

# HOW TO GET GOOD GRADES



IN TEN EASY STEPS

## STEP ONE

### BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

Have you ever seen a grown elephant at a circus or zoo with one foot roped to a stake in the ground? This huge elephant will walk a few feet, but when he feels the tug of the rope around his foot, he'll stop. The elephant could easily break the rope if he wanted to, so why do you suppose he doesn't give the rope a good yank and break it?

Well, when that elephant was a baby, he had just such a rope tied to his foot. Even though he tried and tried, he found that he just wasn't strong enough to break it, and he gave up. Now, as a grown elephant, he continues to believe that he can't break the rope, and so he doesn't even try.

*This is the time for you to break away from any "ropes" that have been holding you back. Decide right now to use your abilities and your talents, and to do as well as you possibly can in school.*

## STEP TWO

### GET ORGANIZED

USE YOUR ASSIGNMENT BOOK Take your assignment book to every class with you and use it for each day's assignments.

USE THREE-RING BINDERS Three-ring binders work well because you easily can insert handouts, and if you miss a day's notes, you can copy someone else's and insert them where they belong. Buy a personal 3-hole punch and put it in your notebook. You'll then be able to punch your handouts right there in class and immediately put them in your notebook with your notes for the day.

USE FOLDERS FOR SCHOOLWORK Have a different colored folder for each class. Keep current assignments along with all returned assignments, quizzes, and tests in the appropriate folder. Old tests and quizzes can help you study for future tests and they may come in handy if there is a question about your grade.

HAVE THE NUMBERS FOR THE HOMEWORK HOTLINES Make sure you have the numbers for the homework hotline handy. This way you can call if you get stuck on a homework problem in the evenings. A good math hotline is AskRose. Students can call 877-ASK-ROSE or email [askrose.org](mailto:askrose.org) with questions.

CHECK CANVAS AND HARMONY DAILY Make sure to check canvas everyday so you know what assignments are due and what homework you have.

KEEP YOUR LOCKER AND BACKPACK NEAT Never put loose papers in your locker, your backpack, or folded up in a book. Always put them in the appropriate folder or notebook as soon as you get them. Have books and materials organized so that you quickly and easily can find what you need.

GET ORGANIZED BEFORE YOU GO TO BED Put completed homework in the appropriate folder, and put everything you need for the following day in the same place each night. If there is anything you need to remember to do in the morning, leave yourself a note so you won't forget.

## STEP THREE

### MANAGE YOUR TIME WELL

USE CLASS TIME AND STUDY HALLS Always use the time your teachers give you in class to start on homework, to ask questions, or to get help.

CREATE YOUR OWN STUDY PLAN Your study plan needs to be based on what's going to work for you. Your study plan will vary from day to day, depending on the time you have available and the amount of homework you have. Before you get home from school each day, you already should have a study plan in mind.

PREPARE FOR SABOTAGE. Identify anything that could interrupt or ruin your study plan and figure out how to eliminate or avoid it.

EX: I used to get interrupted by texts. Now my friends don't text until around 8:30 and I make sure I have my homework done by then.

Or

I can't lie down on the couch and watch TV until I have all of my homework finished.

## STEP FOUR

### BE SUCCESSFUL IN THE CLASSROOM

LEARN HOW TO ADAPT TO DIFFERENT TEACHERS In the classroom, the teachers are in charge and they make the rules. You may have one teacher who says you're tardy if you are not in your seat when the bell rings, and another teacher who considers you "on time" if you are in the vicinity of the door. It doesn't matter whether or not you agree with the teacher's rule; it only matters that you are in your seat when the teacher requires you to be. Part of your education is to learn how to adapt to different personalities, teaching styles, and expectations. You will be dealing with these throughout your adult career.

