

How To Get Good Grades

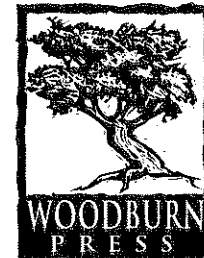
In Ten Easy Steps

Woodburn Press

How To Get Good Grades

In Ten Easy Steps

by Linda O'Brien



2010 Edition

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What Kind of Student Are You?

QUIZ - Put check marks in the spaces that best describe you.

	Always	Sometimes	Never
1. I complete homework assignments.	_____	_____	_____
2. I have everything I need with me when I go to class (book, pencils, paper).	_____	_____	_____
3. I use the time teachers give us in class to get started on my homework.	_____	_____	_____
4. I take good notes.	_____	_____	_____
5. I ask and answer questions in class.	_____	_____	_____
6. I use tricks to memorize information.	_____	_____	_____
7. After reading an assignment in a textbook, I know what I've read.	_____	_____	_____
8. I get along well with my teachers.	_____	_____	_____
9. I am good at taking tests.	_____	_____	_____
10. I am happy with my grades.	_____	_____	_____

Give yourself 2 points for each **Always**, 1 point for each **Sometimes**, and 0 for each **Never** response. **Your Score** _____

What Your Score Means

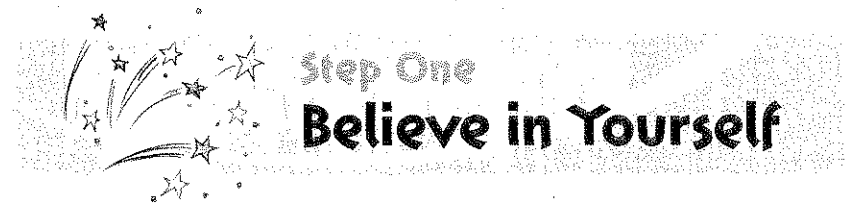
20 - 15 points: You are a very good student. This book will be mostly a review for you. It could, however, help you raise your grades even higher.

14 - 10 points: You are a student who could be getting better grades. With this book, you will definitely be able to improve your grades.

9 - 5 points: You're probably not getting very good grades. This book can help you change that. It could even change how you feel about school.

4 - 0 points: Your grades need serious improvement. Don't give up. This book can help you turn your grades around!

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



Step One Believe in Yourself

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

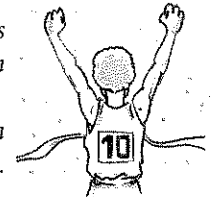
In order for you to succeed, you have to believe in yourself and in your abilities. Here's a little story to help illustrate this idea.

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

The first athlete runs out. He looks confident, and as he waits, he warm up and stretches. The people nearby can hear him muttering to himself, "I'm ready. I can do this."

The second athlete appears. He slowly shuffles out with his head down, and as he waits, he fidgets with his watch. Those nearby hear him say, "I'm gonna get killed."

Two athletes, same size, same abilities... Even before the competition starts, everyone knows who's going to win.



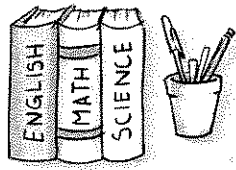
Whether you're an athlete preparing for competition or a student tackling a difficult subject, it's important that you believe in yourself. You need to recognize the talents and abilities that you have, and you must believe that you can succeed!

Take a minute now, and in the grid below, list the courses that you're currently taking. Then in the "Grade" column, write down the highest grade you think you can earn in each course this grading period.

	Course	Grade
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		



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



Step Two Be Organized

If you're organized, you have what you need when you need it. This section will give you a number of ideas on how to get organized. Of course, you must determine what's going to work best for you.

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

JANUARY 13	
✓	Math p. 110 due 1-14
✓	Bio chap. 8 due 1-14
	Study for History quiz chap. 10
✓	Do Eng. paper outline
	Basketball Practice 4:00

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

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

Break down assignments. Large assignments are much more manageable 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 smaller assignments.

Mon. - Do research
Tues. - Do outline

Wed. - Write rough draft
Thurs. - Finish paper

Writing these kinds of smaller assignments in your planner will help you do your big assignments over a period of time, not at the last minute.

