STUDY SKILLS
For
High School Students
(The Disorganised Kid’s Guide to Success!)
Patrina Cole
Regular exercise is an important part of a successful study routine...as is a healthy diet...lots of laughter...And loads of sleep...
SUCCESS!

To do well at school you don’t have to be brainy. Successful people are usually well organised, positive, motivated, and make sure they have time to do all of their homework.

Be Organised * Be Positive * Be Motivated * Allow Time

You might have noticed that none of these things mention brain power. They are all things that you can do.

"A strong, positive self-image is the best possible preparation for success." -- Joyce Brothers

"The Dictionary is the only place that success comes before work. Hard work is the price we must pay for success. I think you can accomplish anything if you’re willing to pay the price." -- Vince Lombardi

Think well of yourself and you will do well!

It is important to think about your attitudes towards school. The way you think about yourself, and things in general, can affect how well you do at school. If you feel good about school then you won’t mind doing homework.

Often getting started is the hardest part about study. By just being organised and making a start you are already halfway there.

The important thing to remember about school is to try. When you give up, school becomes a negative place to be. You need to enjoy your time at school and feel as though you are achieving some success.

"Success is the maximum utilization of the ability that you have." - Zig Ziglar
BE ORGANISED!

The most important thing that you can do to be successful at school is to be organised.

Homework Diary
* It is very important to use your homework diary every day. A homework diary is the best way to keep track of your homework, tests, assignments and when they are due.
* Show your parents your homework diary so that they know what you are doing at school.

A Tidy File
Successful students are able to keep their files in an organised and tidy way. To do this you will need to:
* Go through your file regularly and remove unwanted pages and old work
* Put the date on all of your work and then put your work in order
* Keep each subject in its own section
* Punch holes in handout sheets
* Use plastic sleeves to store important handouts such as course outlines

Be Prepared
* Always have your own pens and paper
* Make sure that you always have the correct books and equipment needed for each of your classes that day
* It is best to be really organised and pack your bag the night before

Study Timetable
At the beginning of each week make sure that you fill in your study timetable. Keep it pinned on the wall or somewhere where you can easily see it.
Try your best to follow this timetable. If not, simply try again next week.

"Plan for the future because that's where you are going to spend the rest of your life."
~ Mark Twain
Personal Goal Setting

Find direction. Live your life the way you choose.

Goal setting is a powerful process for planning your future. Properly-set goals can be incredibly motivating, and as you get into the habit of setting and achieving goals, you'll find that your self-confidence builds fast.

Achieving More With Focus

Goal setting techniques are used by top-level athletes, successful business-people and achievers in all fields. They give you long-term vision and short-term motivation. By setting sharp, clearly defined goals, you can measure and take pride in the achievement of those goals. You can see forward progress in what might previously have seemed a long pointless grind. By setting goals, you will also raise your self-confidence, as you recognise your ability and competence in achieving the goals that you have set.

True goals are your own creation and you need to think them out and set them for yourself. It is useful, however, to group them into three categories:

Short-term goals:
- Complete homework
- Prepare notes
- Get out of bed earlier
- Be nice to your brothers and sisters for a day (it IS possible!).

Mid-term goals:
- Do well in tests/exams
- Read all of the set novels by August
- Improve your grade in English from a 'C' to a 'B'

Long-term goals:
- Gain tertiary entrance
- Stay at home until 21
- Plan for a career
- Identify a lifestyle and how to get there

No study program should be developed without first identifying what your goals are. You must have something to achieve, and some measurable outcome for all your efforts.

You can’t hit a home run unless you step up to the plate. You can’t catch a fish unless you put your line in the water. You can’t reach your goals if you don’t try.

- Kathy Seligman
STUDY and HOMEWORK

When you sit down to do homework you need to work out what you are going to do and how you are going to do it. By working these things out you will be getting organised. You will need to spend time on homework and study.

Homework

* Homework is given to you by your classroom teacher.
* You will need to get homework finished on time. In fact, it is best to try to complete it a few days earlier so that you have time to check your work before you hand it in.
* You need to do homework so that you can practice the things you are learning in class.
* Homework should be started on the day that you get it.
* Homework lets the teacher see if you have understood the topic.

