

The 10 Steps to Good Grades



Step One

Believe in Yourself 2

Step Two

Be Organized 4

Step Three

Manage Your Time Well 6

Step Four

Be Successful in Class 8

Step Five

Take Good Notes 14

Step Six

Know How to Read a Textbook 16

Step Seven

Study Smart 18

Step Eight

Be a Good Test Taker 23

Step Nine

Reduce Test Anxiety 24

Step Ten

Get Help When You Need It 25



Step Four

Be Successful in Class

If you do the things discussed in this section, you are sure to be successful in school.

Have good attendance. How many days of school do you generally miss a year? ____ 0-5 ____ 6-10 ____ 11-20 ____ more than 20

Unless you have an illness or health condition, you should have checked 0-5. *Research shows that attendance is the number one school success factor!*



Adapt to different teachers. Teachers are in charge and they make the rules for their class. As a student, it is your responsibility to know what's important to each of your teachers, and to know what you need to do to succeed in each of your classes.

Think about the teachers you currently have and write a few words describing each teacher's teaching style. Also write down anything that's important to that teacher. For example,

Mr. Johnson likes discussions, raise hand to speak, no late homework

Teacher's name	Teaching style / Things to remember
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Knowing what your teachers want will help you succeed in your classes!

Be prepared for class. When you come to class prepared, you get more out of the class presentations and lectures. You can also participate in the class discussions.

Put check marks in the spaces that best describe how prepared you are for class.	Almost Always	Some- times	Hardly Ever
1. I am in my seat when the bell rings.	_____	_____	_____
2. I bring everything I need to class.	_____	_____	_____
3. I have my homework done.	_____	_____	_____
4. I come to class well-rested and alert.	_____	_____	_____
5. I am prepared and ready for tests.	_____	_____	_____

Give yourself 2 points for each **Almost Always**, 1 point for each **Sometimes**, and 0 for each **Hardly Ever** response. **Your Score** _____
If your score is less than 10, try to improve any area that needs work.

Be aware of your body language.

As soon as Shawna walked into the kitchen, she could tell from the way her mother was standing that she was in big trouble.

Body language often communicates how we feel and what we're thinking even better than words. If you truly want to get good grades and are interested in succeeding in school, make sure that your body language communicates this to your teachers. For example, sit up in your seat and look at your teachers when they're speaking.

Even if you don't feel all that positive about a class or school, try acting like you do. You just may find that your attitude improves to match the way you act.

OUTSIDE ASSIGNMENT - During your next lunch period, spend a few minutes observing the students in the lunchroom. When you find a student showing one of the following emotions, check it off.



- | | |
|-------------|-----------------|
| _____ angry | _____ excited |
| _____ happy | _____ tired |
| _____ bored | _____ lonely |
| _____ sad | _____ confident |



Do your homework. No one needs to explain the importance of doing homework to you. You know how important homework is!

How much time, on the average, do you spend on homework each day? _____

How would you rate your homework grades?

_____ Excellent _____ Good _____ OK _____ Should be better

If you checked “Excellent,” great! Keep up the good work. If you checked “Good,” “OK,” or “Should be better,” put a check mark by the things you can do to improve your homework grades.

- _____ Spend more time on my homework
- _____ Get help from a parent, classmate, or teacher
- _____ Find a better place to study and do homework
- _____ Turn off the TV or music
- _____ Be more focused while doing homework
- _____ Start working on homework earlier in the evening
- _____ Take everything I need home with me from school
- _____ Limit the interruptions (phone, IM, text messages)



Try doing the things you checked for one week. Your homework grades are sure to improve!

Be a good group member. Research shows that the number one reason people get fired from their job is not because they can’t do the work. It’s because they can’t get along with their co-workers and/or supervisors. *Being able to work well as a group member is an important skill to develop!*

When working on a group project, most students are active, positive group members. Not all students, however, do their share of the work. When one or more group members don’t do their share, it decreases the success of the whole group.

On a scale of 1 - 10, rate yourself as a group member. Circle the number you’ve chosen. (Try not to choose 5.)

1 ···· 2 ···· 3 ···· 4 ···· 5 ···· 6 ···· 7 ···· 8 ···· 9 ···· 10

I don’t contribute, I make negative comments, and I don’t do any of the work.

I offer many ideas, I encourage others, and I do most of the work.

Imagine that you are in charge of a group. Would you want yourself as a group member? If yes, great. Keep up the good work. If no, try to be a more positive member of your next group. Be interested and involved, share your ideas, encourage others, and offer solutions.

Participate in class. On a scale of 1 - 10, how would you rate your class participation. Circle the number you've chosen. (Try not to choose 5.)



1 ···· 2 ···· 3 ···· 4 ···· 5 ···· 6 ···· 7 ···· 8 ···· 9 ···· 10

I never raise my hand.
If a teacher calls on me
I mumble, "I don't know."

I always raise my hand
and I am eager to share my
ideas during discussions.

Participating in class makes the class more interesting and the time go faster. *Don't be a spectator in your classes - be an active participant.* You'll not only enjoy your classes more, you'll also find that you learn more.

Case Study

Two students walk into class. Tyler has his book open and raises his hand twice to answer questions. Claire forgot her book in her locker, so she puts her head down during the discussion. While in groups, Tyler leads the discussion on the Civil War and asks for input from the other group members. Claire doesn't say a word in her group. She isn't really sure what the topic is.

