

10 Steps to Great Grades Leader's Guide

*This Leader's Guide is designed to help you lead a group of students through **10 Steps to Great Grades**. We recommend that you go through two or three steps each day. We also suggest that you read this book together as a group, discussing each section as you go.*

Pre-Activities

To get your students thinking about how to get good grades, ask them to think about their study skills and their past grades. Do they have good study skills? Are they happy with the grades they've received in the past? Would they like to get better grades?

As a group, come up with a list of reasons why getting good grades is important. For example, getting good grades can lead to happier parents, more privileges at home, respect from peers, teachers, and coaches, greater self-esteem, and the opportunity to take advanced courses. Continued good grades can lead to acceptance into college, scholarships, and a better paying job. Of course, students who get good grades also learn more and know more—and doing well in school makes school more fun.

Before passing out *10 Steps to Great Grades*, tell your students that the book they will be reading discusses ten things that students need to do to get great grades in school. As a group, try to come up with your own list of ten things that students need to do to get great grades. Once you hand out the books, you can then compare your list with the list in the Table of Contents.

Post-Activities

1. After going through *10 Steps to Great Grades*, have students choose three or four specific ideas from the book to try. One or two weeks later, have students write a short paragraph about the ideas they tried and whether or not they were helpful.
2. Ask students to identify one study skill area that they need to improve (be a better test taker, be better organized, etc.). Then ask students to list a few specific things they can do to improve their study skills in that area.

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Letter

Read the introductory letter aloud.

Table of Contents

Read through the *Table of Contents*. How does your group's list of things students need to do to be successful in school compare with the 10 steps listed here?

What Kind of Student Are You? – Page 2

Have students take the *What Kind of Student Are You?* survey.

Have students add up their score and write it on the line. Figure out the average score for the class.

Step 1 – Believe in Your School – Pages 3

Read this page aloud and discuss the importance of believing in yourself.

Ask students to think of the people in their lives who help them believe in themselves. Who are they? What do they do that's helpful? Do students thank these people for their help?

Step 2 – Be Organized – Pages 4-5

Use a Student Planner or Assignment Notebook

If your students have student planners, go over how you want them to use their planners.

Take a large assignment, and as a group, talk about how it might be broken down into several smaller assignments.

Check student planners at the end of the week, and give extra credit points to those whose planners are completed correctly. Do this for several weeks to help students get in the habit of regularly using their planners.

Use Folders for Schoolwork

Have samples of different color pocket folders. Label each with the name of a course your students are taking. Show how these folders can be used to keep papers, tests, and assignments organized.

Discuss ways that students can keep track of the grades they receive in each class (e.g., record them on the inside front covers of their class folders). If your students are able to access their grades online, make sure they know how to do this, and encourage them to check their grades often.

Keep your Desk and Backpack Neat

Set time aside at the end of each grading period to clean and organize desks and backpacks.

Get Organized Before You Go to Bed

Talk about your students' nighttime routines, and about how routines of all kinds help make our day runs smoother.

Step 3 – Manage Your Time Well – Page 6

Discuss the fact that we all have 24 hours a day/168 hours a week. How we use our time is called "time management."

Use Class Time Wisely

Remind students that when they use their time in school wisely, they have less work to do on their own.

Create a Study Plan

Have students make an "after-school schedule" for the next two days.

Ask students to identify things that have interrupted their studying in the past. Write these on the board and brainstorm ways that students can prevent these kinds of interruptions in the future.

Step 4 – Be Successful in Class – Pages 7-10

Be in School, on Time, Every Day

Tell students that the #1 school success factor is attendance.

Be Prepared for Each Subject

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?

Pay Attention in Class

Students who pay attention in class don't have as much to learn on their own. Encourage students to make the most of the time they are in class.

Always Do Your Homework

Ask students to keep track of how much time they spend doing homework for 2 or 3 days. Tell students to only count the time they are actually doing homework. Have students turn in the number of hours they spent on their homework. Figure out the class average.

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Participate in class

How would your students evaluate their class participation? Do some students participate too much? Do some participate inappropriately?

Be a Good Group Member

Ask students how they feel about doing group projects. Why do they think teachers assign group projects?

Treat Others With Respect

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

Involve Your Parents

Ask students to think of ways their parents are involved in their education.

Can parents help too much, or be too involved?

Have students suggest appropriate ways to involve their parents.

Take Responsibility for Your Grades

Is cheating a problem in your school? If so, how do students cheat? Is this fair to the students who don't cheat?

Step 5 – Take Notes and Organize Handouts

Pages 11-12

Pay Attention in Class

Discuss the idea of active listening. Ask students to think of times when they practice active listening (e.g., when a coach is explaining a new play, when their best friend is telling them something interesting).

Copy Notes from the Board or Overhead

If notetaking has been taught in class, do a quick review.

