

## Talent Search

### Middle School



# Study Smart

Students who study smart spend less time studying, yet they get better grades. This is because they know how to get the most out of their study time.

*Here's how you can study smart.*

### Have a good place to study

Your study area should be quiet, comfortable, well-lit, and have a surface for writing. Equip your study area with the tools you need (paper, pencils, pens, calculator, stapler, and highlighters).

### Eliminate distractions

Turn off the TV and silence your phone. By eliminating all distractions, you force yourself to do one thing only—study.

### Be smart about when you study

Some students study best at night. Others prefer studying earlier in the day. Try to plan your day so that you study when you're the most alert.

While it's best to have a regular time to study, many students have sports, activities, and/or other responsibilities they must work around. At the end of each school day, think about the time you have available—and the amount of work you have to do. Then make a plan.

*Do you ever feel overwhelmed by all you have to do? If so, check out this video.*



VIDEO

## Get started

Don't put off studying, make excuses, or wait until you're "in the mood." Set a time to start on your homework and stick to it. If you have a hard time getting started, begin with something you can finish quickly or a subject you like.

## Create a study plan

- ▶ Before you begin studying, decide exactly what you want to get done and the order in which you are going to do it. Be specific. For example:  
*1) do math problems; 2) read science pages 51–70; 3) revise paper for language arts.*
- ▶ If you have a lot to do, prioritize your work and start with whatever is the most important.
- ▶ If you have something to memorize, work on it first, and then go over it again at the end of your study session.

## Break large assignments down

Big assignments can sometimes be overwhelming. Break large assignments and projects down into smaller, more manageable parts.

For example, suppose you have a paper due on Friday and you have a week to complete it. Here's how a breakdown of that assignment could look.

- ▶ Mon: create outline
- ▶ Tues: write first draft
- ▶ Wed: make revisions
- ▶ Thurs: write final draft

## Take breaks

After studying for 30 minutes, take a short break. Get a snack or stand up and stretch. Resist the temptation to text a friend, go online, or check your messages. Save those things for later.

# Improve Your Grades

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Whether you're a student who gets good grades easily, or you're someone who has to work hard for their grades, middle school is a great time to build good study habits—and to focus on ways to get better grades.

*Here are some tips for improving your grades.*

## Succeed in class

### Be prepared

When you come to class, have all of your homework done, and bring everything you'll need with you. Be alert, well-rested, and ready to learn.

### Eliminate distractions

Put away anything that isn't directly related to what you are doing in that class.

### Have a positive attitude

Walk into each class with a positive attitude and the determination to learn as much as you can. Remember, the more you learn in class, the less you need to learn on your own.

### Take good notes

Most test questions come from information that's been presented in class, so it's important to have notes to study from that are organized, neat, and complete. Taking notes also helps you pay attention and focus on what's being discussed in class.

*To learn more about how to take good notes, watch this short video.*



VIDEO

## Be organized

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### Use a planner

Take a planner to every class. Record assignments, tests, quizzes, special events, and appointments. Also, use your planner to break large assignments and projects down into more manageable parts.

### Have a system for organizing papers

Whether you use folders, binders, or notebooks, the important thing is that you have a system for organizing all of your papers (handouts, notes, and homework). Choose a system that works for you—and have a specific place for every paper.

### Develop routines

Routines help your day run more smoothly. Have a morning routine that gets your day off to a good start and a nighttime routine that includes getting everything ready for the next day.

### Eliminate clutter

Throw out the things you don't need. Put the papers you want to keep in a home file and keep your study area clean and neat.

## Manage your time

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### Use your free time wisely

Take advantage of study halls and use any free class time to start on your homework—you'll have a lot less work to do at night. Also look for ways to make use of other free times. For example, start on your homework while you're waiting for a ride.

### Control time wasters

Social media, TV, and video games can all be huge time wasters. Schedule small chunks of time for these activities, and stick to your schedule.

