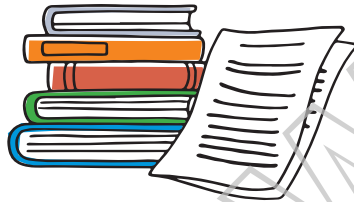




# How to Get Good Grades

IN SEVEN EASY STEPS



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 booklet can help you improve your grades!

# How to Get Good Grades

## IN SEVEN EASY STEPS

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# STEP 1 BE ORGANIZED

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

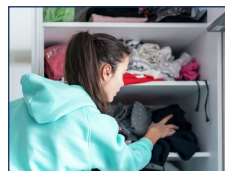
**Use three-ring binders for class notes.** Have a three-ring binder for each class, or one large binder with tabs for different subjects. Three-ring binders work well because handouts can easily be inserted, and if you do miss a class, you can copy someone else's notes and insert them where they belong. Having a 3-hole punch makes it possible to put handouts in your notebook along with your notes.

**Have a plan for papers.** Whether you use folders or binders, the important thing is that you have a system for organizing all of your papers—class notes, handouts, and homework. *Have a specific place for every paper.* Also, throw out papers you don't need, and put 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 binder. 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, 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 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 a student planner.** Take a planner with you to every class. Record every assignment and write down the date each is due. When an assignment is completed, check it off. Use your planner to also keep track of test dates, activities, and anything else you want to remember.

Subject	Monday, September 12
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

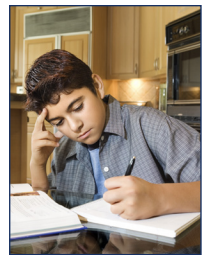
**Use class time and study halls.** Use the time teachers give you in class to ask questions, start on homework, or get help. Using your time in school wisely means that you have less to do in the evenings.

**Create your own study plan.** 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.

**Control time wasters.** Social media, TV, and video games can all be huge time wasters. Schedule small chunks of time for these activities and stick to your schedule.

**Combine tasks.** Go over a speech while you're cleaning your room, or check your homework while you're eating breakfast.

**Look for wasted chunks of time.** Think about how you can use these times more effectively. For example, you might review your notes while you wait for a ride.





## STEP 3

# 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. You can never make up all of what you miss, even if you're out of school for only a day. To get good grades, you must have good attendance!

*For the top 10 reasons you need to be in school every day, watch this short video.*



**Learn how to adapt to different teachers.** In the classroom, the teachers are in charge and they make the rules. One teacher may count you late if you're not in your seat when the bell rings, while another teacher may consider you on time if you're 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 learning how to adapt to different sets of rules, personalities, and teaching styles.*

**Be prepared for each class.** Have everything you need with you when you go to class (completed homework, books, paper, pencils). Being prepared also means that you come to class well-rested and ready to learn.

**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. And more importantly, when you've done your homework, the material being taught makes more sense, you can participate in discussions, and you learn more.

**Have good computer skills.** Teachers expect students to have basic computer skills and to be able to locate information online. If you're struggling with technology, 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. To be a good group member, do your share of the work, be open to new ideas, and be a positive, supportive member of the group.

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

**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.



**Watch your body language.** Use body language that shows you're engaged and paying attention. Sit up straight and look at your teachers when they are speaking. (If you act interested and engaged, you just may find that you feel more interested and engaged.).

**Have a positive attitude.** Walk into each class with a positive attitude and be determined to learn as much as you can. *Remember, the more you learn in class, the less you need to learn on your own.*

## DON'T HESITATE TO ASK FOR HELP

If you have questions or need help in any of your classes, talk to your teacher. Teachers usually know if you're having trouble, but they may or may not approach you to offer extra help. Asking for help is your responsibility.



## STEP 4 TAKE GOOD NOTES

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

**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 also shows your teachers that you're 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. They may speak louder or slower, or repeat information. They may also give verbal clues like "*The main point...*," "*The most important outcome...*" or "*The biggest reason...*" In your notes, underline, highlight, or put a star beside the most important information. You'll then know to give it special attention when you're studying.

**Go over your notes as soon as possible.** While the information is still fresh in your mind, take a few minutes to go over your notes. Fill in missing information, 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.

If you're really serious about getting the best grade possible in a class, rewrite your notes using your own words, eliminating the unimportant information.

**Get copies of notes and handouts if you're absent.** If you miss a class, it's your responsibility to get copies of any notes and/or handouts you missed.





## Sample Notes

### Key Words

## Prehistoric Reptiles

Science  
Jan. 12 / p. 10

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

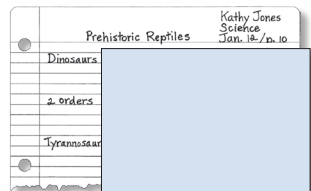
2 orders ★ Saurischia + Ornithischia orders  
over 800 species w/ ↑ posture  
Saurischia incl. Tyrannosaurus

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

### 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.
- ▶ To help you take notes faster, use symbols and abbreviations and 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** (topics, people, places, events). When you hear a key word, write it in the left-hand margin. Key words help you organize your thoughts, and they make your notes easier to understand.

