

The Secrets to Getting Good Grades

Hi! My name is Samantha Sawyer. I will be entering my senior year in high school and I have worked hard to get where I am. Would you like to know the secrets of getting good grades in high school? When I first started as a freshman, I went to my guidance counselor and asked her how I could get my grades up. I had struggled a bit in middle school and knew I would have to kick it up a notch in high school.



She told me that the first thing I had to do was to be willing to work harder. (I kind of expected her to say that!) But then she told me the real secret of improvement: “If you really want your grades to improve, you have to learn how to **work smart.**” I had no idea what that meant. Fortunately, she went on to explain to me that there were some simple, basic things that everyone can do to become a more efficient and effective student. So I tried them, and in a short time my grades began to rise—and school magically got easier!

Now I’m going to tell you the secrets of working smart. These “secrets” are really just common-sense things that you can do to make learning easier. Learning is basically a **skill**. Through practice you can get better and better at it—if you learn how to learn. There are five steps to working smart:

1. First, you have to [get yourself organized](#) so that you can do more in less time.
2. Second, I will show you how to get the [extra help](#) you need.
3. Third, I can tell you how to [prepare for tests](#).
4. Next, I have a lot of [study tools](#) to help you take notes in class and create study guides.
5. Finally, I can link you to [outstanding web sites](#) where you can get help with any or all of your courses.

As I said, the secret of getting good grades is working smart. But there are many ways to work smart. Click the items on these pages and learn the different ways to work smart in high school.

STEP ONE: [GET ORGANIZED](#)

Working smart means establishing priorities and managing your time. Do you want better grades and more free time? You can do it when you become the *master of your time*.

Ten Secrets of Time Management

Set Your Goals

Establish Your Priorities

Use a Homework Log

Identify Your Time Wasters

Plan Your Free Time

STEP TWO: [GET EXTRA HELP](#)

On these pages you will learn how to get your teachers, parents, mentor, and counselors on the same page in order to provide you with the help you need. Working smart means getting other *people to work for you!*

How to Work with Your Teachers

Working with Your Mentor

How Guidance Counselors Can Help You

Help Your Parents Help You

Student Survival Manual: <http://www.thesurvivalmanual.com>

STEP THREE: [GET PREPARED FOR TESTS](#)

Did you know that there are different ways to study for different types of tests? Working smart means knowing the right way to study for tests!

How to Prepare for a Test <http://homeworktips.about.com/cs/studyskills/>

Dealing with Test Anxiety <http://studyweb.chemeketa.edu/resources/testanx/>

How to Study for Essay Tests

<http://www.gmu.edu/departments/writingcenter/handouts/essaytes.html>

How to Study for Objective Tests

<http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/handouts/1444.html>

How to Take Good Notes <http://www.bucks.edu/~specpop/Cornl-ex.htm>

How to Create Study Outlines

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_outlin.html

Self-Assessment <http://www.iss.stthomas.edu/studyguides/selfassessment.htm>

Study Skills Web Sites <http://www.iss.stthomas.edu/studyguides/studyskills.htm>

STEP FOUR: [GET HELP WITH HOMEWORK](#)

You can be the best mechanic in the world, but you can't work on your car if you don't have the right tools. Go to this page and you will be able to download great tools that will show you how to: take effective notes, create the best study guides, and read faster (with greater comprehension). With the right tools you can *work smart!*

Ten Homework Tips

Get Help in Math <http://mathforum.org/dr.math/>

Get Help in Science <http://www.schoolwork.org/science.html>

Get Help with Your Writing www.powa.org/thesis.htm

How to Write Great Papers www.galegroup.com/free_resources/lit_kit/guide.htm

How to Read a Textbook <http://www.cbv.ns.ca/sstudies/links/learn/1422.html>

STEP FIVE: [GET GREAT WEB RESOURCES](#)

Working smart means taking advantage of every resource and opportunity. This includes the Internet. Using our search guides, you will be able to learn more about algebra, science, math, English, and any other subject that interests you. Like to play games that challenge your brain? You'll find all you want here.

Great Math Sites and Games <http://thinks.com/math/>

Science Games www.teachervision.com/lesson-plans/lesson-5833.html

Self-Discovery <http://www.pitt.edu/~counsel/pittpathwaysteps.html>

Booklists and More <http://www.gti.net/rocktwp/booklist.html>

Word Puzzles <http://www.wolinskyweb.net/word.htm>

Interesting Science <http://www.ala.org/ICONN/kcfavorites.html>

English Made Easy <http://ccc.comnet.edu/grammar/>

Geography <http://members.aol.com/bowe rmanb/101.html>

Foreign Languages <http://www.oberoi-net.com/language.html>

History http://www.indianchild.com/history_help.htm

As you can see, working smart involves organization, preparation, the right tools, and access to the right information. But the one principle of working smart that I have learned is: DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP. If you want to get higher grades, take charge of your life! The information on these pages will enable you to do just that.

Does all this sound good? Working smart means using the right tool to get the job done. But the key word is WORK. My counselor was right; you have to work hard to succeed in school. And I hope you use these great tools as a part of your hard work. So, if you want to get your grades up, then just follow me by going back to the beginning and clicking that first button!

[GET ORGANIZED](#) NOW!

STEP ONE: GET ORGANIZED—Master Your Time

I'm going to tell you the ten secrets of getting organized for school. How important is it to be well organized? Just think what one F on an assignment will do to your final grade! Did you ever get a low grade on a test because you didn't have the time to study? Did you ever get an F because you lost your homework? Did you ever forget about an important assignment?

Good organizational skills will help you avoid the catastrophes of lost homework, lost time, and cramming. They will also help you manage your time better. Proper time management enables you to do your homework and study for tests, yet still have time for the fun things in your life. You **can** become a better student and still enjoy your free time!