BE IN SCHOOL, ON TIME, EVERYDAY When you miss school, you miss lectures, notes, class discussions, homework explanations, and assignments. It doesn't matter how conscientious you are about making up your work, you can never make up all of what you miss. Unless you have an extended illness or a chronic health problem, you should miss no more than 5-6 days of school a year,

BE PREPARED FOR EACH CLASS You need to be prepared both physically and mentally for class. Physically, you need to bring books, homework, paper, pencils, etc. to class. Being mentally prepared means that you are ready to use your mind to learn. To be physically and mentally alert, you need to get enough sleep each night, eat right, and exercise.

SIT IN THE FRONT OF THE CLASS, IF POSSIBLE It is easier to stay involved, pay attention, ask questions, and see the board, overheads, etc. when you sit in the front of the classroom. If you find your mind "wandering" and you have been assigned a seat in the back of the classroom, ask your teacher if it would be possible for you to move to the front.

BE AWARE OF YOUR BODY LANGUAGE AND NONVERBAL BEHAVIOR This counselor's story illustrates the importance of body language:

***"One day a student named Jeremy complained to me that his English teacher always picked on him. Jeremy assured me that he never talked out in class, that he always did his homework, and that he did everything he was instructed to do.***

***The following week, I was in Jeremy's English class to talk about***

***scheduling. Jeremy, who was sitting in the back row, never spoke out of turn, never talked to his neighbors, and he did everything I asked during my entire presentation. Nevertheless, as my presentation went on, I became more and more infuriated with him. Why? Because of his body language and his non-verbal behavior.***

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

***The next day I called Jeremy into my office and explained to him what I had observed the previous day. Jeremy was genuinely surprised that I had even noticed him in the class.***

What Jeremy didn't understand is that when teachers are up in front of a classroom, they see most things. They know who is paying attention, who is taking notes, and who is engaged in class discussions. They also are very much aware of who is doing homework for a different class, writing personal notes, daydreaming, and "napping" (even if students think they have positioned their hands and books to hide it). If you choose to do any of these things, don't kid yourself that you are "fooling" your teacher. You may "get away" with it occasionally, but your teachers will notice, even if they don't say anything. Teachers notice, and they conclude that you don't care about what's going on in their class. It's not enough for you to say that you want to get good grades; your body language and your nonverbal behavior have to communicate this also.

**ALWAYS DO YOUR HOMEWORK** Do not look at homework as something you should do, think of homework as something you MUST do.

**PARTICIPATE IN CLASS** Participating in class helps to keep you focused and it keeps your mind from wandering.

**BE A GOOD GROUP MEMBER** Here are a few things to remember when you have to do a group project: 1) Do your share of the work and do it well 2) Accept that everyone is different and try to be open to all ideas 3) Be positive and try to encourage and support the other members of the group.

**TREAT OTHERS WITH COURTESY AND RESPECT** Treat your teachers and classmates the same way that you want to be treated. Be polite, look at your teachers when they are 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 an entirely different message.

*INVOLVE YOUR PARENTS:* Make your parents your allies. When they ask, "What did you do in school today?", tell them. They'll love the fact that you're talking to them about school. Whenever possible, also let your parents help you with your homework or studying. They can, for example, drill you on vocabulary, help you write papers, listen to your presentation, and help you study for tests. You'll get better grades, and your parents will appreciate your giving them the opportunity to help.

If you are having a problem with a subject, teacher, class, or fellow student, let your parents know. They can help you deal with whatever the situation is and; if necessary, they can intervene on your behalf. When talking with your parents about a problem, you must be willing to tell them the entire story (the good AND bad). If your parents "go to bat for you" only to find that you have "forgotten" to tell them a part of the situation which changes things drastically, it will be more difficult for your parents to rush to your defense if another situation occurs.

# STEP FIVE

## TAKE GOOD NOTES

BE AN ACTIVE LISTENER When you are actively listening in class, you don't just hear the words the teacher is saying, you also think about and really try to understand the information that is being presented.