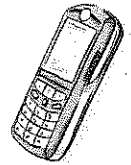
Use three-ring notebooks for class notes. Three-ring notebooks work well because you can easily insert handouts. Also, if you miss a class, you can copy someone else's notes and insert them where they belong. If you keep a 3-hole punch in your notebook, you can hole punch your handouts right there in class. You can then put them in your notebook along with your notes for the day.

Use folders for schoolwork. Have a different color pocket folder for each class. In these folders, keep your current assignments, along with returned assignments, quizzes, and tests. When a folder starts to get full, take the returned papers out and put them in a safe place at home. Old tests and quizzes can help you study for future tests.

In each of your folders, keep a record of your test, quiz, and homework grades for that class. Keeping a record of your grades will eliminate surprises at report card time.

"I write down all of my grades. Then I always know where I stand in all my classes." Brad

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



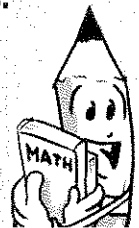
Keep your locker and backpack neat. Never stick loose or folded papers inside books, in your backpack, or your locker. Always put them in the correct folder or notebook. Keep your locker and backpack neat, clean, and organized so that you can easily locate materials.

Get organized before you go to bed. Each night, put completed homework in the right folders, and get everything organized for the following day. If there's something you need to remember to do in the morning, leave yourself a note so that you don't forget it.



Step Two Be Organized

- ▶ Use a student planner.
- ▶ Break down assignments.
- ▶ Use three-ring notebooks for class notes.
- ▶ Use folders for schoolwork.
- ▶ Have phone numbers for classmates.
- ▶ Keep your locker and backpack neat.
- ▶ Get organized before you go to bed.





Step Three Manage Your Time Well

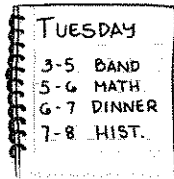
With good time management, you have time for the things you need to do, and you still have time for the things you want to do.

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

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

Create your own study plan. Some students study best at night. Others study better earlier in the day. Many students also have after school activities, sports, and jobs that they need to work around.

At the end of each school day, figure out how much time you have available, look at how much homework you have, and then develop a study plan. To help keep yourself organized and "on track," have a study plan in mind before you get home from school each day.



Prepare for sabotage. Identify anything that could interrupt or ruin your study plan. Then figure out how to eliminate or avoid it.

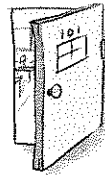
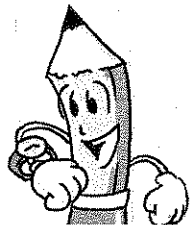
"I used to get interrupted by phone calls. Now I tell my friends not to call until 9:00, and I make sure my homework's done by then." Kate

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



Step Three Manage Your Time Well

- ▶ Use class time and study halls.
- ▶ Create your own study plan.
- ▶ Prepare for sabotage.



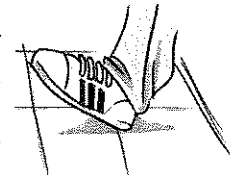
Step Four Be Successful in Class

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

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

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

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



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

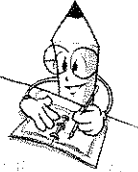
"It's really important to know your teachers and to know what they want. Are they strict about rules? Do they grade homework? Do they give points for participation?" Brad

Be prepared for each class. Be sure to have everything you need with you when you go to class (books, paper, pencils). *Also have all of your homework done.* When you've done your homework, you get more out of the class, the material being taught makes more sense, and you can participate in discussions. If you haven't done your homework, you may not even understand what the teacher is talking about.

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

Sit in the front of the class, if possible. It's easier to pay attention and stay involved when you sit in the front of the classroom. It's also easier to ask questions and to see the board or overhead. If you have a problem paying attention, ask your teacher if you can sit close to the front.

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



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

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

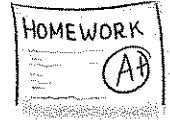
Throughout the period, Jason would look at his friends and roll his eyes, or he'd slump his shoulders, let his head drop back, and then he'd sigh. Jason's behavior was clearly saying to me, 'This is stupid and boring, and I don't want to do this.' I found Jason's behavior distracting and irritating.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

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

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

If you choose to do these things, don't kid yourself into thinking that your teachers don't notice, even if they don't say anything. Teachers notice, and they just assume 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 has to communicate this also.