Here are my ten secrets of good time management :

- 1. Make a “to do” list every day**
 - a. Use a planner to keep your daily lists together
 - b. Put the most important things at the top of the list and do them first
 - c. Check off the tasks as you complete them

- 2. Use spare minutes wisely**
 - a. Identify all the spare time you have—riding the bus, waiting for dinner
 - b. Plan to use this “downtime” to finish short, easy tasks
 - c. Use downtime as a cushion to get ahead of schedule

- 3. Know that it's okay to say “no”**
 - a. If your friends ask you to party the night before the SAT, realize that it's okay to decline
 - b. If you want to go out on the night before a big test, ask yourself which is more important

- 4. Get more bang for your buck**
 - a. Determine when you do your best work
 - b. Schedule your homework accordingly
 - c. Avoid studying late at night when you're tired

- 5. Review your notes after each class**
 - a. Use downtime to review notes
 - b. Use frequent reviews to avoid cramming
 - c. Prepare for pop quizzes

- 6. Nutrition and Sleep**
 - a. Eat a good breakfast
 - b. Eat the right foods

7. Communicate your schedule to others

- a. Ask your parents to cooperate with your schedule
- b. Tell your friends not to call when you are working
- c. Turn off the television!

8. Become a taskmaster

- a. Determine your work schedule first
- b. Allot times to each activity
- c. Schedule your recreational activities second
- d. Eliminate recreational activities that are not important to you

9. Don't waste time agonizing

- a. Do the hard/unpleasant tasks first so you don't have to dread or worry about them all evening
- b. Try to train yourself not to like or dislike any specific task—just do them

10. Keep things in perspective

- a. Set realistic daily goals
- b. Schedule breaks when you need them
- c. Adjust your schedule if it isn't working
- d. Stick to your schedule if it works

Are you the master of your time or are you always fighting the clock? These ten tips can help you decide how to use time to your advantage. The main thing is to avoid procrastination – don't waste time! As you look over these ten secrets, be honest with yourself. Don't set a schedule you won't keep. If you really, really want to go to a party or movie, plan ahead to have all your work done. Then you can relax and enjoy your free time.

Working smart means getting organized, but there is another way to organize your life—establishing your goals. This is also important. Having specific goals will give you clear reasons for doing what you're doing—trying to get better grades! Follow me and I'll show you how to set your long- and short-term goals.

[Set Your Goals!](#)

STEP ONE: GET ORGANIZED—Set Your Goals

Here's another secret of working smart: Setting Goals. When you set specific goals, you are making a pledge to yourself to go after them. You are saying: "This is what I want; this is what I know I can do." Managing your time is important; managing your life is just as important. When you set your goals in life, you take the first step toward managing your life: "This is where I want to go; this is where I want to be."

I'm not just talking about academic goals, like getting an A on a test or in a subject. I mean all your goals in life—what sort of job you want, which college you want to attend, and how much money you want to make. Setting goals should be an exciting task because you get the chance to choose what you want to have, to do, and to be in life. Here are two tools to get you thinking about your future:

Set Your Goals in Life:

1. Things you would like to own:

1 year _____

5 years _____

10 years _____

2. Place you would like to live:

1 year _____

5 years _____

10 years _____

3. Place you would like to visit:

1 year _____

5 years _____

10 years _____

4. Job you would like to have:

1 year _____

5 years _____

10 years _____

5. Family life you would like to have:

1 year _____

5 years _____

10 years _____

6. Things you would like to know:

1 year _____

5 years _____

10 years _____

7. Person you would like to be like:

1 year _____

5 years _____

10 years _____

Set Your Personal Goals:

1. My Personal Goal:

State a goal that would enhance your personal life. _____

How will I accomplish this goal? _____

Who will help me accomplish this goal? _____

2. My Social Goal:

State a goal that would enhance your social life. _____

How will I accomplish this goal? _____

Who will help me accomplish this goal? _____

3. My Academic Goal:

State a goal that would enhance your academic life. _____

How will I accomplish this goal? _____

Who will help me accomplish this goal? _____

Now that you have thought about your goals, can you set your priorities? What is really most important to you about a job, education, money, or your lifestyle? The last secret of organizing your life is establishing your priorities. To do this, you will have to think about your personal values. Let's go to the next page and you can decide what is most important in your life.

[Set Your Priorities!](#)

STEP ONE: GET ORGANIZED - Set Your Priorities

What truly centers a person are his or her values. Values are those things—religion, family, school, money—that we place greatest importance on. The ultimate tools for organizing yourself are your values. For example, if you really value education (which we believe you should), you will not be reluctant to manage your time and set high academic goals for yourself.

Here is a simple checklist to help you decide your priorities in life. Add others you think might be important to you; then put a number (say, from 1 to 10) beside each item to indicate its importance to you.

- _____ Doing my best in school
- _____ Being popular
- _____ Friendships
- _____ Respecting other individuals
- _____ Self-respect
- _____ Graduating from high school
- _____ Honesty in myself and others
- _____ Being independent
- _____ Being responsible for my actions
- _____ Religion
- _____ Getting along with my parents
- _____ Having money
- _____ Staying drug-free
- _____ Helping others
- _____ Having a healthy body
- _____ Going to college
- _____ Being successful

As you look over your list, ask yourself how you will achieve each one of the items and why it is important to you. Then look back at your goals and your time management activities. Is there anything you would change about them? Your time management activities will serve as the **means** to achieve your goals. Your goals are the things you want to accomplish or attain. Your values are probably most important because they tell you **why** your goals are important to you.

STEP ONE: GET ORGANIZED - Use a Homework Log

Here is an easy-to-use tool to help you organize your homework assignments.

Weekly Homework Assignments				
Record Assignments that are Due and that are Completed				
Name _____ Week of _____				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Due:	Due:	Due:	Due:	Due:
Completed:	Completed:	Completed:	Completed:	Completed:

STEP ONE: GET ORGANIZED—Know Your Time Wasters

Time wasters are activities that you can easily eliminate to create more time in your day.

