the left-hand margin. Of course, as you're going over your notes, you are "locking" the information in your memory.

If you're really serious about getting the best grade possible in a class, completely redo your notes. Eliminate the unimportant information and rewrite the rest of your notes using your own words.

Sample Notes

Kathy Jones
Science
Jan. 12 / p. 10

Key Words

Prehistoric Reptiles

Dinosaurs from 2 Greek words
deinos = terrible + saurus = lizard
dominated life on land - 140,000,000 yrs.

2 orders ★ Saurischia + Ornithischia orders
over 800 species w/ ↑ posture
Saurischia incl. Tyrannosaurus

Tyrannosaurus largest flesh eater - 40' in length
slow, top speed ~12 mph
warm blooded, laid eggs
★ lived during Cretaceous period

Get copies of notes and handouts if you're absent. If you miss a class, it's your responsibility to ask your teacher about any assignments, handouts, and/or tests you may have missed. *Don't just assume that your teacher will tell you if there's something you need to know or do.* Also, get copies of any notes you missed and put them in your notebook.

"If I know I'm going to miss school, I try to get work ahead of time. If I'm out sick, I get the work and the notes I missed the next day. I really try not to miss school though—it's such a pain to make things up." Greg



Step 5 Take Good Notes

- ▶ Be an active listener.
- ▶ Take notes to help you pay attention.
- ▶ Recognize important information.
- ▶ Take notes that are easy to read.
- ▶ Go over your notes as soon as possible.
- ▶ Get copies of notes and handouts if you're absent.





Step 6 Read to Learn

Knowing how to read a textbook makes it easier to understand and remember what you've read.

Textbook authors have already done a lot of the work for you. They've put in section headings that tell you what you're going to be reading about, they've put all of the important words in **bold** or *italic* print, and they've added pictures, charts, graphs, lists of vocabulary words, summaries, and review questions. Textbook authors have provided these "learning tools" in order to make it easier for you to understand and remember the information they're presenting.

In this section, you will discover how to use these learning tools. You will also learn how to **Survey, Read, and Review**. *When you survey, read, and review, you remember more of what you read.*

SURVEY. Surveying gives you a quick overview of the material you're going to be reading. To survey, do the following:

- ▶ read the title, headings, and everything in **bold** and *italic* print
- ▶ look at the pictures, graphs, and charts
- ▶ read the introduction, summary, and review questions

On the following page you'll find a music history textbook chapter on The Beatles. To survey this page, you would first read the title and each of the section headings: **The Beatles dominate the music industry**, **The band gets their start in Liverpool**, **A change of image**, **Success in the U.S.**, and **The Beatles go their separate ways**. You would then read everything in **bold** or *italic* print, look at the chart, and read the **Review Questions**.

Surveying provides you with a great deal of information in a short amount of time. (Look at how much you learn about The Beatles just from reading the section headings.)

In addition to providing you with an overview of the material, surveying also provides you with an "information framework." Having this framework of main ideas makes it much easier to understand and remember the more detailed information.

The Beatles



The Beatles dominate the music industry

The Beatles were a British rock group that dominated the rock and roll industry during the 1960's. The Beatles had an enormous impact on music. They were, in fact, the single most important component in the creation of the modern day "pop" culture.

The four members of this dynamic group were **Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, George Harrison** and **John Lennon**. Their playful, yet irreverent public image captured the imagination of an entire generation.

The band gets their start in Liverpool

In the summer of 1957, John Lennon and Paul McCartney began playing together in Liverpool, England. Later that year, Paul invited guitar player George Harrison to join the group. The band was becoming popular around the area and was booked to play a series of concerts in Hamburg, Germany. The group perfected their musical skills in the Hamburg beerhalls playing standard American rock and roll songs.

A change of image

On returning from Hamburg, The Beatles were discovered by **Brian Epstein**. As their manager, Epstein changed the image of the group by exchanging their black leather jackets and tight jeans for collarless suits. He also gave them a new style of haircut. In 1962, Epstein got The Beatles their first recording contract.

Shortly before entering the studio, drummer Ringo Starr was added to the group. The early Beatles recordings were instantly successful, and soon the band was headlining tours.

Success in the U.S.