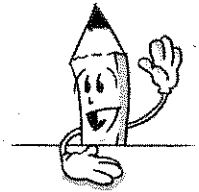
Always do your homework. Don't look at homework as something you should do. Think of it as something you *must* do. Since a large portion of your grade is usually based on homework, your grade drops every time you miss an assignment. Always complete your homework on time and, whenever possible, do extra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



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

Be a good group member. Knowing how to work well in a group is very important. Whether you are working on a school project, involved in an extra-curricular activity, or working at a job, you need to be able to work and get along with the other members of the group. Whenever you are involved in a group project, do the following:

1. do your share of the work and do it well
2. try to be open to new ideas
3. support the other members of the group



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

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

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

Remember that teachers are people too. They like having students say hello to them in the halls, and they appreciate it when students show an interest in them. If a teacher's been out ill, a simple comment like "I hope you're feeling better" can brighten that teacher's day.

"Teachers like it when you talk to them, and it lets them know that you care. Teachers are busy though, so if you have a question or problem, see them before or after class." Maria

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

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



If you ever have a problem with a subject, teacher, class, or another student, let your parents know. They can help you deal with whatever the situation is, and if necessary, they can step in on your behalf.

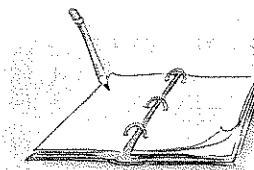
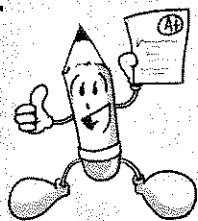
Take responsibility for your grades. If you get a good grade on a test or paper, be proud of your accomplishment. If you receive a poor grade, don't make excuses. Take responsibility for your grade, and then figure out what you can do to get a better grade next time.

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



Step Four Be Successful in Class

- ▶ Be in school, on time, every day.
- ▶ Learn how to adapt to different teachers.
- ▶ Be prepared for each class.
- ▶ Sit in the front of the class, if possible.
- ▶ Be aware of your body language.
- ▶ Always do your homework.
- ▶ Be a good group member.
- ▶ Participate in class.
- ▶ Treat others with respect.
- ▶ Involve your parents.
- ▶ Take responsibility for your grades.

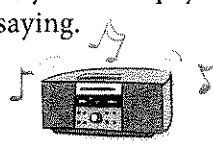


Step Five Take Good Notes

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

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

Kelly is listening to the radio while she's getting ready for school. The DJ plays several songs, and then he announces that he's going to play a new song by Kelly's favorite artist. As soon as she hears this, Kelly sits down and listens carefully to the song on the radio. As she listens, Kelly tries to hear every word so that she can understand the meaning of the lyrics.



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

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



Recognize important information. You can often hear a change in your teacher's voice when he/she is going to say something that's important for you to know. Teachers often speak louder or slower, or they say things like "the most important outcome," "the main point," or "the biggest reason." Anything your teacher writes on the board or overhead should also be considered very important.

Put a star beside the most important information in your notes. You'll then know to give it special attention when you're studying later.

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

Take notes that are easy to read.

- ▶ Put the name of the class, the date, and the page number at the top of each page of notes. It will help keep your notes organized.
- ▶ Put the subject of your notes at the top of the page.
- ▶ Skip lines between topics and only use one side of the paper. Your notes will be neater, and they'll be easier to read. You'll also 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	↑	up or increasing	w	with
≠	not equal	↓	down or decreasing	w/o	without
>	greater than	→	resulting in	w/in	within
<	less than	*	most importantly	b/c	because
~	approximately	eg	for example	v	very
∴	therefore	ie	that is	esp	especially

- ▶ Use pencil or erasable pen to keep your notes neat.
- ▶ Leave a wide space or margin on the left side of each page. As you're taking notes, listen for **key words**. When you hear a key word, write it in the left-hand margin. Key words (topics, people, places, events) help you organize your thoughts, and they make your notes easier to understand. Key words can also help you review for a test. Just cover up your notes, look at each key word, and test yourself to see what you can remember about that topic, person, place, or event.