Time Wasters: Things I Don't Need to Do Every Day

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

STEP ONE: GET ORGANIZED—Plan Your Free Time

1. Deciding on how much time you need to study.

On the following lines list your present courses, the grade you wish to attain, and the number of hours you will need to study each week to earn that grade.

<i>Course</i>	<i>Grade I Want</i>	<i>Weekly Study Hours</i>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
Total Needed		_____

2. Determine how much time you have to study.

How much time do you spend doing the following?

Studying at school _____ Free time activities _____

Studying at home _____ Family activities _____

Total hours studying per week _____

Compare to "Total Needed" above: Do I need more time to study? Yes _____ No _____

3. Do I need to budget my time?

Do I have a quiet place to study? Yes _____ No _____

Do I know the best time for me to study? Yes _____ No _____

Do I need to set up a schedule? Yes _____ No _____

4. What are the main distractions that I can eliminate? _____

STEP TWO: GET EXTRA HELP

On these pages you will learn how to get your teachers, parents, mentor, and counselors on the “same page” in order to provide you with the help you need. Working smart includes *getting other people to work for you!*

The five sections in this step are as follows:

[How to Work with Your Teachers](#)

[Working with Your Mentor](#)

[How Guidance Counselors Can Help You](#)

[Help Your Parents Help You](#)

[Student Survival Manual: <http://www.thesurvivalmanual.com>](#)

Everyone needs help—**no one succeeds alone!** So let’s...

...learn [How to Work with Your Teachers!](#)

STEP TWO: GET EXTRA HELP -- How to Work With Your Teachers

10 Ways to Work Smart with Teachers

Some of you may think that all teachers like to do is to give tests and to pile work on you. Not true! They do want you to work, but they also want to see you improve and to do well in their classes. Here are some ideas on how to work smart with teachers...

I. Participate in Class. This is a good way for teachers to get to know, like, and respect you. If you have a positive attitude in class, you will show your teachers that you are interested in the subject. Class participation demonstrates a positive attitude toward learning that every teacher will appreciate and acknowledge. **Teachers are naturally inclined to want to help students who participate in class discussions and activities.** Here are a few examples of positive class participation:

- 1] Try to answer teachers' questions. Being able to answer your teachers' verbal questions in class shows them that you are paying attention.
- 2] Ask relevant questions. Ask for clarification or explanation of difficult topics. Don't be afraid to admit you don't understand.
- 3] Volunteer for projects. Teachers often need help with classroom chores. Be willing to help out. If you help them, they will help you.

II. Ask Your Teachers for Help. Your teachers will help you if you ask them. But you shouldn't expect them to teach the class all over again just for you. You need to respect their time and identify the specific areas in which you need assistance.

- 1] Ask specific questions. Don't expect the teacher to guess the source of your confusion.
- 2] Admit your weaknesses. This is always a sign of strength.
- 3] Speak with teachers after class. If you are struggling, then ask your teacher for extra time and attention.

III. Ask for a Parent-Teacher Conference. Yes, I mean it! Students who ask for a parent-teacher conference in order to get more assistance will automatically earn the respect of teachers and school administrators. Many students dread these conferences because they mistakenly believe that everyone is judging or condemning them, as if they had done something wrong. Just the opposite is the case. The purpose of these conferences is to find new ways to help students.

IV. Show Respect in Class. You can show respect to your teachers by obeying them and their rules, especially the rules governing behavior. Ask yourself this question: If you were a teacher,

would you want to go out of your way to help a student who constantly disrupts the class? Wouldn't you want him or her out of the class?

V. Show Respect After Class. When you see your teachers after class, say "hello" to them and call them "Mr.," "Miss," or "Mrs." as a sign of respect. Teachers are good people doing a hard job; they have earned everyone's respect, especially that of their students.

VI. Ask for Extra Work. No, I am not crazy! Think about it. If you are a teacher and one of your students keeps asking for extra work in order to improve, wouldn't you be impressed? Wouldn't you give him or her extra attention and assistance?

VII. Talk with Your Teachers about the Future. Ask your teachers' advice from time to time. Tell them about your career or college plans.

VIII. Be Positive. There are many negative things happening in schools these days. Don't be a part of them! Show your teachers a positive attitude about school and learning. A good attitude will take you a long way in school and in life.

IX. Tell Your Teachers about Take Stock in Children. Talk to your teachers about Take Stock in Children. They will be impressed that you have signed a performance contract and have made a serious commitment to go to college. This is just another incentive for them to help you.

X. Thank Your Teachers. Thank your teachers for the extra help they give you. This courtesy will make a profound positive impression on them and make them want to help you in the future.

STEP TWO: GET EXTRA HELP -- Working With Your Mentor

Working Smart with Your Mentor

As a Take Stock in Children scholar, you have the opportunity to work with a caring, adult mentor. Your mentor is there to provide you with any guidance or advice about school and life that you might need. **Your mentor can help you in many ways—if you ask.**

Here are a few things you should know about Take Stock in Children mentors:

Mentors are Volunteers. That's right, mentors are not paid to help students. They do it because they want to. Mentors are committed, caring adults who sacrifice their time and energy to make a difference in young people's lives.

Mentors Want to Help. Mentors volunteer to meet with students because they want to help them. Your mentor is not there to tell you what to do or check up on you. Mentors provide personal guidance, advice, and other assistance; they are not truant officers, cops, or authority figures.

Mentors Can Help You in Many Ways. Most mentors will be more than glad to help you in any way they can. The key here is to **ask**. There's no shame in asking for help; on the contrary, it is a sign of strength not weakness. Your mentor will gain more respect for you if you ask him or her for help.