In 1964, The Beatles' music was released in the United States. The sales were tremendous, breaking all previous records. The band came to New York in April, where screaming fans met them at the airport, and 70 million people watched them on the *Ed Sullivan Show*.

Throughout the 1960's The Beatles' popularity grew. Their *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album was released in 1967 to unprecedented critical acclaim. A series of creative, commercially successful albums followed.

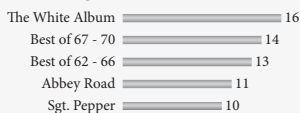
The Beatles go their separate ways

By the end of 1968, the members of the group had begun to go in different directions. Paul McCartney continued to write "pop" melodies while George Harrison immersed himself in eastern spirituality. John Lennon grew more distant from the band as he grew closer to his wife, Yoko Ono. In April of 1970, McCartney released his first solo album and announced the end of The Beatles.

Throughout the 1970's, The Beatles' music continued to be popular, and they were constantly encouraged to reunite. Lennon's death in 1980 put an end to any hope of a reunion.

The Beatles were inducted into the **Rock and Roll Hall of Fame** in 1988.

Best Selling Beatles' Albums (in millions)



Review Questions

- 1) Which band members started The Beatles?
- 2) What year did The Beatles start their recording career? When did they break up?
- 3) After their break up, did The Beatles ever reunite? Why or why not?

READ. When your reading has a purpose, you have a reason to stay focused, and your comprehension improves.

To give your reading a purpose, try turning each section heading into a question. For example, you could turn the heading, **A change of image**, into the question, "How did The Beatles change their image?" Keep your question in mind as you read, and at the end of the section, see if you can answer it. Questions give you something specific to look for, and they help keep your mind from wandering. You are, therefore, able to remember more of what you read.

You can also give your reading purpose by looking over a section, finding the words in **bold** and *italic* print, and asking yourself, “*Why is this word, person, place, or event important?*” You should, of course, have an answer to that question when you finish reading the section. For example, after reading the section, **A change of image**, you should know who **Brian Epstein** is.

When you have completely finished your reading, you should also be able to answer all of the **Review Questions**.

REVIEW. Okay, you’ve surveyed and read the assignment. This is when most students will close their book and think, “*I’m done.*” Taking a few extra minutes for review, however, will make a huge difference in what you’re able to remember later. *When you review, you lock the information in your brain before it has a chance to evaporate.*



To review, go through the same process you did when you surveyed the material. This time, as you read the section headings, briefly restate the purpose or point of each section to yourself using your own words. As you look at the vocabulary words and the words in **bold** and *italic* print, think about what they mean and why they are important.

If you really want to lock the information in your brain, review everything again a day or two later. When you go to study for the test, you’ll be amazed at how well you already know the material.

It may take a little practice to get the **Survey, Read, and Review** process down, but you’ll soon realize that this process doesn’t mean more work, it just means better grades.



Step 6 Read to Learn

- ▶ **SURVEY** the assignment to get an overview.
- ▶ **READ** with a purpose.
- ▶ **REVIEW** to check your understanding.



Step 7

Study Smart

Students who “study smart” find they spend less time studying, and yet they get better grades.

Find a good place to study. Although it’s usually best to have one place where you study regularly, it doesn’t matter where you study, as long as it has a surface for writing, it’s well lit, quiet, and comfortable. Your study area should also be equipped with paper, pens, pencils, a calculator, etc.

Some students need it to be quiet when they study; others like to have music playing in the background. If you like to listen to music while you do your homework, try playing classical music very softly.

“I like to listen to music while I’m doing busywork-type homework, but not when I’m studying.” Maria

“The library is a really good place for me to study. It’s quiet, and I don’t have any of the distractions that I have at home.” Greg

Get started. Getting started on your studying is often the hardest part. Don’t put it off until later, don’t make excuses, and don’t wait until you’re “in the mood.” If you have a hard time getting started, begin with something you can finish quickly or a subject you like.

Vary your studying. To make your study time more effective and less tedious, use study strategies that use multiple senses (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic).

- ▶ **Visual:** Use color in your notes. Create charts and diagrams, and put important information on flash cards. Creating these will not only help you learn and remember the material—you’ll have great study tools for later.
- ▶ **Auditory:** Read and review information out loud, have discussions, make up rhymes to remember things, and explain what you’ve learned to someone else.
- ▶ **Kinesthetic:** Move around when you study, use objects whenever possible, and act out ideas.