Go over your notes as soon as possible. While the information is still fresh in your mind, take five minutes to go over your notes. Rewrite anything that's confusing, fill in the spaces, and make sure that you have all of the key words written in the left-hand margins. Of course, while you are going over your notes, you are also "fixing" this information in your memory.

If you are really serious about getting the best grade possible in a class, completely redo your notes. Eliminate the unimportant information, and rewrite the rest of your notes using your own words. Your notes will be much clearer, and as you rewrite them, you'll also be learning the material. This is time consuming, but it pays off.

Key Words

Prehistoric Reptiles
Kathy Jones
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

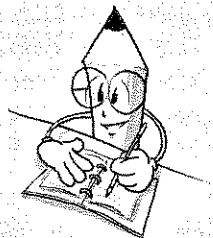
Get copies of class notes if you are absent. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to ask your teacher about assignments, hand-outs, and tests. It's also your responsibility to make up any work that you've missed. *Do not just assume that your teacher will tell you if there's something you need to know or do.* Also, get copies of any notes you have missed and put them in your notebook as soon as possible.

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

REVIEW

Step Five Take Good Notes

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



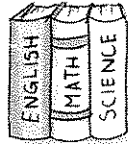


Step Six - Know How to Read a Textbook

When you know how to read a textbook, you understand and remember what you read.

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

In this section, you will discover how to use these learning tools. You will also learn how to **Scan**, **Read**, and **Review**. Knowing how to scan, read, and review will help you remember what you read.



Scan. Scanning gives you a quick overview of the material you're going to be reading. To scan, read the title, the subtitles, and everything in **bold** and *italic* print. Look at the pictures, graphs, and charts and read the introduction, the review questions, and the summary.

On the following page is an article about the Beatles taken from a music history textbook. If you were to scan this page, you would read the title and each of the section headings: **The Beatles dominate the music industry**, **The Beatles get their start in Liverpool**, **The Beatles change their image**, **The Beatles find success in the U.S.**, and **The Beatles go their separate ways**. You would read everything in bold print, look at the chart, and read the **Review Questions**.

Scanning provides you with a great deal of information in a short amount of time. (Look at how much you learned about the Beatles just from reading the section headings.) In addition to providing you with an overview of the material, scanning also provides you with an "information framework." Having this framework of main ideas makes it easier to understand and remember the more detailed information.



The Beatles



The Beatles dominate the music industry

The Beatles were a British rock group that dominated the rock and roll industry during the 1960s. The Beatles had an enormous impact on music. They were, in fact, the single most important component in the creation of the modern day "pop" culture. The four members of this dynamic group were **Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, George Harrison and John Lennon**. Their playful, yet irreverent public image captured the imagination of an entire generation.

The Beatles get their start in Liverpool

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

The Beatles change their image

On returning from Hamburg, the Beatles were discovered by **Brian Epstein**. He became their manager, and he changed the image of the band, exchanging black leather jackets and tight jeans for collarless suits and a new style of haircut. In May of 1962, Epstein landed the Beatles their first recording contract. Shortly before entering the studio, drummer Ringo Starr was added to the group. The early Beatles' recordings were instantly successful, and soon the band was headlining tours.

The Beatles find success in the U.S.

In 1964, the Beatles' music was released in the United States. The sales were tremen-

dous, breaking all previous records. The band came to New York in April, where screaming fans met them at the airport, and 70 million people watched them on the *Ed Sullivan Show*. Throughout the 1960s the Beatles' popularity grew. Their *Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band* album was released in 1967 to unprecedented critical acclaim. A series of artistically creative and commercially successful albums followed.

The Beatles go their separate ways

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

Throughout the 1970s, the Beatles' music continued to be popular, and they were constantly hounded to reunite. Lennon's death in December of 1980 ended such speculation. The Beatles were inducted into the **Rock and Roll Hall of Fame** in 1988.

Best Selling Beatles' Albums (in millions)

The White Album	16
Best of 67 - 70	14
Best of 62 - 66	13
Abbey Road	11
Sgt. Pepper	10

Review Questions

- 1.) How many Beatles were there? Which two were the first to play together?
- 2.) What year did the Beatles start their recording career? When did they break up?
- 3.) After their break up, did the Beatles ever reunite? Why or why not?