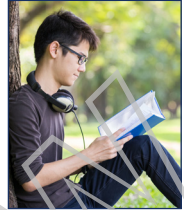
Key words can also help you review for a test. Just cover up your notes, look at each key word, and test yourself to see what you can remember about that topic, person, place, or event.





## STEP 5 READ TO LEARN

To help you understand and remember more of what you read, go through the following three steps: 1) **SURVEY** the assignment to get an overview; 2) **READ** with a purpose; 3) **REVIEW** to check your comprehension and lock the information into your brain.



**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.

Surveying provides you with a great deal of information in a short amount of time. Having this framework of main ideas makes it much easier to understand and remember the more detailed information.

**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. Your question will give you something specific to look for, and it will help keep you focused. Keep your question in mind as you read—and after you've read the section, see if you can answer it.

**REVIEW.** To review, go through the same process you did when you surveyed the material. This time, briefly restate the purpose of each section using your own words. As you look at 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!



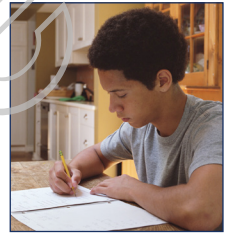
## STEP 6 STUDY SMART

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

**Find a good place to study.** Your study area should have a surface for writing, be well-lit, quiet, and comfortable. Your study area should also be equipped with all of the supplies you need.

If you like to listen to music while you do homework, try playing classical music very softly.

**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 with a subject you like.



**Vary your studying.** To make your study time more effective and less tedious, use study strategies that engage multiple senses (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic). Here are some examples of ways to make your studying more interesting and productive.

- ▶ **Visual:** Use color in your notes, create charts and diagrams, and put important information on flash cards.
- ▶ **Auditory:** Read and review information out loud, have discussions, explain what you've learned to someone else, and make up rhymes and acronyms.
- ▶ **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.

## 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.
- ▶ Focus on one thing at a time and alternate types of homework.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ After studying for 20–30 minutes, take a short break. Get a drink, get up and stretch, or go for a short walk.
- ▶ Identify anything that could interrupt your study plan. Then figure out how to eliminate or avoid it.



**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 these smaller assignments in your planner. This will help ensure that you do your big assignments over a period of time, not at the last minute.

## 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.

▶ 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.

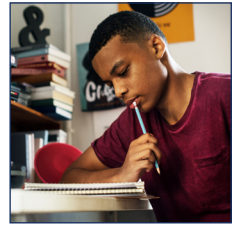
▶ Review often and review out loud. *Review is the key to learning and remembering anything!*

▶ You really know something if you can explain it in your own words. Try teaching material to yourself in front of a mirror.

▶ Write down any names, dates, formulas, and/or facts you need to remember on index cards. Go over them as often as you can.

▶ Pay particularly close attention in class the day before a test. This is when teachers often go over information you need to know.

▶ If a teacher gives you a review sheet, study it until you know everything on it.



### 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.

▶ 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 (**H**uron, **O**ntario, **M**ichigan, **E**rie, **S**uperior).

▶ Look for an easy or logical connection. For example, to remember that Homer wrote *The Odyssey*, think, "*Homer is an **odd** name.*"

### Have a growth mindset.

Having a growth mindset will help you improve your skills and tackle challenges with a "can do" attitude.

*For tips on how you can develop a growth mindset, watch this short video.*





## STEP 7 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 performance by using these test-taking tips.

**Get off to a good start.** When you get your test, write anything you want to remember at the top. Then quickly look over the entire test and make a plan. Decide how much time you will spend on each section or question.



**Mark the questions you want to return to.** Lightly mark 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.

**Increase your odds on multiple-choice questions.** 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.

**Look for key words in true/false questions.** Statements with absolute words such as *all*, *always*, *never*, and *none* in them are usually false. Statements with *usually*, *often*, *most*, and *many* are usually true.

**Know how to approach essay questions.**

- ▶ Read each question and then start with the easiest one. This will help you gain confidence.
- ▶ Before you do any writing, jot down the key words, ideas, and points you want to include.

**Check all of your answers.** If you have time, check all of your answers, even the ones you know are correct.

# REDUCE TEST ANXIETY

A little nervousness before a test improves your alertness and concentration. Too much worry, or test anxiety, can make it difficult for you to do your best.

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, 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 and then slowly release it, along with any tension. Do this until you feel your body relax.
  2. Starting at the top of your head, flex and then relax each part of your body.
  3. 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.

## A FINAL WORD

Getting good grades takes hard work and determination. As Aristotle once said, *"Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."* Follow the steps in this book, turn these steps into habits, and you will be well on your way to getting great grades!



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