Study

* Study is different from homework because it is work that you do on your own.
* Each day you need to spend some time looking through the work you have done in class that day.
* Study can include:
  - Practicing examples
  - Reading books
  - Writing summaries
  - Learning things off by heart
  - Telling somebody else what you have learnt
  - Re-reading notes and summaries
* Study should be balanced. It is easy to spend time on subjects that you like and forget the harder subjects.

Use your study timetable to check that your study is balanced.

“One of life’s most painful moments comes when we must admit that we didn’t do our homework, that we are not prepared.” ~ Merlin Olsen
STUDY TIMETABLE

It is very important to use a study timetable. A timetable is the best way to get organised. If you use a timetable each week you will be able to:

* Study regularly
* Do regular revision
* Make sure that you spend some time learning your hardest subjects

Break your work load up into twenty minute blocks. Then have a short break. After the break complete another block of homework.

Put the hardest subjects into your timetable first.

When you are making your timetable try to be realistic. Include what you can do, rather than putting down far more than you could ever do.

Also be prepared to be flexible or adaptable. If you need to spend more time on something than you had planned then that is alright.

If you don’t stick to your timetable for one week, just start again the next week. Don’t give up altogether. It might take you quite a while to get used to being organised if you have been a bit disorganised in the past.

Using your timetable

1. At the start of each week read your homework diary. Make sure that you put all of the homework that you have to do into your study timetable.

2. List the subjects that you study at school

3. Now put each of these on to your study timetable.
   Use this time for study, not just homework.
This timetable covers the time from 4.00pm until 6.00pm. It would suit a person who likes to do their homework straight after school. If it suits you better to do your homework later in the evening, maybe because you have a favourite TV show you like to watch, or have sporting commitments, then change the times in the first column.
READY FOR STUDY?

Checklist for study conditions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do I have a place of my own to study?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is it free from distractions?</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Noises, television, stereo, other people etc...)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I have a desk or table and a comfortable chair?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is my study area well lit?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Can my study area be left undisturbed from night to night?</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I see a clock so that I can time my study?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I have all of the pens, pencils, erasers and so on that I need?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I have all of the books I am likely to need close by?</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Concentration

At times all of us will have our study time reduced in effectiveness due to a lack of concentration. As your attention wanders you are no longer aware of what you are reading. While you are going through the motions of reading and studying, the information will not be retained. How easily are you distracted by the following when studying?:

* Daydreaming
* Watching TV
* Listening to music
* Reading a magazine or a book
* Unable to get started
* Unsure what to do
* Tidying your notes, desk, room
* Telephone
* Interruptions
* Doing unnecessary work e.g. cover page, sharpening pencils
* Personal grooming
* Chatting on the computer
* Eating/drinking
STUDY TIPS

In the Classroom

* Pay attention in the classroom. That way it will be much easier for you to learn about the topic.
* Ask questions if there is something that you don’t understand. Don’t be embarrassed about asking questions. The chances are that somebody else will want to know the answer as well.
* Be an active learner i.e. really listen to what your teacher is telling you. Take notes, jot down questions you would like answered, do further research into the topic.

At Home

* It is a good idea to start to get organised before you start your homework each night.
* Begin by tidying your file. Put the handouts that you received that day into the right section of your file.
* Read through all of the work that you did during the day. Check to see that you have understood what was being taught. If you don’t understand something, ask somebody for help: a brother or sister, a parent, a friend or the teacher the next time you have that subject.

Make a Fast Start

* Make a fast start with assignments
* It is a good idea to plan to finish the assignment BEFORE the due date. This will avoid having to do a rushed last minute effort.
* All of the books you need may have already been borrowed from the library if you leave it until the last day.
* Big assignments or projects need to be completed over a long period of time. Try to work on a small part of the assignment every night; don’t leave it until the last minute to complete.
Take a Break

* Work on your assignments or study for about 20 minutes.
* Take a five minute break - stretch your legs, get a drink or something healthy to eat, such as a piece of fruit.
* Work for another 20 minute block
* Take another 5 minute break and so on.

*Working like this will help you to concentrate.*

Be Motivated

* Generally your homework will not be hard to complete
* The really hard work is getting motivated to do it.
* The trick to homework is to try to approach it in a positive way.
* One way to be motivated is to give yourself small rewards for doing something that you find difficult.
* Remember to be proud of yourself for the work you get done.
* Some students like to finish their homework straight after school and use the evening to relax
* Make sure that you plan for some rest and relaxation. It is important to have fun as well as study.