How can your mentor help you? Well, I can't answer that question specifically, but here are just a few general ways that mentors can help students:

- 1] **Homework.** Mentors are not professional tutors, but they often have the knowledge to help you with your assignments. If your mentor does not want to help with homework, don't take it personally. He or she may not feel comfortable in that subject area.
- 2] **Personal Issues.** We all have personal issues that we talk about with others. Your mentor will gladly listen to your concerns and then help you work through your problems -- if you ask for help. Remember, **you** have to make decisions regarding your life, but it is good to listen to an older person once in awhile.
- 3] **Advocacy.** Are you having a problem with another student or a teacher? Mentors often speak with teachers or school administrators about their students' problems.
- 4] **Parents.** Would you like your mentor and parents to work together as a team? Well, ask your parents to contact your mentor and welcome him or her to the team. The more encouragement your mentor receives, the more likely it is that he or she will want to communicate with your parents.
- 5] **Keeping You on Track.** This is one of the real values of a mentor—making sure you don't get distracted or sidetracked from your goals.

Let me tell you, my mentor has helped me in each of these areas, especially the fifth one—I always had trouble focusing on specific goals in school! The point is that mentors are a resource for you; they are adults who are ready, willing, and able to help you with nearly every issue or problem you may face.

But remember, you don't get something for nothing. There are a number of things you should do and several things you should avoid doing in order to get the most out of your mentoring experience.

Things to Do:

- 1] **Be Polite.** You can show appreciation to your mentor by giving him or her your respect—by being courteous at every meeting. Bad manners show disrespect.
- 2] **Be on Time.** Try not to be late to your mentoring sessions. Your mentor has taken time away from work to meet you.
- 3] **Ask for Help If You Need It.** If you need help, ask for it.
- 4] **Attend Every Meeting.** If you intentionally skip a mentoring session, how do you think your mentor would feel? How would you feel?
- 5] **Start Setting Goals.** To get the most out of mentoring, you should start thinking about your goals and how your mentor can help you achieve them.

Things to Avoid:

- 1] **Ask Mentors to Meet Outside School.** Take Stock in Children is a school-based mentoring program. This means that mentors are only permitted to meet with students on school grounds, during school hours, or at Take Stock in Children-sponsored events. Respect your mentor by respecting the rules.
- 2] **Ask Mentors for Money or Gifts.** Trust me, you will receive something more valuable than material possessions if you build a long-term relationship with your mentor. Your mentor is not an ATM, so don't put him or her on the spot by asking for money.
- 3] **Expect Mentors to Do Your Work.** Your mentor will help you, but it is your responsibility to do your own work. Don't try to manipulate your mentor into doing your homework or to do your studying for you.

STEP TWO: GET EXTRA HELP -- How Guidance Counselors Can Help You

Working Smart with Guidance Counselors

If there is anyone you want helping you, it is your school guidance counselor. These people know just about everything about getting into college and preparing for a career. But there is one big problem: **Guidance counselors are very busy people!** Counselors have many responsibilities and many students to advise. The key for you is to make the most of the time you spend with your guidance counselor!

Here are the main ways that your counselor can help you:

- 1] **Plan Your Course Schedule.** It is a good idea to plan all four years of high school as early as possible. You can use the [four-year course planner](#) provided in the [High School Planning](#) section. You can also make your counselor's job much easier if you have developed specific college and career plans.
- 2] **College Planning and Preparation.** Your counselor can give you practical advice about applying to colleges, picking the right career, and educational requirements for college admission. Try to ask your counselor specific, rather than general, questions. This will save time.
- 3] **Provide You With Materials.** Your school guidance office probably has a whole lot of great prep materials for the SAT, ACT, and just about every education-related topic. My rule is: If it's free, I'll take it! Why not check out all the freebies and see if you can find something interesting?
- 4] **Timely Information.** When is the SAT to be held? How do you apply? When should you apply for college? Counselors have up-to-the-minute information about important school and college deadlines. Check out their bulletin boards at least once a week!
- 5] **Financial Aid Assistance.** You will need money for college, right? You don't want to have to borrow it, right? If so, you better talk with your counselor on a regular basis. Counselors know about local and national scholarships, deadlines and federal aid application procedures, and many other important things.

Here's another tip: Try to get to know everyone in the guidance office. I'm telling you, these people are the best source of educational information you have. If they know you, if they like you, they will go out of their way to pass on valuable information to you.

STEP TWO: GET EXTRA HELP -- Help Your Parents Help You

Working Smart with Parents

As you can see by now, getting help from others makes life a lot easier and a lot happier. It's great to know that there are people who want to help you! There is one group of people that we almost always take for granted and overlook—our parents!

Like you, your parents signed a Take Stock in Children performance contract. This means that they agreed to do all they can to help you succeed. But did you ever stop to think how hard it is to be a parent? It's not easy paying bills, worrying about meals, and looking out for you -- all at the same time!

Yes, your parents want to do all they can for you, but why don't you make it easier for them to help you? They are already proud of you for being selected as a Take Stock in Children scholar, so why not make them even prouder by doing a few simple things to make their job easier?

Here are my suggestions for helping your parents:

- 1] **Do Your Chores.** Don't have any chores? Ask for some! It's never too early to start helping around the house. If kids help get all the work done quicker, maybe mom and dad will have more time to help with homework.
- 2] **Ask for Quiet Time.** Once you start doing chores, you have earned the right to ask for a few things yourself. The first should be for some quiet time to do your homework. All this means is that the TV or radio gets turned off, or at least down a notch, so that you can study in your room without distraction. Your family members will respect you if you stick to a schedule.
- 3] **Keep Your Room Clean.** You might think that only little kids have this problem, but you would be wrong. Even at college, there are students who don't pick up things and leave their stuff all over their desks. This makes it easy to lose assignments and tougher to be comfortable when studying.
- 4] **Ask for Help.** Try to get your mom, dad, or grandparents to look at your homework assignments. They might not always know all about a subject, but they might be able to give you some pointers.
- 5] **Get Your Parents Involved at School.** Students whose parents take an active interest in school tend to do better than those who don't. Encourage your parents to visit the school and meet your teachers. Ask them to come to Parent-Teacher Conferences. Ask them to communicate with your teachers regularly.