### Set time aside to relax

It's important to take some time each day to relax and recharge your batteries.

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# Stay Motivated

To succeed in middle school, you need to stay interested in your classes and motivated to do your best. Here are some tips to help you stay motivated in middle school, and beyond.

### Practice positive self-talk

We all have an “inner voice,” and when things aren’t going well, that voice can be negative and critical. You can help yourself stay positive and motivated just by changing your self-talk.

Replace “*I’m terrible at math*” with “*I’m smart—I can do this.*” Changing how you think will change how you feel and act.

### Figure out what motivates you

Turn what competes with your schoolwork into a motivator. For example, reward yourself with social media or video game time once your homework is done.

### Set goals

Goals give you focus, direction, and purpose. Having a goal can also help you come up with a plan of action. For example, if your goal is to get an A or a B in your math class, there are specific things you need to do to make that happen.

Have a list of both short-term goals (*have your paper done by Friday*) and long-term goals (*go to college*). For more on goal-setting, watch this video.



VIDEO

## Use motivating “self-notes”

Write motivating words, ideas, and/or quotes on sticky notes. Put these notes anywhere you’re likely to see them.

## Visualize success

Before the day of a test, close your eyes and imagine yourself confidently walking into the classroom and answering the questions correctly. Imagining a scene like this is called visualization. This is a technique used by students, athletes, and leaders around the world.

## Hang out with motivated people

Try to stay away from people who are negative and critical. Instead, choose to be around people who support and encourage you. These are the people who will help you achieve your goals and realize your dreams.

## Build a support network

Whether it’s your family, teachers, counselor, or Talent Search advisor, it’s much easier to stay motivated when you have people behind you who will encourage you to succeed—and hold you accountable. Talk to the people in your support network about your plans, dreams, and goals, and ask for their help and support.

## Acknowledge your accomplishments

Be proud of yourself when you complete a difficult assignment or get a good grade on a test you studied really hard for. Give yourself a small reward, brag about it to your support network, or just feel proud that you did something difficult.

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# Career Exploration

Even though high school graduation is several years away, it's not too early to start thinking about what you want to do after you graduate, and what kind of career you would like to have.

*Here are some ways you can start exploring careers today, and begin to plan for your future.*

### Read and research

There are lots of great books and websites to help you learn about the careers you're interested in. For example, the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* has excellent information on hundreds of careers. An online edition of this book is available at [bls.gov/ooh](https://www.bls.gov/ooh).

### Talk to people

Talk to the adults in your life about their careers—what they like and don't like, how they got into their career, and whether they have any advice for you. If possible, job shadow an adult for a day. This is a great way to find out what it's like to work in a specific career.

### Expand your horizons

Think about your interests and skills and look for opportunities to develop them. Get involved in school and community activities, and try classes and activities you haven't considered, or that are outside of your comfort zone. You never know what you might enjoy!

## Think about your interests and abilities

Your interests are what you like to do and what you find interesting. Your abilities are the things that you're good at or have a talent for. Considering your interests and abilities will help ensure that you choose a career you'll enjoy, and one you will also be good at.

- ▶ **Your favorite school subjects** can be a clue to what might be a good career choice for you. For example, if you really like language arts, you might make a good journalist or lawyer. If you really like math, you might want to research careers in business or engineering.
- ▶ **Hobbies and activities** that you find fun and enjoyable can reveal the types of careers you might like. Do you like being around people? Being outdoors? Solving puzzles? Helping others? Making art?
- ▶ **Your abilities** will change and evolve as you grow and develop, but when you think about what you do well now, you can identify the career areas you may want to explore first.

## Consider education options

Most careers require education and/or training after high school. Some careers require four or more years of college (such as teacher and lawyer), while other careers require two years of colleges or less. When exploring careers, factor in how long you want to spend in post-high school education.

