

# Teacher's Edition

## Table of Contents



<b>What Kind of Student Are You?</b> .....	2
<b>Step One</b>	
<b>Believe in Yourself</b> .....	3
<b>Step Two</b>	
<b>Be Organized</b> .....	4
<b>Step Three</b>	
<b>Manage Your Time Well</b> .....	6
<b>Step Four</b>	
<b>Be Successful in Class</b> .....	7
<b>Step Five</b>	
<b>Take Good Notes</b> .....	11
<b>Step Six</b>	
<b>Know How to Read a Textbook</b> .....	14
<b>Step Seven</b>	
<b>Study Smart</b> .....	17
<b>Step Eight</b>	
<b>Be a Good Test Taker</b> .....	22
<b>Step Nine</b>	
<b>Reduce Test Anxiety</b> .....	25
<b>Step Ten</b>	
<b>Get Help When You Need It</b> .....	26
<b>Tips for Parents</b> .....	27
<b>Words to Live By</b> .....	30

Go through the **Table of Contents**. Discuss how getting good grades is about more than being smart or studying hard. It's also about having a good attitude, being organized, getting along with teachers, asking for help, etc.

# Teacher's Edition

Before beginning this step, write **Time Management** on the board. Ask someone to explain what this term means.

Ask students if they've ever had too much to do and not enough time.

How did they get into that situation, and how did they deal with it?

Ask students to think about when they study best.

Have students make up a "schedule" for the next week. *You can download a weekly schedule form for your students to use at [www.woodburnpress.com/schedule.pdf](http://www.woodburnpress.com/schedule.pdf).*

Ask students to identify things that have disrupted their studying in the past. Write these on the board and brainstorm ways that students can prevent this kind of "sabotage" in the future.



## Step Three Manage Your Time Well

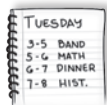
*With good time management, you have time for the things you need to do, and you still have time for the things you want to do.*

**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 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 sports, activities, or other responsibilities 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 keep yourself organized and "on track," have a study plan in mind before you get home from school each day.



**Prepare for disruptions.** 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 - I just make sure that 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 disruptions.



# Teacher's Edition



## 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 have 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. Do they give points for participation? Are they strict about rules? Do they grade homework?" Brad*

**Be prepared for each class.** 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 your teacher is talking about.

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

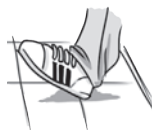
Tell students that the biggest factor in school success is attendance.

Make a list of reasons why students miss school. Decide which ones are valid and which are invalid.

Ask students if different teachers have different rules and class requirements. Is this fair? How might these differences make their school experience more valuable?

Ask students how not having their homework done affects their school day.

Do students feel that eating right, exercising, and getting enough sleep affects their school performance in any way?



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**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. 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.



Discuss how body language can communicate what a person is thinking and feeling. Have students demonstrate this by using facial expressions and body movement to communicate the following feelings and emotions: interested, bored, disgusted, angry, happy, worried, proud, defeated, aloof, sympathetic, afraid, surprised, distracted, and excited.

Have one or more students come up to the front of the room to find out just how easy it is to see what's going on in the classroom. Ask a volunteer to role play Jason's nonverbal behavior in the story above.

*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.

# Teacher's Edition

**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. Complete all of 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're working on a school project, involved in an extra-curricular activity, or working at a job, you need to be able to get along with the other people in the group. Whenever you're 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 want you to talk to them - it lets them know that you're interested and that you care. Teachers are busy though, so if you have a question or problem, see them before or after class."* Maria

Ask students to keep track of how much time they spend doing homework for 1 week (M-F). Ask them to also keep track of how much time they spend doing a favorite leisure time activity (watching TV, playing video games, talking on the phone, etc.). At the end of the week, compare these numbers.

Ask students how they feel about doing group projects. Have them think of reasons why teachers assign group projects.

Discuss how courteous the students in your school are to teachers and to each other.