Read. When your reading has a purpose, it's easier to stay focused and you're better able to understand what you read. To give your reading purpose, try turning each subtitle into a question. For example, you could turn the subtitle, **The Beatles change their image**, into the question, "What did the Beatles do to change their image?" Keep your question in mind as you read, and when you finish the section, see if you can answer your question. Your question will give you something specific to look for, and it will help keep your mind from wandering. You will, therefore, remember more of what you read.

Before you start to read a section, look to see if there are any vocabulary words, names, places, or events in **bold** or *italic* print. Then ask yourself, "Why is this word, person, place, or event important?" You should, of course, have an answer to that question when you finish reading the section. For example, after reading "**The Beatles change their image**," you should know who **Brian Epstein** is.

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

Review. Okay, you've scanned and read the assignment. This is when most students will say, "I'm done," and close their book. Taking a few extra minutes for review, however, will make a huge difference in what you're able to remember later. When you review, you lock the information into your brain before it has a chance to evaporate.



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

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

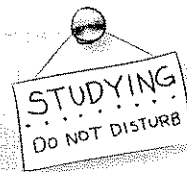
It may take a little practice to get the **Scan**, **Read**, and **Review** process down, but you'll soon realize that this process doesn't mean more work - it just means better grades.



Step Six

Know How to Read a Textbook

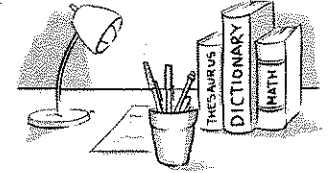
- ▶ **SCAN** by reading subtitles, words in bold and italic print, summaries, charts, and review questions.
- ▶ **READ** with a purpose.
- ▶ **REVIEW** by scanning the material to check your understanding.



Step Seven Study Smart

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

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



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

"I like to listen to music while I'm doing busywork-type homework, but not when I'm studying." Maria

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

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

Know your learning style. We all learn differently. Some learn best by seeing the material (visual learners) and some learn best by hearing the information (auditory learners). Some learn best by doing (kinesthetic learners) and some learn best through the use of technology. Think about how you learn, and adjust how you study accordingly.

Visual learners learn best from films, pictures, reading, and demonstrations. If you're a visual learner, take notes, use flash cards and diagrams, form pictures in your mind, and use color in your notes.

Auditory learners learn best from presentations, discussions, films, and music. If you're an auditory learner, read aloud, have discussions, listen to tapes, and review information out loud.

If you're a kinesthetic learner, you learn best when you're doing hands-on activities. Move around while you study, use objects whenever possible, and role play ideas and concepts.

If you're a technological learner, use computers, the Internet, and technology to keep you interested, motivated, and focused.

"I must be a visual learner because I have to see what I'm trying to learn." John

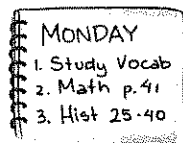
As a general rule, the more senses you involve and the wider variety of methods you use while studying, the more you remember. William Glasser, an expert in the field of education, stated that,

"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."

Organize your study time.

- ▶ Before you start to study, make a plan. Decide exactly what you want to get done, and the order in which you are going to do it.
- ▶ Prioritize your work to make sure you have enough time for the things that are the most important.
- ▶ Focus on one thing at a time.
- ▶ If you have something that seems overwhelming, break it down into smaller parts.
- ▶ Always allow more time than you think you'll need.
- ▶ If you have something to memorize, work on that first. Go over it again at the end of your study session.
- ▶ Do difficult assignments first, while you're still fresh and alert.
- ▶ Alternate types of homework (read English, do math, read history).
- ▶ Know when and how to take breaks. Research has shown that students learn the most during the first and last ten minutes of any study session. After studying for 20 minutes, try taking a short break (get a drink, get up and stretch, go for a short walk).

"When I study, I take short breaks between subjects." Brad



Know how to study for tests.

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

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

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



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

- ▶ If your textbook has review questions, know the answers to all of these questions. Also, go through your textbook and make sure you know the meanings of all the words in **bold** and *italic* print.

- ▶ When reviewing a topic, ask yourself, Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How (5Ws + H).

- ▶ If a teacher gives you a review sheet, study it until you know everything on it. Then use it to come up with questions that might be on the test.