## Explore career clusters

There are 16 different career clusters (groups of similar careers). Exploring these groups can help you figure out what career areas might be a good fit for you. *To learn more, watch this video!*





# Why Go to College?

## Talent Search Middle School



As a Talent Search student, you know that going to college is important, and that it takes hard work to get there. But because you're in middle school and college seems so far away, you may find yourself wondering if you need to be thinking about college this early.

The short answer is **yes!** Here are some reasons why going to college is a goal that is definitely worth working toward—starting today!

### More career opportunities

A college education can open doors and prepare you for a career that will be right for you. Don't know what that career is yet? College can help you figure that out, too.

### More money

Statistics show that four-year college graduates earn almost twice as much as high school graduates. That comes out to \$1,000,000 or more over a lifetime.

Having a higher income provides financial stability. You also have more money for the things that are important to you, like entertainment, travel, and hobbies.

*A four-year college isn't your only option. Many students attend a two-year college to prepare for their career. To learn more about your education options, watch this short video.*



VIDEO

## New people and experiences

Going to college will give you the opportunity to study a variety of subjects, expand your skills, and meet new people. Most importantly, college gives you the opportunity to become the person you aspire to be.

## A sense of accomplishment

Getting to college, succeeding in college, and graduating take a lot of hard work, motivation, and persistence. Receiving a college diploma is proof of your determination and your drive to succeed. It is an accomplishment you can be proud of for the rest of your life—and a reminder that you can do anything you set your mind to!

## What you can do now

College is still years away, but that doesn't mean you can't start getting ready now. Here's what you can do to be college ready—starting today!

- ▶ **Establish good study habits and skills.** Work to develop good time-management, organization, and study skills. Developing these skills now will help you succeed in middle school, high school, and college.
- ▶ **Explore extracurriculars.** Colleges like seeing activities on applications. Try different extracurricular activities to see what you have a talent for and enjoy doing.
- ▶ **Talk about it.** Tell your family you want to go to college and that you'll need their support. Also talk to your Talent Search advisor and school counselor about your college goals and ask for their help.

# College Options

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Most careers require education and/or training beyond a general high school education. Some careers require two or four years of college; others require only one year of training or education.

Here are some things to consider as you start thinking about your college options.

### Types of colleges

There are several different kinds of colleges: four-year colleges, two-year colleges, career/trade schools, and specialty colleges. Most of the students who continue their education beyond high school attend a two-year or four-year college.

### Two-year colleges

Most two-year colleges are community colleges. These colleges provide affordable programs that make it possible for students to begin their career after two years of college or less. Two-year colleges offer two types of programs.

### Career-oriented programs

These programs prepare students for a specific career. Many of these programs are two-year programs; others take one year or less to complete.

### University parallel programs

Many students who want a four-year degree start at a two-year college to save money. These students take courses they know will transfer to a four-year college.

## Four-year colleges

A four-year college degree provides students with a wide range of career choices and opportunities. *Students who want to attend a four-year college need to take college prep courses in high school and work hard to get good grades.*

**Four-year college entrance requirements vary greatly.** Colleges with an open admissions policy generally accept all high school graduates until spaces are filled. Selective colleges, on the other hand, look for students who have an impressive academic record.

**Four-year colleges offer a variety of majors.**

A major is the subject you choose to study in-depth. Four-year colleges offer a wide variety of majors, from popular majors like business or nursing, to very specific majors like urban forestry. If you have a specific career you want to pursue, you'll need to attend a college with a major that will prepare you for that career.

**Four-year colleges can be expensive.** While a college education can cost a lot, most college students receive some kind of financial aid. There are also lots of ways to cut college costs. Don't ever think that you can't afford to go to college!

## Other factors to consider

Here are some factors to consider when you're thinking about what's important to you in college.

- ▶ **Size:** What size college do you want to attend?
- ▶ **Location:** Where do you want to attend college? Close to home? In a city? Close to nature?
- ▶ **Activities:** Are there specific activities or sports you want to participate in?

*For more on what to consider when choosing a college, watch this video.*

