

5 Steps To Academic Success

Middle School Edition



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Dear Student,

There's a lot going on in middle school, but remember, the main reason you're in school is to learn—and to do as well as you can in your classes. This book can help you do both!

There are lots of study tips available online and in study skills books. For this booklet, we have chosen the very best study tips and strategies to help you succeed in middle school.

As you read through this booklet, look for the tips that will help you be a better student. Then use them to get more out of your classes and get better grades.

Here's to a great school year!

5

Steps To Academic Success

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Step

1

Get Organized

To succeed in middle school, you need to be organized!

These five tips will help you get organized and stay “on top of everything.”

Tip #1

Have the right tools

Just as a carpenter needs a hammer and nails to build a house, you need the right tools to be a successful student.

Here are the tools you need:

- ▶ paper
- ▶ pencils
- ▶ pens
- ▶ backpack
- ▶ student planner
- ▶ 3-ring notebooks
- ▶ pocket folders
- ▶ calculator



Tip #2

Use pocket folders

Have a different colored pocket folder for each class. Use these folders for handouts, returned papers, and homework assignments.

Tip #3

Use 3-ring notebooks

Have a three-ring notebook for each subject, or one large notebook with tabs for multiple subjects.

Tip #4

Have a place for everything and eliminate clutter

- Keep your locker and backpack neat and clean.
- Throw out any papers you don't need.
- Put the papers you want to keep in a file at home.
- Before going to bed, get everything ready for the next day—and put your backpack in the same place each night.

Tip #5 Use a Planner

Using a student planner every day is a great way to stay organized. Take your planner to every class and take it home each night.

Use your planner to record the following information:

Subject	Monday, September 18
English	✓ Read pages 5-10 - Due Tues.
Math	✓ Do all problems on p. 25 - Due Wed.
History	★ Quiz on Chapter 3
Science	✓ Do Review Questions - Due Wed.
Spanish	✓ Vocabulary - page 10 - Due Tues.
	Dentist 4:00
	John's birthday

► Important Dates

Write in the beginning and ending date of each term, special events, test and exam dates, and the days your school will be closed for holidays and vacations.

► Daily Assignments, Quizzes, and Tests

- Write each assignment under the date it is assigned.
- Beside each assignment, write the date it's due.
- Check off assignments when they're completed.
- Write in all quiz and test dates, and put a star beside these.

► Activities and Appointments

Write in practices, appointments, social activities, and anything else you want to remember.

TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS

- Use your free time in school to get started on homework. *You'll have a lot less to do at night.*
- Make To Do lists and cross things off when they're done.
- Limit TV, video games, and time online. Activities like these are fun, but if you're not careful, you can waste a lot of time on them. Schedule small chunks of time for these kinds of activities, and stick to your schedule.

Step

2

Be a Class Act

You probably spend over 30 hours in class each week. Make the most of them!

Here are seven things you need to do to be successful in your classes.

For each of these seven items, check the box to indicate if it's something you are **Good at** or something you **Need to work on**.



Good at
Need to work on

1. Have all homework done

In many classes, homework is a large portion of your final grade. Don't think of homework as something you should do—think of homework as something you *must* do.

Be in class every day. Attendance is the #1 success factor!

2. Participate in class

Participating in class makes the class more interesting, and it makes the time go faster. It also helps keep your mind focused. Ask questions, volunteer answers, and participate in class discussions.

3. Have a positive, can-do attitude

Believe in your ability to succeed, and give each class your best effort. Use positive self-talk to help boost your confidence and stay motivated. ("I'm smart. I can do this.")

Good at
Need to
work on

4. Have good body language

The boy who slouches in his seat is saying he's bored and doesn't care about what's going on. If you want to succeed in your classes, make sure your body language shows it.



5. Be respectful

We all want to be treated with common courtesy and respect. Treat your teachers and classmates the same way that you would like to be treated.

6. Be an active listener

When you are actively listening in class, you aren't just hearing the words that are being said, you are also thinking about and trying to understand the information that's being presented.

7. Get help when needed

If you're having difficulty with a class, talk to your teacher. If there is something else that's making it difficult for you to succeed (a bully, problems at home, a health issue, etc.), see your counselor. *Don't let anything get in the way of your school success.*

TAKE STEPS TO IMPROVE

Look over the items that you need to work on, and think about what you can do to improve in each of these areas.