You might think that these things are trivial or not really that important. Believe me, they are. You will not believe how your life can turn around for the better if you just start taking responsibility for helping other people help you. Make them want to help you! Be worthy of the help!

STEP TWO: GET EXTRA HELP -- Student Survival Manual

Student Survival Manual:

<http://www.thesurvivalmanual.com>

Although this Website is designed for survival in college, it provides a lot of practical advice that is just as useful in high school. Take a look and peruse the reviews -- I think you'll see that there is a lot of great information on the site and that it's fun reading!

STEP THREE: GET PREPARED FOR TESTS

This section contains eight separate sections that will help you to do something that will always be with you while you are in school -- taking tests. While many of us (me included) aren't real fond of taking tests (what an understatement!), there are things we can do to both make it less stressful and help us do better. Take a look at the sections below (and the associated websites when you are ready) and review the appropriate ones before that "big" test -- I guarantee you it will help!

[How to Prepare for a Test](#)

<http://homeworktips.about.com/cs/studyskills/>

[Dealing with Test Anxiety](#)

<http://studyweb.chemeketa.edu/resources/testanx/>

[How to Study for Essay Tests](#)

<http://www.gmu.edu/departments/writingcenter/handouts/essaytes.html>

[How to Study for Objective Tests](#)

<http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/handouts/1444.html>

[How to Take Good Notes](#)

<http://www.bucks.edu/~specpop/Cornl-ex.htm>

[How to Create Study Outlines](#)

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_outlin.html

[Self-Assessment](#)

<http://www.iss.stthomas.edu/studyguides/selfassessment.htm>

[Study Skills Web Sites](#)

<http://www.iss.stthomas.edu/studyguides/studyskills.htm>

STEP THREE: GET PREPARED FOR TESTS -- How to Prepare for a Test

Did you know that there are different ways to study for different types of tests? Working smart means knowing the right way to study for tests! Here is a good web site to learn all about preparing for tests: <http://homeworktips.about.com/cs/studyskills/>. You can also look at the following pages to find other ways for preparing for tests.

Put an “X” beside the things you normally do to prepare for tests.

When preparing for a test, do you:

- Concentrate on what you don't know?
- Ask questions?
- Ask your teacher for help, if necessary?
- Make a test schedule?
- Create a study outline?
- Know what will be covered?
- Anticipate the questions?

When taking a test, do you:

- Get a good night's sleep before the test?
- Understand the test directions?
- Look over the entire test first?
- Make sure you know how much time is given?
- Know how much the questions count?
- Notice key words in directions?
- Do the easiest questions first and return to the unanswered ones?

STEP THREE: GET PREPARED FOR TESTS -- Dealing with Test Anxiety

Do you do poorly on tests because you are nervous or simply “freeze up”? Do you have blackouts and memory lapses during tests? Do you feel physically sick before tests? If you think you have a problem with “test anxiety,” you should look over this page.

Test anxiety can grow from a mild case of nerves into something very serious. While that is not often the case, it can lead to poor performance, and this poor performance can become habitual -- not a good thing. One thing we certainly do not want to happen is for test anxiety to give us incorrect expectations about our own capabilities. With a little work all of us can overcome this anxiety and do well on tests -- it just takes a little bit of effort and confidence in our abilities.

In addition to the general information below, here is one good website that help you deal with test anxiety: <http://studyweb.chemeketa.edu/resources/testanx/>.

- 1] **What is test anxiety?** Test anxiety refers to a combination of psychological and physiological reactions that interfere with students’ concentration while taking tests. Test anxiety is manifested by high levels of nervousness that students experience prior to and during a test. While a certain degree of test anxiety is normal and healthy, too much anxiety can cause students to “blank out” or “freeze up” during a test. Test anxiety may also hinder or even destroy a student’s memory and attention in the short run. Despite adequate preparation, many students do not perform well on tests because of their fear of tests.
- 2] **How do I know if I have test anxiety?** The most common symptom of test anxiety is “freezing up” or experiencing a mental block that prevents one from remembering information. For example, a person who has test anxiety, while reading the test questions, may suddenly find them meaningless. Students may also display physical symptoms of anxiety, e.g., headaches, nausea, or shortness of breath.
- 3] **What can I do about my test anxiety?** There are four ways students can manage their test anxiety. The first is by means of **proper preparation**. A thorough knowledge and review of the course material will lessen test anxiety. The second way is to **improve test-taking skills** -- using many of the techniques presented elsewhere in this *Student Resource Center*. The third is to **use specific techniques** to keep calm during the test (see a short list below). The fourth is for a student to **change his or her attitude** toward tests -- be positive and confident in your abilities.

Following are a few things you can do as a students to help combat your own test anxiety...

Four Ways To Overcome Test Anxiety

1: Preparation: Improving Study Skills

Utilize recommended study techniques as found elsewhere in this *Student Resource Center*, including the SQ3R Method (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review)
<http://www.accd.edu/sac/history/keller/ACCDitg/SSSQ3R.htm>

Avoid cramming for a test

Go to all classes

Make flashcards of main concepts and use them to review

Create good outlines

Work on mastering the main concepts of the course

Establish a reasonable study schedule and stick to it

2: Practice: Improving Test-Taking Skills

Know what types of questions will be asked on the test

Use self-testing techniques appropriate to the type of test

http://www.takestockinchildren.com/bulletin_02.asp

Take practice tests

Identify all key concepts and develop questions for them

3: Stress Management: Things to Do Before and During the Test

Get a good night's sleep before the test

Eat a good breakfast the day of the test

Avoid arriving too early or late for the test

Avoid listening to others or discussing the exam with others while waiting to begin the test