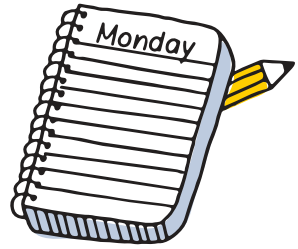
As a general rule, the more senses you involve and the more methods you use to study, the more you'll remember. William Glasser, an expert in the field of education, stated:

"Students learn 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see, 50% of what they see and hear, 70% of what is discussed with others, 80% of what they experience personally, and 95% of what they teach to someone else."

Organize your study time.

- ▶ Before you start to study, make a plan. Decide what you want to get done and the order in which you're going to do it.
 1. Study for History quiz
 2. Do Math worksheet
 3. English - read pages 55-75
- ▶ If you have a lot to do, prioritize your work to make sure you have enough time for the things that are the most important.
- ▶ Focus on one thing at a time.
- ▶ If you have something that seems overwhelming, break it down into smaller, more manageable parts.
- ▶ Always allow more time than you think you'll need.
- ▶ If you have something to memorize, work on that first. Then go over it again at the end of your study session.
- ▶ Do difficult assignments first, while you're still fresh and alert.
- ▶ Alternate types of homework (read English, do math, read history).
- ▶ After studying for 20 - 30 minutes, take a short break (get a drink, get up and stretch, go for a short walk).

"When I study, I take short breaks between subjects." Brad
- ▶ Eliminate clutter. Throw out any papers you don't need, and put those you want to keep in a file.



Know how to study for tests.

- ▶ Know what the test will cover and what kind of test it will be. For essay tests, it's important to understand the big picture and know main points and key facts. For multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank tests, you need to know more detailed information.

- ▶ Have all of your reading done ahead of time.

"I try to get all of the reading done a couple of days before the test. Then I just need to skim and review." Greg



- ▶ Pay particularly close attention in class the day before a test. This is when teachers often go over information you need to know.
- ▶ If your textbook has review questions, know all of the answers. Also, go through your textbook and make sure that you know the meanings of all the words in **bold** and *italic* print.
- ▶ If a teacher gives you a review sheet, study it until you know everything on it. Then use it to come up with questions that might be on the test.
- ▶ You really know something if you can explain it in your own words. Try teaching material to yourself in front of a mirror or to a family member.
- ▶ Review often and review out loud. When you review, you move information from your short-term memory into your long-term memory. *Review is the key to learning and remembering anything!*
- ▶ Write down any names, dates, formulas, and/or facts you need to remember on index cards. Take these cards with you the day of the test and go over them as often as you can.

Know how to memorize and remember information.

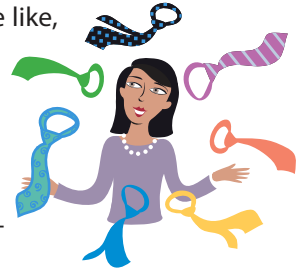
- ▶ Write down whatever it is you want to memorize, and then stare at it. Close your eyes and try to see it in your mind. Say it, and look at it again. Do this until you know it.
- ▶ Use flashcards to memorize vocabulary words, facts, and lists.

"If you have a lot to memorize, spread it out over a period of time, and just keep going over and over it." Sarah

► Before you go to sleep, go over any information you want to remember. Your brain will commit it to memory while you sleep.

► Use acronyms to help you memorize items. For example, the acronym HOMES can help you remember the Great Lakes (Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior).

► Use the first letter of the words you want to remember to make up a silly, ridiculous sentence. For example, to remember the names of the planets for a test, make up a silly sentence like, “My very elegant mother juggled seven ugly neckties.” (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune). As soon as you get your test, say this sentence to yourself, and at the top of the page, write MVEMJSUN. When you need to write down the names of the planets, you’ll have your memory cue ready.



► Look for an easy or logical connection. For example, to remember that Homer wrote the *Odyssey*, think, “**Homer** is an **odd** name.”

► Information is easier to remember if it’s grouped or categorized. Use lists and diagrams to group related terms, facts, and ideas.