Take Good Class Notes

Why are class notes important?

Having good notes will help you do well on tests.

Tests usually cover material that's been presented in class, so having good notes to study from can definitely improve your test grades.

Taking notes helps you pay attention.

You can think much faster than anyone can talk. This is one of the reasons your mind sometimes wanders when you are in class. Taking notes helps you stay focused.



Notetaking Tips

Tip #1

Use three-ring notebooks

Three-ring notebooks make it easy to insert pages. If you have a 3-hole punch, you can hole punch handouts in class and put them with your notes for the day—and if you miss a class, you can insert a copy of the notes where they belong.

Tip #2

Recognize important information

Since you can't write down everything your teacher says, you need to be able to identify the information that's most important. To help you recognize important information, listen for these verbal clues from your teachers:

- phrases such as "the main point"
- information that is repeated
- louder or slower speech

Tip #3

Copy what's written on the board

If your teacher takes the time to write something on the board or overhead, then it's probably something that you need to know and remember.

Tip #4

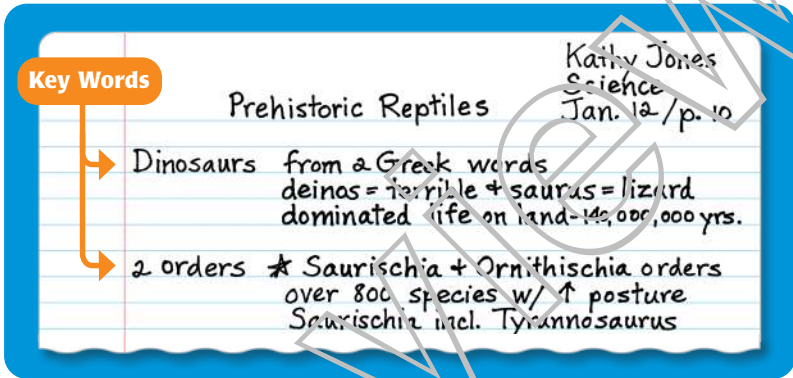
Take notes that are organized and easy to read

- ▶ Begin a new page for each class.
- ▶ Write the class, date, page number, and topic at the top.
- ▶ Only use one side of the paper and skip a line between topics.

Tip #5

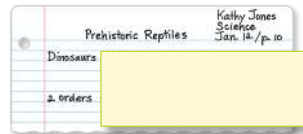
Use Key Words

Leave a wide space on the left side of each page and write in key words (topics, people, places, events).



Key Words can help you prepare for tests

When studying for a test, cover up the right side of your notes, look at each key word, and see what you can remember.



A WORD ABOUT TECHNOLOGY...

The use of technology in schools is increasing every day. Proper use of technology can help you locate, understand, apply, analyze, and evaluate information. When misused, technology can be a distraction, and it can prevent you from getting the most out of your classes. *Use the technology that's available in your classrooms as it's intended—to learn.*



Step

3

Read to Learn

To do well in your classes, you must understand and remember the information you read.

LEARNING TOOLS

Textbook authors use learning tools to make it easier for you to understand and remember the material they're presenting.

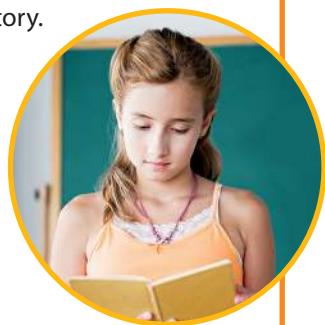
See if you can match these learning tools with what they do.

Headings and Subtitles	show important terms
Pictures / Graphs	introduce new terms
Bold and Italic Print	introduce main ideas
Chapter Summaries	test comprehension
Vocabulary Lists	give an overview
Review Questions	present information visually

Answers are at the bottom of page 15.

Reading Tips

- ▶ Have a quiet place to read, good lighting, and a sturdy, comfortable chair.
- ▶ Practice reading at different speeds. For example, in most cases, a science textbook should be read at a much slower speed than a short story.
- ▶ Read introductions and summaries carefully. They contain the most important information.
- ▶ If you're reading material that's particularly difficult or important, read it out loud.