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

- ▶ Review often and review out loud. When you review, you move information from your short-term memory into your long-term memory. *Review is the key to learning anything!*

- ▶ Write down any names, dates, formulas, and/or facts you need to remember on index cards. Take these cards with you the day of the test, and go over them as often as you can before the test.

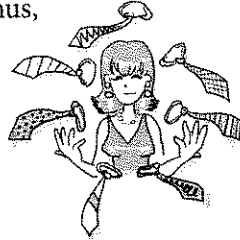
Use tricks to help you memorize information.

- ▶ Use flashcards to memorize vocabulary words, facts, and lists.

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

- ▶ Write down what you want to memorize and stare at it. Close your eyes and try to see it in your mind. Say it, and then look at it again. Do this until you know it.

- ▶ Before you go to sleep, go over any information that you want to remember. Your brain will commit it to memory while you sleep.
- ▶ 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 the words you want to remember to make up a silly, ridiculous sentence. For example, if you need to remember the names of the planets for a test, just make up a silly sentence like, “My very elegant mother juggled seven ugly neckties.” (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune). As soon as you get your test, say this sentence to yourself, and at the top of your test, write MVEMJSUN (the first letter of each planet). When you need to write in the names of the planets on the test, you’ll have your memory cue ready.



- ▶ Look for an easy or logical connection. For example, to remember that Homer wrote the *Odyssey*, think, “Homer is an *odd* name.”
- ▶ Information is easier to remember if it’s grouped or categorized. Use lists and diagrams to group related terms, facts, and ideas.
- ▶ Use ridiculous, unforgettable images to help trigger your memory. For example, a ridiculous image could help you remember that Hawthorne wrote *The Scarlet Letter*. Just visualize a large red letter “A” with a big thorn sticking in it saying “Ha!” It can be fun coming up with your own ridiculous images, and they work.

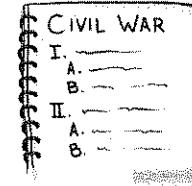


Use tricks when making a presentation or speech.

- ▶ Use props when possible. Props (posters, books, sports equipment) give you something to look at and something to do with your hands. You can also put notes on the back of your props.
- ▶ To help add enthusiasm and energy to your voice, pretend that you’re telling your best friend something really important.
- ▶ Good speakers make eye contact with the people in their audience. If this is difficult for you to do, look at their foreheads instead.

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

1. Choose a topic.
2. Gather information.
3. Make an outline.
4. Write a rough draft.
5. Read your paper out loud.
6. Think of ways to improve your paper, and then rewrite it.
7. Have someone else read it.
8. Write the final draft.
9. Check for spelling and grammatical errors.
10. Make sure your paper looks neat, and turn it in on time.



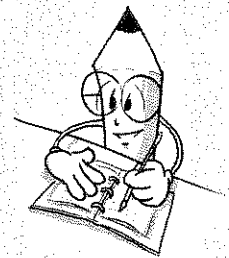
When you’re writing a paper, it’s very important to put it away at least once or twice. When you take it out and read it again, you’ll see and hear things that you didn’t notice before.

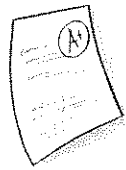
Be sure to always identify another person’s words or ideas by using quotation marks or footnotes. If you present another person’s words or ideas as your own, it’s the same as cheating. It’s called plagiarism.



Step Seven Study Smart

- ▶ Find a good place to study.
- ▶ Get started.
- ▶ Know your learning style.
- ▶ Organize your study time.
- ▶ Know how to study for tests.
- ▶ Use tricks to help you memorize information.
- ▶ Use tricks when making a presentation or speech.
- ▶ Know how to write a paper.





Step Eight

Be a Good Test Taker

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

Get off to a good start. Have everything you need for the test with you when you go to class (pencil, erasable pen, calculator). If you have a couple of minutes before the test starts, try to relax.

As soon as you get your test, write anything that you want to remember (facts, dates, equations, formulas) at the top of your test. Put your name on the test, and read the directions carefully.

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

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

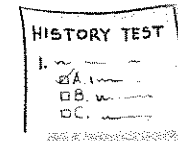
Don't spend a lot of time on difficult questions, and don't panic if you don't know the answers to the first few questions. Sometimes it takes a few minutes for your brain to get in gear.

