

Important Study Skills Information

or

How to Succeed in School



Time and Place

Where you study is important.

Studies have also shown that studying the same material in two different locations can help you do better.

Study in a quiet room free of distractions.

Sit in a straight chair; do not lie down.

Light on writing surface should be on opposite side of writing arm.

Some smells help you study better: lemon and peppermint stimulate attention and memory.

Resources include pens, pencils, erasers, paper, dictionary, reference materials.

Television, loud music, etc. should not be played or watched;

Sometimes quiet, soothing music can be used to cover the sounds of household distractions.

Studies have shown that if you study in silence, you will be better prepared for a test given in silence.

NEVER try to study for a test or do difficult homework *right* before bed.

Study at a consistent time as much as possible: in the morning, immediately after school, before dinner, after dinner--*whichever is your best alert/concentration time.*

Organization

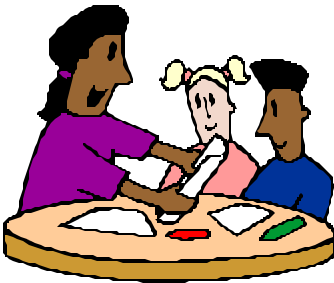
Good organization is the most important key to success.

If you are absent from even one class (or a day), you should always ask for the missed work.

If you use a take-home folder--when you complete your homework, all work should be put into the appropriate folder; technically nothing should be left in the take-home folder.

Before you go to sleep at night, you should put all work into the appropriate folders and your backpack should be put by the door.

Bring the proper materials to every class each day: assignment notebook, textbook, folders, spiral notebook, pens, pencils, etc.



Homework/Assignment Notebook

If you do not have an assignment in a class, you should write "None" in the space provided for assignments. Don't leave the space blank.

If you have completed all your homework or don't have any homework, you should check over and possibly rewrite the assignment, review past class work, rewrite notes, read.

If you don't have each class every day (like spelling), you should still write in the assignment given out the day before or write something like "See above."

When doing your homework, you should work on the hardest/longest assignment(s) first.

If you have a long-term assignment, you should break it up into "short term goals." In other words, organize it so that you complete small sections at a time.

Working/studying for long times is not as effective as breaking up the work into shorter segments.

[However, if you are doing well, don't just stop because you should study in short segments.]

Typically, a student should be doing approximately 10 minutes of assignments per grade level; for example a 7th grade would do 70 minutes.

General Notetaking

Taking notes in class will **always** be helpful. If a teacher writes information on the whiteboard, you should copy it or take notes.

Later, rewrite and edit notes (highlight, color code, star, transform into study sheets/cards, rewrite into paragraphs).

Pay careful attention to signal/transition words like “important,” “causes,” “first,” “one,” “two,” etc.

Notes should NOT be written in sentence or paragraph form; use abbreviations, symbols, arrows, etc. that help clue you into listening carefully to the information and can help organize your notes

Write each new note on a new line; don't ever make notes look like sentences or paragraphs.

Indent new information that is related to or a detail of previous information written above it.



Study Methods for Tests

[Read “The Best Study Skills-Five Strategies You Need to Know and Use.” (additional sheet)]

[Read “Association and Visualization Methods” and “The Link Method” and “Trolley Dash-Shopping List Memory Game” (additional sheets)]

A very useful study method for reading textbooks is **SQ4R** which stands for “**survey, question, read, respond, record, review.**” (See handout)

Creating notes (when recording above) useful for studying is a practice called “**Key Word**ing” (Cornell Study Method) for which you pick no more than five important words from the section of notes you've taken (paragraph/section of a chapter). (See handout)

These words then become “triggers” to help recall the main idea of the information written in the notes.

Mnemonic devices (memory aids) such as acronyms (words made from the letters of other words (“HOMES”), creative sentences, rhymes, songs, full descriptions (immersing yourself in the information)

Use note cards to create flashcards for vocabulary words, countries/capitals, people/accomplishments, etc.

Make up your own practice tests.

Memorize facts, words, formulas, etc.

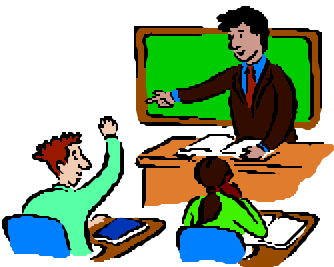
Find time each day to review the material you covered in class.

Review, review, review, review, review, review!

Plan ahead; plan enough time to study before a test; budget your time.

Get a good night's sleep; eat a healthy breakfast!

Note: While cramming for a test might help you in the short term, you will forget information much more quickly than if you had “spaced out” the information. Your brain stores information for a much longer time if it is “packed” carefully and gradually: an hour of study today, an hour on the weekend, another session a week from now, etc.



Goal Setting/Setting Priorities

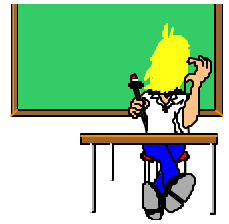
When setting goals, make sure they are observable and measurable. Set what are called SMART goals: goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound.

You often need to meet short-term goals in order to reach long-term goals.

Sometimes you need to decide what activity is more important to do: set high and low priorities.

Change priorities as events come closer to their “due” dates. (A report moves up the list as the due date draws closer.)

Always try to complete long term assignments before the due date in order to get you through the last minute problems that always come up (Murphy's Law).

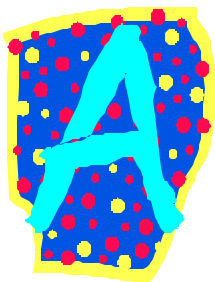


Test Taking

- If possible, ask what type of test it will be; adjust your studying methods.
Always read over the entire test and read directions carefully before starting.
Answer first the questions you know, the easiest ones (opposite of doing homework).
Skip questions you have trouble with; mark them and come back to them later--the opposite way you approach homework assignments.
- On T/F tests, if any part of the question is false, the answer is false.
Words like "never," "all," "always" often signal false answers on T/F.
Try to eliminate impossible answers if you are not sure.
- On multiple choice questions, try to answer the question first without even looking at the choices.
- On matching, cross out the answers you've used
Read the longer section first and then match it with the shorter section.
(For example, read the definitions list and then match with the single words.
It will mean reading fewer words and working faster.)
- For an essay test, turn the question into a statement and make it your first sentence of the answer.
Plan your answer by making some notes, a list, or a web for yourself.
Be sure to add details to support your essay answer.
- For fill in the blanks answers, don't forget to look over the test; there may be answers within the test somewhere.
- DO NOT CHANGE an answer on a test unless you are sure beyond any doubt.
Do NOT second guess yourself.
- Use relaxation techniques to take the stress away from test taking: use abdominal breathing, mind pictures

Attitudes

- Negative attitude can keep you from succeeding.
Try to figure out why you have the negative attitude.
Determine whether your attitude is realistic or if it grew from *one* bad experience.
If it's realistic, think of three things you can do to change the situation.
Think about how you have changed since you had the bad experience.
Positive attitude increases your chance for success.
Be careful of a negative self-fulfilling prophecy.
Look for something positive in every experience.
Researchers have found links between a positive outlook and both active-disease fighting and longevity.



Information for study skills has been taken from a variety of sources:

1. You Can Take Charge-A Study Skills Curriculum. Columbus, Ohio: Zaner-Bloser, 1998.
2. "Adon Ross's Route to Success"
3. SQ4R and Cornell Study Method handouts.
4. Information is also in Write Source 2000 (Sections 409-457)
5. Carey, Benedict, "Forget What You Know About Good Study Habits." *New York Times*.
6 September 2101
6. <http://www.memory-improvement-tips.com>