

Study Skills Factsheet

10 Golden TIPS

- 1** Every study guide published in the last 35 years starts by advising you to settle upon one location to do your studying. That's still good advice, whether you choose the kitchen table, your bedroom or the family recreation room. Choose a place with good lighting, preferably with a firm chair and working surface, and where interruptions will be at a minimum.
- 2** Make out a study schedule for one week, allowing yourself breaks to reward yourself. At the end of the first week make an honest assessment of how well you did. Revise it - and then try to stick to it for the rest of the school year.
- 3** Psychologists say we have a good chance of retaining new information if we recall it within 24 hours. If we recall it once again within a week, the memory hangs onto it. That's why it is essential to look back at the notes you took in school that day, and to review them again before the week has ended. Simple as that sounds, it is often the difference between average and excellent marks, or between passing and failing.
- 4** Try to do more than the bare minimum that is required. Your interests in a subject will jump dramatically if you read some of the supplementary material recommended by the teacher.
- 5** Understand what you're supposed to do in your homework before you leave the classroom. It's no good trying to figure out at 9 o'clock that evening what the mathematics teacher meant by something she said just before the second-last period ended. Find out during class.
- 6** Try to prepare ahead. Both your interest and your retention rate will soar if you have read, in advance, material that your teacher will be presenting. Often, what you thought might be a boring class turns out to be fun.

7 Organize yourself so you complete chores before you start your homework. Some students try to complete phone calls before homework. Others allow themselves the reward of a break to make social phone calls.

8 Take a close look at the way you take notes and ask yourself whether you could improve your methods. The most successful students organize their notes immediately after taking them rather than waiting a few days or a week. If you feel you're still having problems, speak to the teacher of the subject which is giving you trouble.

9 Don't let yourself fall behind. Nothing is more discouraging than the realization that you've missed an assignment deadline while other work is falling behind. Try to provide time in your schedule for assignments. If you're still falling behind, take another close look at your schedule and make adjustments.

10 Finally, learn to type if it is still at all possible. Not only is typing a skill that could mean the difference between getting a job or not in later life, but teachers in both high school and university confess that they tend to give higher marks for neatly typed assignments. Neat typing won't disguise a sloppily researched assignments, but it is far better than almost illegible handwriting.

STUDYING for an exam

Let's say you've just been told that an important test is one week away. Here's what you should be doing.

1. Review your notes. Start with the main points before you return to review the material in detail.
2. Set up a schedule so you know what you will be reviewing each night, and know that you can cover everything in that time.
3. Listen closely to the teacher's tips on what may be in the examination and skip over it for that reason.
4. Never assume you know what type of examination it will be, e.g. essay questions or true-or-false. If you're in any doubt, don't hesitate to ask.

...and here's a "DO NOT"

Don't sit up all night cramming. Research has shown that regular sleep plays a vitally important role in learning. People who miss out on their sleep have more difficulty in recalling learned information than those who keep regular sleeping hours.

TAKING notes

1. Use a loose-leaf notebook. That means that you can take out or add material.
2. At the end of the week (or month), put your notes in a marked folder which you keep in a safe place at home or at school. Spilling a whole years' notes in a crowded corridor between classes can be a devastating experience.
3. Date your notes and number the pages. You'll be extremely grateful in April that you started doing it in September.
4. Write your name and school form at the top of each page. Lost notes are often found but seldom returned because it is impossible to learn who wrote them.
5. Don't ignore points that the teacher puts on the blackboard. Follow the same organization in your notebooks.
6. Almost everyone has a different way of taking notes. The important thing - particularly if you plan to attend university or college - is to develop your own form of shorthand in which key phrases will recall information. Try to put material down in your own words, rather than the teacher's because that will mean more to you later.
7. Review your notes no later than the evening of the day that you took them.

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HOW MUCH TIME --- should I spend on homework?

The number of hours that an individual student may spend upon homework will vary, depending upon study periods available in your daily schedule and the type of course that you are taking. Take for granted, however, that you will require more study time as you progress from grade to grade. One secondary school in Toronto advises its Grade 9 students to schedule one hour each week night for home study, and to increase that schedule up to three hours in Grade 12.

Most school guidance departments have sample study schedules and are pleased to share them with parents who may want to know how they can help their son or daughter become better organized.

A final tip: count upon more time prior to, and during, exams.

STUDYING FOR --- specific subjects

We've said nothing in this brochure about studying for specific subjects because the best source of advice is your teachers. We should emphasize however that it is particularly important to stay on top of both mathematics and languages. Falling behind in either is demoralizing, to say the least. For the special tricks of studying for specific subjects, we'll refer you to your own teachers.