When class is over Claire runs into the hallway looking for her friends. Tyler stays after class to ask the teacher a question about the homework.

Questions

Who do you think has a better grade in the class? _____

Who will be ready for a quiz tomorrow on the Civil War? _____

Who received zero points for class participation today? _____

Treat others with respect. We all want to be treated with common courtesy and respect. Over the past years, however, it seems that courtesy (saying please, thank you, excuse me) and respect (speaking respectfully to others) have become less common.



Describe a recent time that you were treated with courtesy and respect or a time when you were treated disrespectfully.

OUTSIDE ASSIGNMENT - To see how courteous and respectful students are in your school, listen to the students around you for one day. Count how many times you hear a student say *thank you*, *please*, or *excuse me*. Also count how many times you hear someone be disrespectful to a classmate or teacher. Write in the totals below.

_____ Thank you / Please / Excuse me
_____ Disrespectful comments

Make it a point to treat others as you would like to be treated. Hold the door open for the person behind you, say hello to teachers and classmates in the hall, say you're sorry if you bump into someone, and pick up the book or paper your classmate dropped. Doing these things will make you feel good, and they'll brighten the day of those around you.

Get along with your teachers. People become teachers because they enjoy their subject and they want to help students learn. While you will probably like some teachers better than others, you should make an effort to get along with all of your teachers.

Do you currently have a poor relationship with any of your teachers?
 Yes No If yes, what can *you* do to improve that relationship?

OUTSIDE ASSIGNMENT - Make it a point to say something nice to at least two of your teachers tomorrow.

Involve your parents. Most parents are interested in how their children are doing in school. Of course, all parents are different, and they have varying levels of interest and involvement.

Choose one (or both) parent, and rate that parent's involvement on a scale of 1 - 10. Circle the number you've chosen. (Try not to choose 5.)

1 ····· 2 ····· 3 ····· 4 ····· 5 ····· 6 ····· 7 ····· 8 ····· 9 ····· 10

My parent never asks about school and doesn't care how well I do.

My parent checks all my homework and is always talking to my teachers.

Most parents want to help their children do well in school, but sometimes they aren't sure what to do. If you could give your parent one piece of advice to help you succeed in school, what would it be?

Take responsibility for your grades. Students should always do their own work. Some students, however, take shortcuts and cheat.

Mark each of the following True (T), False (F), or Maybe (?).

It is cheating to...

- _____ copy someone else's homework
- _____ copy information word for word off the Internet for a paper
- _____ use work you did for one class in another
- _____ have a friend give you general information about a test, such as "*There are a lot of essay questions.*"
- _____ have a friend tell you specific questions that are on a test
- _____ copy off someone else's test paper
- _____ ask a parent to improve or rewrite a paper you've written
- _____ let other students do most of the work on a group project
- _____ have someone help you with your homework

Your Totals: _____ True _____ False _____ Maybe

While everyone would agree that it's cheating to copy off someone else's test paper, some of the above choices aren't so clear. *Students, however, usually know when they're doing something they shouldn't.* Always do your own work. You'll have fewer problems, you'll feel better about the grades you get, and you'll learn a lot more.



Step Five Take Good Notes

As your education progresses, notetaking becomes more important. Early in middle school, notetaking may consist of copying what a teacher has written on the board. By the time you're in high school, however, you need to be able to listen to a lecture and take notes on what's being said.



Since test questions often come from material that's been discussed in class, taking good notes will help you study and do well on tests.

How good are you at notetaking?

Put check marks in the spaces that best describe you.

	Almost Always	Some- times	Hardly Ever
1. My notes are neat and organized.	_____	_____	_____
2. I use symbols and abbreviations.	_____	_____	_____
3. I recognize important information.	_____	_____	_____
4. I write down any information the teacher writes on the board.	_____	_____	_____
5. I put key words in the left margins.	_____	_____	_____
6. I put the subject and date at the top of the page.	_____	_____	_____
7. If I'm absent, I get a copy of the notes I missed.	_____	_____	_____
8. I go over my notes after class and fill in the things I missed.	_____	_____	_____
9. I underline, star, or highlight the most important information.	_____	_____	_____
10. My notes help me do well on tests.	_____	_____	_____

Give yourself 2 points for each **Almost Always**, 1 point for each **Sometimes**, and 0 for each **Hardly Ever** response. **Your Score** _____

20 – 16 points: Congratulations! You are very good at notetaking.

15 – 11 points: Your notes are mostly in the “good” range. With a little work, you could really improve them.

10 – 0 points: Either you haven’t had to take many notes yet, or you really need to work on your notetaking skills. Talk to your teacher or counselor about getting help to improve your notetaking.

Find your two lowest scores on page 14. What can you do to improve each of these right away?

When you’re listening to a lecture, you can’t write down everything your teacher says. *To take good notes, you must pay attention and listen for the information that’s most important.*



Teachers give clues so that you’ll know what information they think is important. As a student, your job is to listen for these clues so that you’ll be able to identify the most important information.

OUTSIDE ASSIGNMENT - During the next day or two, watch and listen carefully for clues from your teachers. On the lines below, describe five things your teachers did to emphasize important information. For example: *Mrs. Jones said “the most important reason,”* or *Mr. Smith wrote the definition on the board,* or *Miss Baker repeated the same information 3 times.*



1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____