Remember:

You are a unique individual, different to everybody else who has ever lived. Built into you is a blueprint for success. Many people around you can help you grow, but ultimately it is up to you to develop your inbuilt potential.
Improving Your Memory

How Do We Remember?

Many subjects at school have exams and tests that rely on your ability to memorise details. Below are some strategies for improving your memory:

**Repetition**: This is a very boring method of memorizing details, however it is the most effective. An example is learning your times tables as a child; you learnt these through repetition.

**Rhyme & Rhythm**: See if you can change the material to be learned into rhyme or a phrase with rhythm; it makes memorizing details so much easier. An example of this is the age-old rhyme:

30 days have September, April, June and November.  
All the rest have 31, except for February alone.  
When leap year comes once in four,  
February then has one day more.

**Chunking**: If you have a lot of information to remember, break it down into 'chunks'. 129101693 for example, is a long number to have to remember. So break it down into chunks of numbers, each of which has special significance to you. E.g. 1991  3  16  20

1991 - the year my son was born

3 - I have 3 children

16 - the date of my marriage

20 - the number of fingers and toes I have

**Speak Aloud**: Your family may think you are crazy when you start talking to yourself, but this is a great way to remember information! Read certain passages aloud, explain to yourself, or others, what you have just read/learned. Ask a family member to test you on the information - this is a great way to see just how much you have absorbed!
Mnemonics: Can you list the planets of the solar system in order from the sun? If so, I bet you used a mnemonic device!

I use this one: My Victor Eats More Jelly So Utter No Praise

Each underlined letter represents a planet: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto.

To remember the Great Lakes, remember the acronym HOMES:

Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie and Superior

Create a Story: Create a little story in your mind about the things you have to remember. Say you need to remember the capital cities of the following countries: Cuba (Havana), India (New Delhi), South Korea (Seoul) and Peru (Lima). My story would go something like this:

When I was in India I went to a New Delhi to buy some Lima beans from Peru. Unfortunately they were out, so I settled for a Cuban Havana. Unfortunately, unlike South Korea it had no Seoul.(soul)"

Remember, your sentence does not have to be serious, or even make sense. (Unlike mine, which makes perfect sense!) The important thing is that YOU remember it.

Meaning: The best way to remember information is to be an active participant. By this I mean that you must be motivated to learn, and you must ensure that what you are learning makes sense to you. If it doesn’t, it is your responsibility to seek help: teachers are not mind readers. (Thank goodness!)

Ways to Improve Your Memory:

- Repetition
- Rhyme & Rhythm
- Chunking
- Mnemonics
- Create a Story
- Speak Aloud
- Strongly Intend To Remember
- Understand what you are learning BEFORE start memorizing
- Organise effective summaries and notes. Put the information to be learned into your 'own' words
- Revise as often as necessary
- Learn formulae, definitions, dates, names, laws, etc by rote (by heart).
- It is better to 'over-learn' than not to learn enough

13.
EFFECTIVE READING STRATEGIES

The ability to read effectively is perhaps one of the most important keys to success in High School. Reading for study is different to the reading you are probably used to. When you study, you are reading for the primary purpose of information rather than entertainment. This involves many different skills.

Preview What You Are About To Read.

You may have loads of reading to get through, so don’t just open the book up at the beginning and start wading through it. Take some time to look over the chapter headings and the subheadings in the Table of Contents.

Check to see if the book has a glossary at the back. This will help you to identify any unfamiliar words or terms.

Flick through the book to get a feel for its usefulness. Is it user-friendly, or bogged down with big words? Does it have images, diagrams or graphs? If so, are they useful?

Skim and Mark

If possible, underline, highlight or use Post-it notes to annotate any parts of the book that are useful. This will save time later on.

Make Notes On What You Have Read

Unless you make some notes on what you have read, chances are you will quickly forget the information. As you read, jot down any important information in your own words - do NOT copy directly from the text. Putting information in your own words actually forces you to THINK about what you are reading.

Keep details of the text i.e. the title, author’s name and page numbers, particularly if using a library book.

Ensure your notes are brief. Use abbreviations wherever possible.
EXAMS!!!

Whether they admit it or not, EVERYONE gets nervous before an exam. Fortunately for most people, if they are well prepared, a few deep breaths and a few simple rules will get them through the panic stage and into the exam.