Take deep breaths to relax

Replace negative thoughts with positive ones

Don't get bogged down by worrying about hard questions; move on and return to them later

To relieve physical tension, flex and relax muscles in the body

Read test directions carefully

Focus on test questions and don't worry about performance

4: Develop a Positive Attitude: What to Do After the Test

Reward yourself for studying, regardless of your test scores

Try not to compare yourself to others

Determine your own performance goals

Assess your performance after each test and think of ways to improve your preparation

Practice self-talk; write down negative thoughts and counter each one with a positive statement

Repeat positive statements and visualize success

Believe that hard work and the right techniques will pay off in improved performance

STEP THREE: GET PREPARED FOR TESTS -- How to Study for Essay Tests

As you advance farther along in high school and then go on in college, you will have to take more and more essay tests. To do well on these tests, you have to use specific skills and strategies. One of the first things you must do to prepare for an essay test is to structure your notes in the form of an outline. The second skill you will need is for use during the test -- the ability to organize your answers.

In addition to the general notes below, the following website will get you started on developing these skills: <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/writingcenter/handouts/essaytes.html>

How to Prepare for Essay Tests

Essay tests can be very difficult because they require you to both provide information and structure it in a coherent fashion. Here are some tips for taking essay tests that you can use -- practicing them will help you gain a great deal of confidence.

1. Keep Track of Your Time

If you have five questions to answer in 40 minutes, make certain you don't spend too much time on any one question.

2. Read Through All the Questions Once Before Starting to Write

By familiarizing yourself with all the questions at the outset, you will have much more time to consider your answers.

3. Identify the Directive Words

Read the directions carefully and pinpoint the key terms. If a teacher wants you to describe, then do so; if the question says "evaluate," then don't worry so much about description.

4. Outline Your Answer First

Whether teachers acknowledge it or not, they are greatly influenced by the coherence and structure of your answer. To list facts in random order makes it seem as if you do not have a clear grasp of the material. Try to organize your answers as well as you can.

5. Take Time to Write an Introduction and Conclusion

A good introduction and summary are very effective ways to present your answers. It helps you present your responses as logical arguments.

STEP THREE: GET PREPARED FOR TESTS -- How to Study for Objective Tests

You have to study for objective tests in a different way than for essay tests—your goal here is to supply correct answers, not detailed descriptions and explanations. Essay tests require narrative skill and memory. Objective tests require memory and critical thinking.

Here is a good web site to introduce you to typical strategies for taking objective tests:
<http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/handouts/1444.html>.

You can also look over the following information to learn about strategies for two specific types of objective tests.

How to Take True-False Tests

Students often get “tripped up” by true-false questions because they don’t read the question carefully. The key to doing well in true/false tests is to make certain you understand the question properly -- make sure of understanding before you try to decide on an answer. Once you understand the question, you can use these strategies to decide if it is true or false.

1. Look for any word in the question that could make it false.

If you can falsify an answer by providing a counter-example, the answer is obviously false.

2. There are generally more “true” answers than there are “false” answers on a test.

3. Look out for extreme modifiers that are an “absolute” and therefore tend to make a question false: all, none, never, only, etc.

Once again, try to think of a counter-example that falsifies the answer.

4. Identify qualifiers (words that make the statement somewhat general in nature) that tend to make questions true: e.g., usually, frequently, often, probably.

5. Questions that state a reason tend to be false.

Words that justify a statement (for example “since,” “because,” and “when”) tend to make the statement false because they introduce a reason that is incorrect.

How to Take Multiple-Choice Tests

Multiple-choice tests measure your ability to pick the best answer from a number of choices. If you do not immediately know the correct answer to a question, the key to determining the correct response is not to get confused by the different possible answers. Here are a few ways to avoid this confusion.

- 1. Read each question with the intention of answering the question without looking at the possible answers.**
- 2. Use educated guessing. Eliminate two alternatives quickly and then decide between the other two.**
- 3. Choose the numbers that are in the middle range, not the extremes, when guessing.**
- 4. Choose answers that are longer and more descriptive.**
- 5. When two similar answers appear, one is likely correct.**

STEP THREE: GET PREPARED FOR TESTS -- How to Take Good Notes

Taking good notes in class is very, very important in high school and absolutely crucial in college. If you can take good notes in class you will have a much easier time studying for tests.

Would you like to know the easiest and best way to take notes? Well, it's called the "Cornell Method," and it's available to you through the Internet. Go to the following web page and learn all about it: <http://www.bucks.edu/~specpop/Cornl-ex.htm>.

Here are some other good tips about note-taking followed by a bit of information about the Cornell format that you can look at...

How to Take Good Notes in Class

- 1. Be Selective: *Do not write in complete sentences!***
 - 1) Speakers average 130 words per minute
 - 2) Note-takers write at 25 words per minute
- 2. Use Shorthand: *Reduce* common words/phrases to symbols**
 - 1) Learn/Use dictionary abbreviations
 - 2) Drop the last few letters of words—"approp" for "appropriate"
 - 3) Develop a code—eliminate connecting words
 - 4) Use "formula" statements
 - a. "The diameter of the earth is four times greater than the diameter of the moon."
 - b. "Earth= 4x > diameter of moon."
- 3. Focus Upon Main Ideas: Use "significance statements"**
 - 1) Identify Main Concepts
 - 2) Explain Main Concepts by stating *why* they are important
- 4. Recognize Relevance: Is information *new* or is it covered in the text?**
 - 1) Read class assignments before class!
 - 2) To listen effectively, have a working knowledge of the topic
- 5. Write Down Questions: Identify areas that are confusing or unclear**
- 6. List Any Examples: Concrete examples often are the best way to clarify complex ideas**
- 7. Review Notes After Class: Map Your Notes!**
 - 1) *Group* concepts by category
 - 2) *Identify* connections among ideas and topics
 - 3) *Transcribe* notes into your own words
- 8. Use a Note-Taking Format: No need to organize material as you write**
- 9. Have at least two pens/pencils for class**
- 10. DO NOT MISS CLASS!!!!**

The Cornell Method of Note-Taking

Students are not as likely to take well-organized notes on a blank piece of paper as they are using some kind of structured format to work with.