Ask every student to speak to one teacher in the hall and to one teacher before or after class within the next day.

# Teacher's Edition

Ask students to think of ways their parents are involved in their education. Are some parents too involved?

Have students suggest appropriate ways to involve their parents.

After going through this section and the Step Four Review, have students close their books. As a “pop quiz” (or for extra credit points), ask students to list as many of the 11 strategies discussed in this section as they can. You could, of course, also do this as a group, or you could have students work in pairs and make it into a contest.

**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 teacher, class, or another student, let your parents know. They can help you deal with any situation or problem.

**Take responsibility for your grades.** If you get a good grade on an assignment or test, be proud of your accomplishment. If you receive a poor grade, don’t make excuses. Take responsibility for your grade and then figure out how you can get a better grade next time.

Always do your own work. You’ll learn more, and your grades will be something 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.**



# Teacher's Edition



## Step Five Take Good Notes

*Tests usually cover material that has 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.

Kylie 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 Kylie's favorite artist. As soon as she hears this, Kylie sits down next to the radio and listens carefully to the song. She tries to hear every word so that she can understand the meaning of the lyrics.



In this scene, Kylie 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 usually tell when a teacher's saying something that's important for you to know. Teachers will often speak louder or slower, or they'll say something like "the main point," "the most important outcome," or "the biggest reason." Of course, anything a teacher writes on the board or overhead should be considered very important. In your notes, underline or put a star beside the most important information. 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

Discuss the difference between hearing and active listening.

Have students give examples of times when they've been active listeners (listening to a coach explain a new play, listening to a friend talk about what happened over the weekend, etc.).

Ask students to list the classes in which they need to take notes. Have them rate their note-taking skills on a scale of 1-5.

Demonstrate how teachers use cues to signal important information. As a class, make a list of verbal cues that teachers use. Ask students to listen for verbal cues in their classes for a day. Give students extra credit if they turn in a list of 5.

# Teacher's Edition

Have students share the symbols, abbreviations, and “tricks” that they use when taking notes.

Discuss and demonstrate the idea of writing key words in the left hand margin of the page. Show how this technique can be used to study for tests.

The next time your students take notes in class, give them 4 or 5 minutes to read over their notes, fill in blanks, and check their key words.

## 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

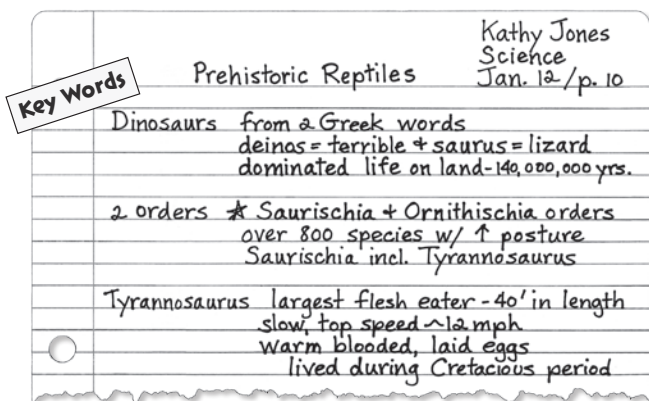
- ▶ Don't worry about grammar or punctuation.
- ▶ Leave a wide space or margin on the left side of each page. As you're taking notes, listen for **key words**. When you hear a key word, write it in the left-hand margin. Key words (topics, people, places, events) help you organize your thoughts, and they 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. Fill in the spaces, rewrite anything that's confusing, and put a question mark by anything you don't understand. Also, make sure that all of your key words are written in the left-hand margins. Of course, as you're going over your notes, you're “fixing” the 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.

# Teacher's Edition



After going over this sample, give a 5 minute lecture on a topic that your students are studying.

Ask students to take notes using as many of the ideas presented in this section as possible.

Ask students which note-taking ideas they used, and compare the key words they chose.

**Get copies of class notes if you are absent.** If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to ask your teacher about assignments, handouts, 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 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



## 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.