Preparing For the Exam

* Ensure you have a quiet, comfortable study environment
* Set yourself clear long term and short term study goals
* Make sure you stick to your study timetable
* Identify and concentrate on areas of weakness
* Learn actively. Don’t rely purely on the information your teacher has given you; do some extra research
* Memorise major concepts only - supporting information will follow naturally
* Ask your teacher for some old exam papers and practice answering the questions. This will also serve to familiarise you with the structure of the exam
* Ask your teacher for some hints on what might be in the exam. LISTEN CAREFULLY in the days leading up to the exam, as many teachers do provide subtle clues about what to expect.
* Take time out to relax. Lie on your bed, listen to music (no heavy metal!) and concentrate on taking deep breaths.
* Exercise regularly - even if you just take the dog for a walk
* Organise your equipment; ensure you have fresh batteries in your calculator, and your pens have enough ink
* Go to bed at a reasonable time on the night before an exam
The DETER Strategy for Taking Exams

To do well in an exam, you must have good knowledge of the information that is being tested. But you must also have a strategy for taking the test that allows you to show what you know. The DETER strategy can help you do your best on any test. Each letter in DETER reminds you what to do.

D = Directions

- Read the exam directions very carefully.
- Ask your teacher to explain anything about the exam directions you do not understand.
- Only by following the directions can you achieve a good score on the exam.
- If you do not follow the directions, you will not be able to demonstrate what you know.

E = Examine

- Examine the entire exam to see how much you have to do.
- Only by knowing the entire task can you break it down into parts that become manageable for you.
- Quickly jot down any ideas that spring to mind.
- Write down any information you usually have trouble remembering e.g. dates, names, formulae.

T = Time

- Once you have examined the entire test, decide how much time you will spend on each item.
- If there are different points for items, plan to spend the most time on the items that count for the most points.
- Place a watch on your desk so you know how much time you have left for each section of the exam.
**E = Easiest**

- The second E in DETER reminds you to answer the items you find easiest first.
- If you get stuck on a difficult item that comes up early in the test, you may not get to answer items that test things you know.
- While answering a question you may think of some information that will help you answer another question. Quickly write the information down on the exam paper before you forget, then you can go back to it later.

**R = Review**

- If you have planned your time correctly, you will have time to review your answers and make them as complete and accurate as possible.
- Also make sure to review the test directions to be certain you have answered all items required.
- If you do not know the answer, then GUESS!! Who knows? You might jag it and get the question right!
- **DO NOT LEAVE THE EXAM EARLY.** Even if you are convinced that there is nothing more you can write, go over your paper, check for errors, add in any bits of information you may have left out. You might find that you gain a mark or two extra. It could even mean the difference between a pass and a fail.
- **DO NOT indulge in a post-exam post-mortem!** Go home immediately after the exam and relax. The temptation will be there to dissect the exam, and your answers, with friends, but this could cause anxiety which may affect your confidence in the next exam.
Look After Yourself
A heavy study load can raise many problems for some students. Apart from having to cram endless facts into your brains, the prospect of actually sitting for exams can bring personal trauma - anxiety, health problems, irritability etc. You may consider getting some advice from your doctor if things get too hard to manage. Talk over some of your fears with your parents. Ask them to give you a little leeway if you are snappy, tense or moody. Take others into confidence and share your feelings.

There is no easy road to success. Successful people do the things other people do not like to do - such as work hard.

You can save yourself a great deal of time and effort by absorbing as much as possible during every classroom session.

AIMING HIGH
Did you know that people are more likely to succeed in life if they feel good about themselves? One way to feel good about yourself is to set goals that are achievable. Once you reach that goal you can believe in yourself that you can make it. The next time you can aim a little higher.

There is an old proverb that says: "If you want to shoot an arrow over a tree, aim at the moon." Work hard and aim to get good marks for your exams.

It is not how many hours you work but how you work the hours that counts.

If you believe in your potential and put effort into your study skills, you will eventually learn how to go about your assignments in an efficient and successful manner.

If you have no purpose in your studies then you will never get anywhere. Students who expect little will not be disappointed!

To achieve anything, you must have some idea of what it is you want to achieve. Two basic requirements for success are: having a vision, and being committed to that vision.

Make a conscious decision to continue working at getting the best from each and every day of your life.

Students who are tired of trying and lacking any sense of purpose, will always find study an uphill battle. Think well of yourself and you will do well.

GOOD LUCK!