To remedy this situation, you should strongly consider using the “Cornell Form” (see the sample on the next page). This simple format gives you some needed structure so that you don’t have to worry about organizing information as you write.

The Cornell Method of taking notes in class was first outlined by a gentleman named Walter Pauk. In addition to the form on the next page, it involves the following basic process:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| RECORD | Use shorthand and symbols. |
| REDUCE | Identify key words and information. |
| RECITE | Repeat key terms. |
| REFLECT | Know why key terms are important. |
| REVIEW | Go over notes daily to avoid cramming. |

So if you think this makes sense for you (and it very well might), go to the following website and learn more: <http://www.bucks.edu/~specpop/Cornl-ex.htm>

Using The Cornell Form

Main Ideas

Explanations

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What I Need to Remember:

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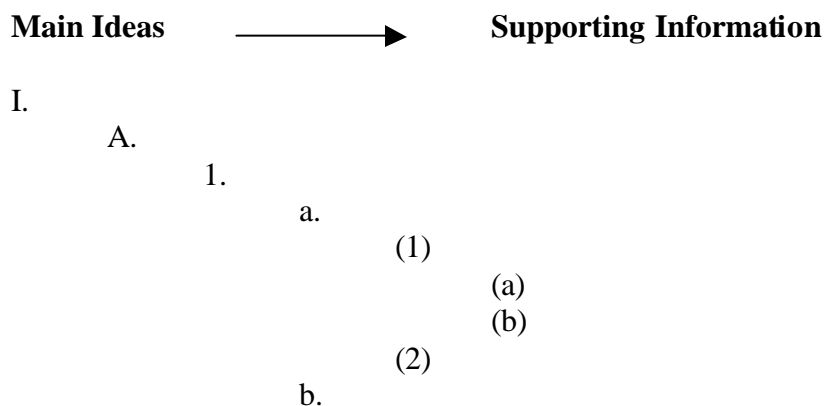
STEP THREE: GET PREPARED FOR TESTS -- How to Create Study Outlines

Outlines are great for organizing papers, studying for tests, writing speeches, taking notes from texts, and preparing reports. Here is a great web site to help you learn how to create study outlines: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_outlin.html

After you look at this website, read over the following material and see...

How To Construct an Outline

Basic Outline Form: The basic form of an outline has main ideas listed on the left side.



Example of a Traditional Outline

- I. Main Idea: Causes of the Great Depression
 - A. Type: Economic
 - 1. Stock market speculation
 - 2. Margin buying
 - 3. Lack of regulation
 - 4. No checks and balances
 - B. Type: Agricultural
 - 1. Drought
 - 2. Poor land management
 - 3. Poor planning
- II. Main Idea: Effects of the Great Depression
 - A. Type: Economic
 - B. Type: Social
 - 1. Starvation
 - 2. Dislocation

The sub-headings and supporting data are intended to answer a number of questions:

- What?
- Who?
- How?
- How many?
- Where?
- When?
- What are the main causes?
- How many types?
- How did they operate?
- When did they occur?

STEP THREE: GET PREPARED FOR TESTS -- Assess Your Study Habits

How are your study habits? Good? Poor? Here is a web site to help you figure out where you stand: <http://www.iss.stthomas.edu/studyguides/selfassessment.htm>. You can also use the checklist on this page to identify the areas you need to improve.

How to Assess Your Study Habits

1. YES NO I never study more than an hour for tests.
2. YES NO I only study the night before a test.
3. YES NO If I study too much, I can't have time for fun.
4. YES NO If I study, I don't have time for fun.
5. YES NO I study with music or the television on.
6. YES NO I don't have a quiet place to study.
7. YES NO I can't sit and study for long periods of time.
8. YES NO I often doodle or get distracted in class.
9. YES NO I have trouble taking notes.
10. YES NO I don't use class notes to study for tests.
11. YES NO I never organize my class notes.
12. YES NO I have trouble keeping up with my reading.
13. YES NO I don't always get my homework done.
14. YES NO I can't recognize the main ideas in a chapter.
15. YES NO I would like to read faster.
16. YES NO I have trouble writing papers.
17. YES NO I don't know how to create an outline.
18. YES NO I will put off difficult assignments.

STEP THREE: GET PREPARED FOR TESTS -- Study Skills Websites

Following list of websites related to study skills will be updated periodically as appropriate.

<http://www.iss.stthomas.edu/studyguides/studyskills.htm>

<http://www.attbroadband.com/internetnews/may/editor1.html>

[Identified as a “bonanza for future reference...hundreds of sites”]

For help with specific subjects go to the next section and ...

... [Get Help with Homework!](#)

STEP FOUR: GET HELP WITH HOMEWORK

You can be the best mechanic in the world, but you can't work on your car if you don't have the right tools. Go to the sections listed below and find general help and help in specific subject areas. The information also provides websites where you will be able to download great tools that will show you how to: take effective notes, create the best study guides, and read faster (with greater comprehension). With the right tools you can *work smart!*

[Ten Homework Tips](#)

[Get Help in Math](#)

<http://mathforum.org/dr.math/>

[Get Help in Science](#)

<http://www.schoolwork.org/science.html>

[Get Help with Your Writing](#)

www.powa.org/thesis.htm

[How to Write Great Papers](#)

www.galegroup.com/free_resources/lit_kit/guide.htm

[How to Read a Textbook](#)

<http://www.cbv.ns.ca/sstudies/links/learn/1422.html>

STEP FOUR: GET HELP WITH HOMEWORK -- Ten Homework Tips

There is a lot of information out there that will help you do better at your homework. In addition to the ten basic tips, you can get some ideas on how to better read a text book along with a listing of websites that provide additional information related to doing homework. So get ready to “buckle down” and “hold onto your hat” as your learning level goes through the roof.