► Use ridiculous, unforgettable images to help trigger your memory. For example, a ridiculous image could help you remember that Hawthorne wrote *The Scarlet Letter*. Just visualize a large red letter “A” with a big thorn sticking in it saying “Ha!” It can be fun coming up with your own ridiculous images, and they work.



Prepare and practice for presentations.

► Have a strong beginning and ending. Begin with a personal story, a humorous quote, or an interesting statistic. End with a thought-provoking story, quick summary, quote, or question.

► Use props when possible. Props (posters, sports equipment, books) give you something to look at and something to do with your hands. You can also put notes on the back of your props.

► Practice. Practice. Practice. The more you practice, the better your delivery will be.

Know how to write a paper. The key to writing a good paper is to spread it out over as much time as possible. Writing a paper should be a process, not a one-time event. When you have a paper to write, go through the following ten steps.

1. Choose a topic that interests you.
2. Gather information. (Librarians can be very helpful with this.)
3. Make an outline.
4. Write the first draft.
5. Read your paper out loud and think of ways to improve it.
6. Revise and rewrite.
7. Have someone else read it.
8. Write the final draft.
9. Check for punctuation, spelling, and grammar errors.
10. Make sure your paper looks neat, and turn it in on time.

When you're writing a paper, it's very important to put it away at least once or twice. When you take it out and read it again, you'll see and hear things you didn't notice before.

Be sure to always identify another person's words or ideas by using quotation marks or footnotes. If you present another person's words or ideas as your own, it's the same as cheating. It's called plagiarism.



Step 7 Study Smart

- ▶ Find a good place to study.
- ▶ Get started.
- ▶ Know your learning style.
- ▶ Organize your study time.
- ▶ Know how to study for tests.
- ▶ Know how to memorize and remember information.
- ▶ Prepare and practice for presentations.
- ▶ Know how to write a paper.





Step 8

Be a Good Test Taker

To do well on any test or exam, you must study hard and be prepared. You can further improve your test performance by using these test-taking tips.

Get off to a good start. Have everything you need for the test with you when you go to class (pencils, eraser, calculator, etc.). If you have a couple of minutes before the test starts, try to relax. As soon as you get your test, write anything you want to remember (facts, dates, equations, formulas) at the top of the page.

Develop a plan. Before you begin answering questions, quickly look over the entire test and make a plan. For example, if a one-hour test has 25 multiple-choice questions and 2 essay questions, you could plan to spend 10 minutes on the multiple-choice questions, 20 minutes on each essay question, and 10 minutes checking your answers.

Mark the questions you want to return to. Put a dot or check mark by any answer you're not sure of. After you've gone through all of the questions, go back to the ones you've marked and try them again.

Don't spend a lot of time on difficult questions, and don't panic if you don't know the answers to the first few questions. Sometimes it takes a few minutes for your brain to get in gear.

"If I'm not sure of an answer, I go with my first instinct." Greg

Increase your odds on multiple-choice questions.

- ▶ When you read a multiple-choice question, try to come up with the answer in your head *before* you look at the answer choices.
- ▶ If you're not sure of an answer, cross out the choices you know are wrong and make an educated guess.
- ▶ If two of the choices are similar or opposite, one of them is probably the correct answer.

- ▶ Read all of the answer choices. At least a couple of the answers will probably sound like they could be correct. Don't be tempted to mark the first answer that sounds good.

"Use the test to help you take the test. Sometimes questions give you information that help you answer other questions." Sarah

Look for key words in True/False questions. Statements with absolute words such as *all, always, never, every, and none* in them are usually False. Statements with *usually, often, sometimes, most, and many* in them are usually True. Read True/False questions very carefully. One word will often determine whether a statement is True or False.

Know how to approach essay questions.

- ▶ Read each question and then start with the easiest one. This will help you gain confidence. It will also give you time to think about how to answer the harder questions. Take note of how many points each question is worth and adjust the time you spend on each accordingly.
- ▶ Before you do any writing, do some brainstorming. Jot down the key words, ideas, and points that you want to cover in your answer. If you have time, organize your ideas into a simple outline. If not, just number your ideas in the order you want to present them.
- ▶ Write neatly and use clear, concise, complete sentences. In your opening paragraph, restate the question and tell the reader what he/she can expect to learn from your essay. In your middle paragraphs, present examples, details, and facts to support the points you're making.