"If you're not sure of an answer, always go with your first instinct." Greg

Increase your odds on multiple-choice questions.

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


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



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

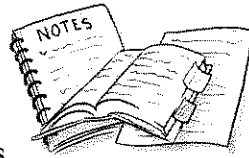
Look for key words in true/false questions. Statements with *all*, *always*, *never*, *every*, and *none* in them are usually false. Statements with *usually*, *often*, *sometimes*, *most*, and *many* in them are usually true. Read True/False questions very carefully. One word will often determine whether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

Know how to approach essay questions.

- ▶ Read each question and then start with the easiest one. This will help give you confidence. It will also give you time to think about how to answer the harder questions. Note how many points each essay is worth, and adjust the time you spend on each accordingly.
- ▶ Before you do any writing, do some brainstorming. Jot down the key words, ideas, and points that you want to cover in your answer. If you have time, organize your ideas into a simple outline. If not, just number your ideas in the order you want to present them. 
- ▶ Begin writing. Use clear, concise, complete sentences and write neatly. In your opening paragraph, restate the question, and tell the reader what he/she can expect to learn from your essay. In your middle paragraphs, present examples, details, and facts to support the points you're making. In your final paragraph, restate the most important points, draw conclusions, and write a brief summary. Finally, reread your entire essay and make corrections.
- ▶ If you don't know the answer to an essay question, take a couple of minutes to write down what you do know about the subject. You may hit on something and get partial credit. If you don't have time to complete an essay, write your teacher a note explaining that you ran out of time. Then briefly list the points you would have covered. Again, you might get partial credit.

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

Be prepared for open book tests. To help you locate information quickly during an open book test 1) highlight your notes; 2) write down all of the information you know you'll need on a separate sheet of paper; and 3) put self-stick notes in your textbook to help you locate specific information.



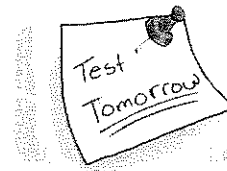
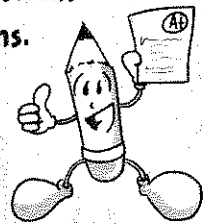
Check your answers. If you have time, check all of your answers, even the ones you know are correct. You may have made a careless mistake. *Always use all of the time that you're given.*

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



Step Eight Be a Good Test Taker

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


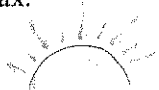


Step Nine Reduce Test Anxiety

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

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

To reduce test anxiety, study enough to feel confident that you know the material. Then try to replace the worry and negative thinking with thoughts that are positive and relaxing. Some of the following suggestions may help you.

- ▶ Start studying early. Cramming only increases test anxiety.
- ▶ Mentally practice going through the test. Close your eyes and see yourself confidently walking into the room, taking the test, answering the questions correctly, and receiving the grade you want. Go through this mental exercise several times before the test.
- ▶ The night before a test, review the material, and then get a good night's sleep. 
- ▶ Walk into the test with your head up and your shoulders back. If you act confident, you just may find that you feel more confident.
- ▶ Try these four common relaxation techniques:
 1. Take a deep breath. Then slowly release your breath, along with any tension. Do this until you feel your body relax.
 2. Start at the top of your head, flexing, and then relaxing each part of your body. 
 3. Close your eyes and visualize warm sunshine washing over you, melting away the tension, and relaxing all of your muscles.
 4. Think of a place where you feel very relaxed and calm. Close your eyes and visualize being in that place.

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



Step Ten - Get Help When You Need It

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

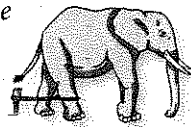
Most questions can be answered, and most problems resolved, just by talking to the right person (secretary, principal, teacher, counselor). If you need academic help, or if you have a class-related problem, talk to your teacher. For most other questions or problems, go to the office or talk to your counselor. If you ever feel threatened or harassed by another student, tell a counselor, teacher, or principal right away.

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

If you're dealing with any of the following, please talk to a parent, counselor, or adult you trust: alcohol, drugs, pregnancy, abusive relationship, eating disorder, problems at home, depression. Thousands of students are struggling with these same problems. The smart ones get help.