10 Basic Homework Tips for Students

1. Locate a Regular Study Area

Create a good study area with all the materials (dictionary, pens, papers, rulers) that you need to do your work.

Make sure the area is quiet.

Find a comfortable chair (hard chairs make studying less enjoyable).

2. List Activities in Order

Make a prioritized list of everything you need to do.

Don't use “I don't know where to start” as an excuse.

Do the hard stuff first when you have more energy.

3. Establish Your Study Time

Reserving a regular study time is very important.

Students who work at the same time every day do their work everyday!!!!

Late night studying can be less productive because you have less energy.

4. Use Free Time During School

If you have free periods during school, use them to get your homework done.

If you have a long bus ride, try to do some homework on the way home.

5. Avoid Procrastination

If you only do homework when you “feel” like doing it, it will never get done.

Get homework done ahead of time in order to have more time to prepare for tests.

6. Take Your Time and Do It Right

Don't rush just to get finished.

Try to understand how the material relates to future tests.

7. Write Down Instructions Carefully

Write down instructions in a step-by-step manner, if possible.

Make certain you understand what the teacher wants.

Ask questions of the teacher if you don't understand.

8. Celebrate Your Achievements

Successfully completing homework assignments for a week deserves some type of recognition or award.

Reward yourself on weekends for achieving this goal.

Take pride in completing your assignments.

9. Plan Your Week

Students who plan their homework schedule find it much easier to keep on track.

Planning your homework a week in advance allows you time to enjoy special activities during the week.

10. Organize Your Information

Keep things in perspective—how much weight does each assignment have?

Try to recognize why the homework material is important—is it general background information, does it count for a grade, will the material be covered on tests?

Learning How to Read a Textbook

Using the “SQ3R” method outlined below has proven effective for students. You, too, may find it useful, so try it out and see how it works. Practice each step with a textbook you are familiar with. If you follow the steps and practice these techniques you will gradually, but steadily, become a far more efficient reader.

S Step 1. Survey the Text

1. Scan the table of contents
2. Read the title and introduction to the first chapter
3. Read the conclusion, summary, and chapter questions
4. Skim the main headings, subheadings, and boldface type
5. Read the first and last sentences of each paragraph (topic and transition sentences)
6. Examine charts, diagrams, and pictures

Q Step 2. Question: Reading as Searching the Chapter

1. Take one section at a time
2. Convert each heading and subheading into a question
3. Identify the relationship between main ideas and supporting evidence
4. Recognize connecting functional words:
More of the same: also, more, moreover, likewise, again, furthermore
Change of ideas: but, although, yet, nevertheless, despite, in spite of, however
Conclusions: so, thus, therefore, in summary, consequently, accordingly, in conclusion, hence
Unfamiliar terms: look up in the glossary or dictionary

R Step 3. Read

1. Read only that section, looking for the answers to your questions
2. Move quickly. Sort out ideas and evaluate them; if content does not relate to the question, give it only a glance
3. READ SELECTIVELY

R Step 4. Recite: Reading as Discovering Answers

1. After reading each section, look away and recite your question
2. Write your answer in the right hand column of your notes
3. Write down unfamiliar terms in the left column
4. Write definitions of unfamiliar terms in the right column
5. Write down key phrases from the section
6. Repeat the procedure for each section of the chapter

R Step 4. Review

1. Re-skim the entire chapter
2. Take five minutes to re-read notes

As promised, here are a few additional websites you can use to get help with homework:

Course-Related Information for All Grades: www.homeworkcentral.com

(This site is quite extensive and has many good tutorials in math and other subjects.)

Educational Games (Grade-Specific):

<http://www.startribune.com/education/homework.shtml>

Middle School Resources: www.familyeducation.com

STEP FOUR: GET HELP WITH HOMEWORK -- Get Help in Math

Get Help in Math

<http://mathforum.org/dr.math/>

<http://school.discovery.com/homeworkhelp/webmath/>

(Good, interactive site to help math students with problems. Many other good resources are available through this web address.)

STEP FOUR: GET HELP WITH HOMEWORK -- Get Help in Science

Get Help in Science

<http://www.schoolwork.org/science.html>

STEP FOUR: GET HELP WITH HOMEWORK -- Get Help with Your Writing

Get Help with Your Writing

www.powa.org/thesis.htm

STEP FOUR: GET HELP WITH HOMEWORK -- How to Write Great Papers

How to Write Great Papers

www.galegroup.com/free_resources/lit_kit/guide.htm

STEP FOUR: GET HELP WITH HOMEWORK -- How to read a Textbook

How to Read a Textbook

<http://www.cbv.ns.ca/sstudies/links/learn/1422.html>

STEP FIVE: GET GREAT WEB RESOURCES

Working smart means taking advantage of every resource and opportunity. This includes the Internet. Using our search guides, you will be able to learn more about algebra, science, math, English, and any other subject that interests you. Like to play games that challenge your brain? You'll find all you want here.

Great Math Sites and Games <http://thinks.com/math/>

Science Games www.teachervision.com/lesson-plans/lesson-5833.html

Self-Discovery <http://www.pitt.edu/~counsel/pittpathwaysteps.html>

Booklists and More <http://www.gti.net/rocktwp/booklist.html>

Word Puzzles <http://www.wolinskyweb.net/word.htm>

Interesting Science <http://www.ala.org/ICONN/kcfavorites.html>

English Made Easy <http://ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/>

Geography <http://members.aol.com/bowermanb/101.html>

Foreign Languages <http://www.oberoi-net.com/language.html>

History http://www.indianchild.com/history_help.htm