In your final paragraph, restate the most important points, draw conclusions, or write a brief summary. Finally, reread your entire essay and make corrections.
- ▶ If you don't know the answer to an essay question, take a couple of minutes to write down what you do know about the subject. You may hit on something and get partial credit. If you don't have time to complete an essay, write your teacher a note explaining that you ran out of time. Then briefly list the points you would have covered. Again, you might get partial credit.

Use strategies to improve your math test scores. 1) Before you start to solve a problem, estimate what the answer will be. 2) If you are having difficulty with a problem, try drawing a picture or a diagram. 3) Don't spend too much time on one problem. If you get stumped, go on, and come back to it later. 4) Show all of your work. Even if you get the wrong answer, you may get partial credit if you were on the right track.

Be prepared for open book tests. These tips will help you locate information during an open book test: 1) highlight your notes; 2) write down any information you know you're going to need on a separate sheet of paper; 3) put self-stick notes in your textbook to help you locate specific information.

Check your answers. If you have time, check all of your answers, even the ones you know are correct. You may have made a careless mistake. *Use all of the time you're given.*

Go over all returned tests. When your test is returned, go over each question you missed and write in the correct answer. You may see one or more of these questions on a future test or exam. Keep a record of your test scores, and keep all returned tests.



Step 8 Be a Good Test Taker

- ▶ **Get off to a good start.**
- ▶ **Develop a plan.**
- ▶ **Mark the questions you want to return to.**
- ▶ **Increase your odds on multiple-choice questions.**
- ▶ **Look for key words in True/False questions.**
- ▶ **Know how to approach essay questions.**
- ▶ **Use strategies to improve your math test scores.**
- ▶ **Be prepared for open book tests.**
- ▶ **Check your answers.**
- ▶ **Go over all returned tests.**



Step 9 Reduce Test Anxiety

A little anxiety before a test improves your concentration and alertness. Too much worry, or test anxiety, can lower your test score.

It's possible for students with test anxiety to get themselves so worked up that they can't think clearly. The brain, like a computer, contains a great deal of information. This information is useless, however, if you're not able to "access it." Having test anxiety is like not having the password for your computer. The information is there, but you can't get to it.

To reduce test anxiety, study enough to feel confident that you know the material, and replace the worry and negative thinking with thoughts that are positive. Also try doing the following:

- ▶ Start studying early. Cramming only increases test anxiety.
- ▶ Mentally practice going through the test. Close your eyes and see yourself walking confidently into the room, answering the questions correctly, and receiving the grade you want.
- ▶ The night before a test, review the material, and then get a good night's sleep.
- ▶ Walk into the test with your head up and your shoulders back. Tell yourself that you're ready, and that you are going to do fine.
- ▶ Try these relaxation techniques:
 1. Take a deep breath. Then slowly release your breath, along with any tension. Do this until you feel your body relax.
 2. Start at the top of your head, flexing, and then relaxing each part of your body.
 3. Close your eyes and visualize warm sunshine washing over you, melting away the tension and relaxing all of your muscles.
 4. Think of a place where you feel relaxed and calm. Close your eyes and visualize being there.

The more you practice these techniques, the better you'll get. If you continue to have problems with test anxiety, talk to your counselor.



Step 10

Get Help When You Need It

When you have a problem, do something to resolve it.

Most questions can be answered and most problems resolved just by talking to the right person (teacher, counselor, secretary, principal).

- ▶ If you need academic help or if you have a class-related problem, talk to your teacher.
- ▶ For most other questions or problems, go to the office or talk to your counselor.
- ▶ If you ever feel threatened or harassed by another student, tell a teacher, counselor, or principal immediately.

All students have problems and concerns. Some students, however, have problems so overwhelming that they can't pay attention in class or concentrate on their work. Even though they may put up a good front, these students need to get help.

Know when to ask for help

If you're dealing with any of the following, please talk to a parent, counselor, or adult you trust right away: alcohol, drugs, pregnancy, abusive relationship, eating disorder, bullying, depression, problems at home.

Thousands of students are struggling with these same issues. The smart ones get help.

"Be strong enough to stand alone, smart enough to know when you need help, and brave enough to ask for it."