TAKE NOTES TO HELP YOU PAY ATTENTION You can think faster than anyone can talk, This is one of the reasons your mind sometimes wanders when you are listening to a lecture. 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, therefore, helps you pay attention and stay focused.

RECOGNIZE IMPORTANT INFORMATION You often can hear a change in your teacher's voice when he/she is going to say something that is important for you to know. Phrases like "the most important reason." "the three causes," etc. also are cues to listen for. Anything your teacher takes the time to write on the board or overhead should be considered very important. Double-underline or put a star beside information that you've copied from the board so that you'll know to give it special attention when you are studying later.

TAKE NOTES THAT ARE EASY TO READ Put the name of the class, the date, and page number at the top of each page of notes. It will help you keep your notes organized.

- Use a pencil or erasable pen to keep your notes neat.
- Write on every other line. Your notes will be easier to read and you'll have space if you want to add something later.
- Use symbols and abbreviations whenever possible. The following symbols will help you take notes faster:

= same or equal	W with
> greater than	Wo without
< less than	w/in within
* most importantly	esp. Especially
- Leave a wide margin on each page and write key words in the margins. Key words (EX: main topics, names of people, and events) help you organize your thoughts. They make your notes more understandable and they act as study guides when you're studying for a test. You can cover up your notes, look at your



key words, and test yourself to see what you remember about that topic, person, or event.

READ OVER YOUR NOTES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE While the information is fresh in your mind, go over your notes and clarify anything that is confusing. While you are going over your notes, you also are "fixing" this information in your memory.

If you are really serious about getting the best grade possible in a class, completely recopy your notes. You will be able to take the time to write your notes out in a more organized manner and you'll be learning the material at the same time!

GET LECTURE NOTES IF YOU ARE ABSENT When you are absent, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed and ask for handouts and assignments. Be sure to copy any notes you missed and put them in your notebook.

## STEP SIX

### KNOW HOW TO READ A TEXTBOOK

The three keys to reading a textbook are:

- 1) SCAN
- 2) READ
- 3) REVIEW

SCAN Read the title, the subtitles, and everything in bold and italic print. Look at all pictures, graphs, and charts, and read review questions and summaries. Scanning provides you with a great deal of information in a short amount of time. Once you have this framework, it's easier for you to make sense of the remainder of the material. You can take all of the new information and fit it into the framework that has been developed.

READ If your reading has a purpose, your comprehension will improve and it will be easier for you to stay focused. To give your reading a purpose, devise a question for each bold-faced subtitle. Keep your questions in mind as you read. Your questions give you something specific to look for and help keep your mind from wandering so that you will remember more of what you read. Before you start to read a section, also look to see if there are any vocabulary words, names, places, or events in bold or italic print and ask yourself, "Why is this word, person, place, or event important?".

REVIEW. After most students have scanned and read the material, they will say, "I'm done," and close their books. If you take a few extra minutes for review, there will be a huge difference in the amount that you remember later on. Reviewing is a way to lock the information into your brain. To review, go back to the beginning and go through the same process you did when you first scanned the material. If you really want to lock information into your brain, review everything again a day or two later.

It may take a little practice to get the SCAN, READ, AND REVIEW process down, but it will be worthwhile. This process does not mean more work, it just means better comprehension, better retention, and better grades.

# STEP SEVEN

## STUDY SMART

FIND A GOOD PLACE TO STUDY It doesn't matter where you study as long as it has good lighting, has a surface for writing, and is comfortable. Determine what works best for you. If you like to listen to music when you study, consider listening to classical music. Research has shown that classical music actually can improve your concentration.

KNOW YOUR LEARNING STYLE We all learn differently. Some students learn best by seeing the material (visual learners), some learn best from hearing the information (auditory learners), and some learn best by doing (kinesthetic learners). Think about how you learn and adjust how you study accordingly.

