

How to Get Good Grades: Ten Tips for Students

1) Believe in Yourself

“Whether you think you can or you can’t, you’re right!” –Henry Ford

- In order for you to succeed, you have to believe in yourself and your abilities. Set short term goals for yourself, and believe that you can achieve them.

2) Be Organized

- **Use an agenda or a planner.** You can write down your homework assignments in every class, and keep track of tests, quizzes, and projects.
- **Use a three ring binder with dividers or have a different color folder for each class.** Buy a 3-hole punch and put it in your notebook, so you can hole punch any handouts you are given and put them directly into your binder.
- **Keep your locker and backpack neat.** Never put loose papers in your backpack or books.
- **Get organized before you go to bed.** Put your completed homework in your folders, and make a habit of putting everything you need for the next day in the same place every night.

3) Manage Your Time Well

- **Do your homework during class when your teacher gives you the opportunity to start it in class.**
- **Create your own study plan.** Have a routine when you get home from school. For example, 3:30-4:00 Snack, 4:00-5:00 Math Homework, 5:00-6:00 English Homework, etc.
- **Prepare for Distractions.** Identify anything that could interrupt or ruin your study plan, and then figure out how to eliminate or avoid it.

4) Be Successful In Class

- **Be in School, On Time, Every Day.** When you miss school, you miss lectures, notes, class discussions, assignments, quizzes, and tests. Unless you have an extended illness or a serious health problem, you should miss no more than 5 or 6 days of a school year.
- **Learn How to Adapt To Different Teachers.** In the classroom, teachers are in charge and make the rules. One teacher may count you tardy if you are not in your seat when the bell rings, and another teacher may consider you present if you have one foot inside the door.
- **Be Prepared for Each Class.** You need to have your books, paper, pencils, etc with you when you go to class. *You also need to have ALL your homework done. Always do your homework.* To be completely present in class, you need to be physically and mentally alert, which means eating right, exercising, and getting enough sleep are all important.
- **Be Aware of Your Body Language.** Teachers are up in the front of the classroom and see everything. They know who is paying attention, who is taking notes, and who is listening to the class discussion. They also know who is doing homework for another class, passing notes, texting on their phone, or daydreaming. It’s not enough for you to say that you want to get good grades; your body language has to communicate this also.
- **Participate in Class.** Participating in class makes it more interesting, and helps keep your mind focused. Ask and answer questions, and get involved in class discussions. Many teachers give participation points, so participating not only makes class more interesting, it can also help you get a better grade.
- **Treat Others with Courtesy and Respect.** Treat your teachers and classmates the same way that you can be treated. Be polite, make eye contact, be aware of your tone of voice, and listen while others are talking.
- **Involve your Parents.** Tell your parents about what you did in school. Have them quiz you on vocabulary words, read over a paper, 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.

5) Take Good Notes

- **Be an Active Listener.** Think about what the teacher is saying and try to understand the information.
- **Take Notes.** Listen for verbal cues (like when a teacher speaks louder, speaks slower, or says “the most important reason is...”) while taking notes to know what information is the most important to know or write down. Use highlighting, underlining, and stars to remind yourself what information you think is important. Make sure you have appropriate headings (ex. Biology, Parts of a Cell, Key Words) on your paper, and that your notes are easy to read.
- **Go Over Your Notes as Soon as Possible.** Rewrite your notes if they are confusing, or put them into your own words. Make sure to get copies of class notes if you are absent.

How to Get Good Grades: Ten Tips for Students

6) Know How to Read a Textbook

- **Scan, Read, and Review.** Scan the book to get a quick overview of what you will be reading. Read the material, thinking about what ideas are important to remember or know. Writing notes in your notebook may be helpful to remember key ideas. Once finished reading, ask yourself what the main ideas or themes are to help lock the information in your brain.

7) Study Smart

- **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, is well lit, and comfortable.
- **Organize Your Study Time.** Make a study plan. Know when to take breaks. Research has shown that students learn the most during the first and last ten minutes of a study session.
- **Know How to Study for Tests.** Know what the test is going to cover, and which type of test is being given (essay, short answer, fill in the blank, or multiple choice). Study review sheets, try to explain concepts in your own words, and make sure you know key terms.
- **Use Tricks to Help you Memorize Information.** Use *flash cards* to memorize vocabulary, facts, and lists. Say it out loud, picture it in your mind, and practice it until you know it. Use *acronyms* to help you memorize (ex. 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 sentence (ex. "My very elegant mother juggle seven ugly neckties" to remember the planets Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune).

8) Use Test Taking Strategies

- **Get Off to a Good Start.** Have all materials you need for the test (paper, pencil, calculator, etc.). As soon as you get your test, write down anything you want to remember (facts, dates, equations, etc.).
- **Mark the Questions that you Want to Return to.** Put a dot or a mark by any question that you do not know an answer for, and return to try them again. Sometimes it takes a few minutes for your brain to get in gear.
- **Increase Your Odds on Multiple Choice Questions.** Eliminate choices you know are incorrect. Look for key words that may hint towards an answer. Read all the answer choices before selecting your answer. Don't be tempted to mark the first answer that sounds good.
- **Know How to Approach Essay Questions.** Read each question and start with the easiest one. Brainstorm or outline ideas you want to cover in your answer. If you don't know the answer, write down what you know about the subject so you can get partial credit.

9) Reduce Test Anxiety

- **Study enough to Feel Confident That you Know the Material.** Start studying early. Review the material the night before the test and get a good night's sleep.
- **Try Relaxation Techniques.** 1) Take a deep breath, slowly release your breath along with any tension 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 your muscles 4) Think of a place where you feel very relaxed and calm.

10) Get Help When you Need It

- **Seek out the Appropriate Adult for Help.** If you need academic help, or if you have a class related problem, talk to your teacher. For any other concerns or problems, make a request to see your counselor. If you ever feel intimidated or harassed by another student, tell a counselor, teacher or another adult right away. If you are dealing with other issues such as alcohol or drugs, an abusive relationship, an eating disorder, depression, or problems at home, please speak with your counselor or a parent.
- **Get Help from your Classmates.** Forming study groups and asking for help from other students is a great way to understand the material presented in class. Ask each other questions, explain concepts, and teach each other.