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 - so he gave up. Now, as a grown elephant, he continues to believe that he can't break the rope, so he doesn't even bother trying.



Just like this elephant, if you think that you can't succeed, or if you allow past failures to keep you from trying, you'll never get anywhere. Think positively, keep trying, and you will succeed!



Tips For Parents

Your child needs you to be interested and involved in his/her academic progress. Using these tips will help ensure that your child will succeed in school.

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

Discuss classes and set goals. Sit down with your child at the beginning of each grading period and help him/her set realistic academic goals. Your child will better understand what your expectations are, and having goals will give your child something to work towards.

At the beginning of the grading period, Kate and her parents decided that she should be able to earn As in math, English, art, PE, and social studies. Since Kate finds Spanish and science more difficult, they decided that they'd be happy with Bs in these two subjects.



Make it a point to recognize extra effort and improvement, and to acknowledge each academic success, even if it's only a good grade on a quiz or homework assignment. At the end of a term, you can offer rewards if goals are met and/or consequences if they're not.

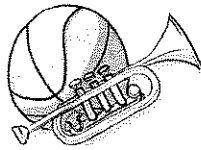
Rewards are particularly good when you want to encourage a change in attendance, effort, or behavior. (Eventually, doing well will be its own reward.)

Consequences should be logical whenever possible. For example, a logical consequence for routinely being late to school is an earlier bedtime. Never take away a positive activity (sports, school plays, music lessons, scouting) as a consequence.

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

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

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



Monitor Activities and Jobs. Make sure that your child is not spending too much time on the Internet, watching TV, playing computer games, or talking on the phone. Also, make sure that your child is not working too many hours or too late at a job.

Be aware of what not to do.

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

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

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



If your child isn't doing well in school, find out why. Most students who don't do well in school feel like failures. They're frustrated, discouraged, and sometimes angry. The "I don't care" attitude they often display is a defense mechanism. It's important for these students to know that their parents haven't given up on them. They also need to know that their parents are interested, supportive, and willing to take the time to help them be more successful in school.

Students who aren't doing well in school usually have problems in one or more of the following areas.

Attendance - It is extremely important for students to be in school, on time, every day. Unless a child is truly ill, he/she needs to be in school.

Attendance is the number one school success factor!

Appropriateness of courses - We can't expect students to get good grades if they are in the wrong classes. If any of your child's courses are too difficult or too easy, call the school counselor. If you think your child might have greater success in a program with a more "hands-on" approach to learning, ask your child's counselor if your district offers any career-oriented (vocational) programs.

Accountability - It's human nature to be tempted to "slack off" when we're not held accountable. How seriously would most workers take their jobs if they knew that their bosses would never know how hard they were working or find out how many days they missed?

Your child needs to know that you will be monitoring his/her academic progress throughout the year and that successes will be recognized and poor performances noticed. Your child also needs to know that you care, and that you will be consistent in your interest.

Alcohol/Drug abuse - Students who abuse alcohol or drugs are often distracted to the point where their school performance is affected. If you know or suspect that your child is drinking or using drugs, talk to him/her about it. If you need information or advice, talk to your doctor or to the school counselor. They can help.

If you believe that there are other reasons for your child not doing well in school, make an appointment to see your child's counselor. Recognizing that there is a problem is the first, and most important, step in finding a solution.



Words to Live By

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

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

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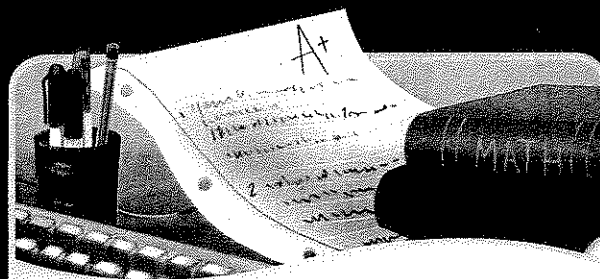
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About the Author - Linda O'Brien was a school counselor for over twenty years. She also served as a board member for the Ohio School Counselor's Association. Ms. O'Brien received a B.S. in Education from Miami University and a Master's degree in Guidance and Counseling from Xavier University. Linda O'Brien is the author of the eleven titles listed above.



How To Get Good Grades In Ten Easy Steps

This book is full of helpful
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