If you are a visual learner, take notes, use flash cards, form pictures in your mind, and make use of color in your notes. If you are an auditory learner, read aloud, have discussions, listen to tapes, review information out loud, and use memory tricks involving rhythm and rhyme. If you are a kinesthetic learner, try moving around while you study, use tools and objects whenever possible, write or type notes, and role play ideas and concepts.

As a general rule, the more senses you involve and the wider variety of methods you use while studying, the more you'll remember. William Glasser, an expert in the field of education, says that "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."

### MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR STUDY TIME.

- Before you start to study, make a plan.
- Prioritize your work in order to make sure you have time for the things that are most important.
- If something seems overwhelming, break it down into smaller parts.
- If something must be memorized, work on that first, and then review it again at the end of your study session.
- Always allow more time than you think you will need.
- Study your least favorite subject first.
- Alternate types of assignments (EX: read English, do math, read history)

etc.).

- Know when and how to take breaks. Research shows that students learn the most during the first and last ten minutes of any study session. Try studying for 20 minutes and then take a short break.

### KNOW WHAT TO STUDY FOR TESTS

- Know what the test is going to cover.
- Pay close attention in class the day before a test. This is when teachers review information that you need to know.
- If you are given a review sheet or study guide, study it until you are confident that you know all of the material on it.
- Have all reading done ahead of time.
- Explain the material to yourself or your study partner in your own words.
- Review is the key to learning anything. When you review, you move information from your short-term memory into your long-term memory.

### USE TRICKS TO HELP YOU MEMORIZE INFORMATION

- Use study cards or flashcards to memorize vocabulary words, facts, and lists.
- Write down what you want to memorize and look at it hard. Close your eyes and try to see it in your mind. Say it, and then look at it again.
- Use rhyming or rhythm to help you memorize things. Make up a rap or memorize to a beat.
- As you are going to sleep at night, go over in your mind what you want to remember.
- Use acronyms to help you memorize. For example, the acronym HOMES can help you remember the Great Lakes (Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior).
- Use the first letter of words you want to remember to make up a stupid, silly, ridiculous sentence. Let's say you need to remember the planets. You could make up a sentence like, "My very elegant mother just scooped up nine piglets." (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto).
- Use silly and ridiculous associations and images to help trigger your memory. For example, a simple association could help you remember that Homer wrote the Odyssey. Just think to yourself, "Homer is an odd name."

KNOW HOW TO WRITE A PAPER The key to writing a good paper is to use as much time as necessary to develop it. Writing a paper should be a process, not a one-time event. You should brainstorm, take notes, make an outline, then write a rough draft. Rewrite the paper until you have it just the way you want it, then write the final draft.

You need to put your paper away at least once or twice during the writing process. When you take it out to read it again, it will be like reading it for the first time. You will

see and hear things that you didn't notice earlier. Have someone else read your paper to make suggestions, and remember, neater papers get better grades.

USE TRICKS WHEN YOU MAKE A PRESENTATION OR SPEECH.

- Use props (posters, pictures, books, etc.) whenever possible. Props give others something to look at and give you something to do with your hands. You also can put notes on the back of them.
- When giving your speech or presentation, pretend that you are telling your best friend something really important.
- Make eye contact with the people in your audience. If you find that you are unable to look into a person's eyes, look at his/her forehead instead.

# STEP EIGHT

## USE TEST-TAKING STRATEGIES

GET OFF TO A GOOD START When you enter the class, have everything you need for the test. As soon as you get your test, write anything that you want to remember (EX: formulas, dates, memory aids, etc.) in light pencil at the top of your test paper. Write your name on your test and be sure to read the directions carefully.

DEVELOP A PLAN As soon as you receive your test, quickly look over the entire test and develop a plan. How many multiple-choice questions and how many essay questions are there? How much time should you spend on each type of question? How much time should you allow for checking over your answers?

MARK QUESTIONS THAT YOU WANT TO RETURN TO Put a dot or light checkmark by an answer you're not sure of. After you have answered all of the questions, go back to the ones you've marked and try them again.

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. It is very likely that you will know the answers to these questions when you go over them later.