Ziad Abdelnour

Tips for Parents

Your child needs you to be interested and involved in his/her academic progress. Doing the following will help ensure that your child succeeds in school.

Show interest. Attend all open houses and parent conferences. You'll learn valuable information, and you'll show your child that school is important.

Know when each grading period ends, and make sure that you see all progress reports and report cards as soon as they come out. If you do not see a progress report or report card, call the school and request a copy. *Do not just assume that someone will call you if there's a problem.*

Recognize extra effort and improvement, and show interest in your child's work. Make it a point to acknowledge each academic success, even if it's just a good grade on a quiz or homework assignment.

Discuss classes and set goals. At the beginning of each grading period, help your child set some academic goals. You could determine what grade your child wants to earn in each course, or perhaps your child's goal is to make the Honor Roll. You might also set some goals relating to study habits (e.g., have all homework done by 8:00 each night).

Setting goals will help your child understand what your expectations are, and give your child something specific to work toward.

You can, of course, offer rewards if goals are met and/or consequences if they're not. Rewards are particularly effective when you want to encourage a change in effort or behavior. (Eventually, doing well will be its own reward.) Consequences are most effective when they are reasonable and logical. For example, a reasonable and logical consequence for routinely being late to school might be an earlier bedtime. *Never take away a positive activity (sports, school plays, music lessons, scouting) as a consequence.*

Listen. Talk to your child about what's happening in school and be a good listener.

Be available to help. Be available to help with homework, but don't give more help than is wanted. Your child may not ask again. Keep in mind that it's your child's responsibility to be organized, to get homework done, and to prepare for tests.

Encourage school involvement. Studies show that students who are involved in school-related activities have greater academic success and they enjoy school more. Encourage your child to be involved in one or more school activities.

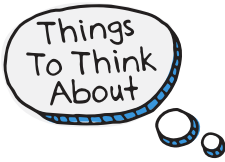
Monitor activities and jobs. Make sure your child isn't spending too much time on social networking sites, watching TV, texting, playing video games, or talking on the phone. If your child has a job, make sure he/she isn't working too late or too many hours.

Be aware of what not to do.

- ▶ Don't nag about school or grades. Your child will tune you out.
- ▶ Don't allow your child to miss school unless he/she is truly ill. You will send a message that school isn't important.
- ▶ Don't criticize a teacher in front of your child. Your child will only lose respect for that teacher.
- ▶ Don't make your child's failures (or successes) your own. Your child may see getting poor grades as a way to rebel.
- ▶ Don't have unrealistic expectations. If your child feels that your expectations can't be met, he/she may not even bother to try.

Work with your school. Know that teachers, counselors, and principals are there to help your child get the best education possible. A health problem, death in the family, or divorce can affect your child's attitude and/or performance in school. If such a circumstance should arise, contact the principal or counselor and explain the situation.

If you have a concern that relates to a specific teacher or class, contact the teacher. For other questions and concerns, contact your child's counselor. Be sure to express any concerns you have in a constructive, respectful manner.



Words to Live By

Below are some quotes to get you thinking about what it takes to be successful in life.

- ▶ We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit. *Aristotle*
- ▶ If we did all the things we are capable of doing, we would literally astonish ourselves. *Thomas Edison*
- ▶ The tragedy of life doesn't lie in not reaching your goal. The tragedy lies in having no goal to reach. *Benjamin Mays*
- ▶ Successful people have learned to make themselves do the thing that has to be done when it has to be done, whether they like it or not. *Aldous Huxley*
- ▶ Failure is the opportunity to begin again more intelligently. *Henry Ford*
- ▶ Opportunities are usually disguised as hard work, so most people don't recognize them. *Ann Landers*
- ▶ Do what you can, with what you have, where you are. *Theodore Roosevelt*
- ▶ Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up. *Thomas Edison*
- ▶ All things are difficult before they are easy. *Thomas Fuller*
- ▶ The greatest thing in this world is not so much where we are, but in what direction we are moving. *Oliver Wendell Holmes*
- ▶ You are never a loser until you quit trying. *Mike Ditka*
- ▶ Life is an echo; what you send out comes back. *Chinese Proverb*

How To Get **Good** Grades

In Ten Easy Steps

Valuable information and
practical tips to help you
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