Take Notes That Are Easy to Read

Show students how using the following symbols and abbreviations can help them take notes more efficiently:

=	same or equal
≠	not equal
b/c	because
w	with
w/o	without
w/in	within
v	very
*	most importantly

Organize Your Handouts

Review how to use folders to organize handouts.

Review Your Notes and Handouts

Show students how to highlight the most important information in their notes and handouts. Explain how this can be helpful when they are studying for a test.

Get Copies of Class notes If You're Absent

Remind students that when they miss school, it is their responsibility to find out what they missed, and to get the work they missed made up as soon as possible.

Step 6 – Read to Learn – Pages 13-16

Before reading this section, ask students if they ever have problems remembering what they read.

Discuss how textbook authors use text features and layout to help students understand and remember the information they are presenting.

Step 1 - Survey

Use *The Ring-Tailed Lemur* article on page 14 to demonstrate surveying.

Survey this page together as a group.

Step 2 - Read

Read *The Ring-Tailed Lemur* page together. As you read, have students turn each section heading into a question. Then have them answer their question at the end of the section. As you read, also note the words in bold and italic print.

When you're finished reading, go over the review questions.

Pass this tip on to your students. When reading a textbook or story, jot down important information or questions on sticky notes. Place these sticky notes in your book to review later.

Step 3- Review

Go back and review *The Ring-Tailed Lemur* page.

Take a textbook that your students are currently using and go through a couple of pages together using the survey, read, and review process.

The next day, have students do a quick review of *The Ring-Tailed Lemur* page. Point out how doing a quick review will help them remember new material.

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Step 7 – Study Smart – Pages 17-21

Find a Good Place to Study

Ask students where they study best. Do they need it to be quiet? Do they study differently depending on the kind of studying they have to do?

Have a Good Attitude

Discuss the importance of attitude, not only in school, but with family members, playing sports, doing chores, etc.

Get Started

Ask if students ever waste time getting started on homework. What can they do to make getting started easier?

Organize Your Study Time

Read through this list of tips. Can your students come up with any additional ideas?

Know How to Study for Tests

Encourage your students to use these tips the next time they have a test.

Know How to Memorize Information

Take a difficult spelling word and use it to practice this memorization technique.

Give students a list of words relating to a subject they're currently studying. Have them make up a silly sentence using the first letter of each word.

Working individually, in pairs, or in small groups, have students make up additional silly sentences for practice.

Know How to Write an Essay

Discuss the writing process.

Pick a high interest topic (e.g., the pros and cons of school uniforms) and brainstorm ideas. Turn these ideas into an outline.

Use These Tips to Make a Good Presentation

Ask students how they feel about giving speeches and presentations. Why is it important for them to learn how to speak in front of a group? Do they have any additional tricks or tips?

Step 8 – Be a Good Test Taker – Pages 22-24

Read through these tips as a group. Have students note which tips they already use. Ask for additional ideas.

Get Off to a Good Start

Tell students that writing what they need to remember at the top of a test is like have a legal cheat sheet.

Make a Plan

Have your students ever run out of time on a test, or had to hurry to finish it? Making a plan only takes a couple of minutes, and it can help keep you on track.

Mark the Questions You Want to Return To

Remind students to not spend too much time on any one question. If they get stuck, mark it and move on.

Increase Odds on Multiple-Choice Questions

Put a few examples of multiple choice questions on the board. Show how using these tips can help students improve their test scores.

Look for Clue Words in True/False Questions

Can students think of additional clue words (i.e., every, some, usually).

Know How to Answer Essay Questions

Tell your students how you want to have essay questions answered. Should students write in complete sentences? Should they repeat the question in the answer?

Improve Your Math Test Scores

Put a few sample problems on the board. Show how using the first two tips can help students improve their scores.

Check Your Answers

Do your students do this?

Step 9 – Don't Sweat the Test – Pages 25-26

Ask students if any of them have ever frozen while taking a test. Is there anything they could have done to improve their confidence?

Talk about the idea of visualization. Discuss how athletes use this technique all the time. Have students close their eyes and go through this visualization exercise.

State Tests

Discuss the standardized tests that your students are required to take.

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Step 10 – Get Help When You Need It – Pages 27-28

Identify the support people in your school and discuss how these people can be helpful to your students.

Ask a counselor or principal to come and discuss his/her job. Encourage students to get help whenever they have a problem, question, or concern.

Review

Read over this Review list. Ask students to pick 1 or 2 things to work on this term to help them get better grades.

Ask students to try to come up with a couple of specific things they can do to improve in these areas.

Tips for Parents – Pages 29-30

Have students take this book home so their parents can also read this section.

Note: Information on how parents can help their children succeed in school is covered in-depth in our 30 page booklets, *Upper Elementary Parent Guidebook* and *Primary Grades Parent Guidebook*. For information, or to read excerpts online, go to www.woodburnpress.com.