LOOK FOR KEY WORDS IN TRUE/FALSE QUESTIONS Statements with always, never, every, seldom, all, and none in them usually are false. Statements with usually, often, sometimes, most, and many in them usually are true. Remember, for a statement to be true, every part of it must be true.

### INCREASE YOUR ODDS ON MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- As you're reading the questions, try to come up with the answer in your head before you look at the choices.
- If you are not sure of an answer, eliminate the choices you know are incorrect by crossing them out, and then make an educated guess. If two of the choices are similar or opposite, probably one of them is the correct answer. If you absolutely have no idea, go with the longest and/or most detailed answer, or with one of the middle answers.

### KNOW HOW TO APPROACH ESSAY QUESTIONS

- Read each essay question and then start with the easiest one. This helps to build confidence and will give you time to think about how to answer the harder questions. The amount of time you allot to each should be determined by how many points each essay is worth.
- Before you do any writing, brainstorm. Jot down key points and ideas that you want to include in your answer, then organize these into a simple outline.
- Begin writing. Write legibly and in complete sentences. In your opening paragraph, state the questions and tell the reader what he/she can expect to learn from your essay. Your middle paragraphs should present examples, details, evidence, and facts to support the points you are making. In the final paragraph, restate your position, and a quick summary. Reread your answer and make corrections.
- If you don't know the answer to an essay question, write whatever you know about the subject. If you don't have time to complete an essay, write a note explaining that you ran out of time, and then briefly list the points you would have covered. You might get partial credit.

BE PREPARED FOR OPEN BOOK TESTS When taking an open book test, you must be able to locate information quickly. To help you do this, highlight your notes, put "Post-its" or bookmarks in your textbook to help you locate specific information, and write down any information you know you'll need on a sheet of paper (if this is permitted by the teacher).

CHECK YOUR ANSWERS If time permits, check all of your answers, even the ones you know are correct. You may have misread the question or made a careless mistake.

GO OVER ALL RETURNED TESTS When your test is returned, go over each question you missed and write in the correct answer. This question may appear on another test or a final exam. Also check to make sure your test was graded correctly (anyone can make a mistake).

## STEP NINE

### REDUCE TEST ANXIETY

Students with test anxiety can make themselves so anxious, that they can't think clearly. To reduce test anxiety, study until you feel confident that you know the material and then study a little more! Some additional suggestions that may help you include:

- Start studying early. Cramming increases test anxiety.
- Mentally practice going through the testing experience. See yourself calmly and confidently taking the test. Use this mental exercise several times before the day of the test.
- How you act can affect how you feel. Walk into the test with your head up, shoulders back, and a smile on your face. If you act confident, you may find that you feel more confident. .
- Take a deep breath, hold it, and then slowly release the breath and the tension. Do this until you feel your body relax.

Positive thinking and relaxation techniques are like anything else. The more you practice them, the better you get.



## STEP TEN

### GET HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT.

There will be times when you will have a question or problem concerning a class, school policy, rule, teacher, or fellow student. Most questions can be answered and most problems resolved if you go to the appropriate person and clearly explain the situation.

If you need academic help, or if you have a class related problem, talk to your teacher. If you feel intimidated or harassed by another student, tell your teacher (if the intimidation or harassment has taken place within the classroom or if the student is on your team), or the teacher on duty or principal (if the intimidation or harassment is at the lockers, in the cafetorium, in the hall, etc.) immediately. If you ever have a problem and are not sure where to go for help, talk with your counselor.

Every student has his/her share of normal teenage problems. Some students, however, have problems that are so overwhelming they cannot pay attention in class or concentrate on their schoolwork. These students need to get help. Students dealing with problems such as alcohol, drugs, pregnancy, an abusive relationship, eating disorder, health concerns, problems at home, or depression need to talk to their parents or their counselor immediately. Thousands of students across the country are struggling with these same problems. **Ask someone for help!**