Reading a Textbook

To help you comprehend and retain more of what you read, go through the following three steps:

1 SURVEY 2 READ 3 REVIEW

1 SURVEY for a quick overview

- ▶ Read the title, section headings, and everything in **bold** and *italic* print. Look at the pictures, graphs, and charts.
- ▶ Read the introduction, summary, and review questions.

The Ring-Tailed Lemur



Lemur Characteristics

Like monkeys and apes, a lemur is a kind of **primate**. The ring-tailed lemur is about the size of a small house cat. It is usually gray or brown and it has large ears and eyes. *Its tail always has 13 stripes*—and can be up to 2 feet long!

The Ring-Tailed Lemur's Habitat

Ring-tailed lemurs are found in only one place in the world: on the island of **Madagascar**. Madagascar is located off of the southeast coast of *Africa* in the Indian Ocean.

To survey this text, read the highlighted information.

2 READ with a purpose

- ▶ Turn each heading into a question.
- ▶ Keep your question in mind as you read the section.
- ▶ When you're finished reading, see if you can answer your question.



What are the Lemur characteristics?

3 REVIEW to remember

- ▶ When you've finished reading an assignment, reread the section headings and the **bold** and *italic* words—but this time think about what you have learned.
- ▶ Make sure you can answer any review questions.

Students who study smart spend less time studying, and yet they get better grades.

▶ Have a good place to study

Can you find the 7 things that are making it difficult for John to get his homework done? Circle the ones you find.



Answers are at the bottom of page 15.

▶ When doing homework, make a plan

- Set a time to start studying and stick to it.
- Before you begin, decide what you want to get done and the order you're going to do it. Be specific. For example:
 - 1) Do report for science
 - 2) Read history pages 50 – 78
 - 3) Do math problems on page 20
- Start with the things that are the most important.
- If you have a large project or assignment to do, break it down into smaller, more manageable parts.

Memorization Strategies



▶ Use all of your senses

The more senses you use, the more likely you are to remember information. When you have something to memorize, look at it (sight), say it out loud (hearing), and write it down (touch).

▶ Look for logical connections

For example, to remember that longitude lines run from North to South on a globe, make the connection that there is an N in longitude and an N in North.

▶ Create crazy images

Take the information you're trying to remember and create a crazy, memorable image in your mind. For example, to remember that Harper Lee wrote *To Kill a Mockingbird*, imagine a mockingbird playing the harp.

▶ Make up silly sentences

Use the first letter of the words you want to remember to make up a silly sentence. For example, to remember the names of the planets, make up a silly sentence like, "*My very elegant mother juggled seven ugly neckties.*"



(Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune)

▶ Write important information on 3 x 5 cards

Use these cards to memorize facts, vocabulary words, and lists. Go over them whenever you have a few extra minutes (waiting for a ride, standing in line, etc.).

Think about what you want to remember before you fall asleep. Your brain will put it in your memory while you sleep.

Step

5

Ace the Test

To do well on any test, you must be prepared. You also need to be a smart test taker.

Test Prep Tips

- ▶ **Pay close attention in class the day before a test**
Teachers will often go over information you need to know.
- ▶ **Study your class notes thoroughly**
Your notes are your best test prep resource!
- ▶ **Review textbook material**
Make sure that you know the meanings of all the words in **bold** and *italic* print.
- ▶ **Study handouts and review sheets**
If your teacher gave you a handout or review sheet, study it until you know everything on it. Then use it to come up with questions that might be on the test.

Test Day – Do you do these things?

YES NO

- Do a “mind dump”**
As soon as I get my test, I write anything I want to remember at the top (names, dates, memory cues, etc.).
- Make a plan**
Before I start, I quickly look over the test and decide how much time to spend on each section.
- Don’t get stuck on difficult questions**
I put a dot next to any answer I’m not sure of. After I’ve gone through the test, I go over these again.
- Check all answers**
I check my answers—I may have made a careless mistake.



Have any NOs? If so, try doing them the next time you have a test.

Different kinds of questions call for different strategies. These easy-to-use tips are sure to help you improve your test scores.



True/False Questions

- ▶ Statements with *often, most, sometimes, usually, and many* in them are usually true.
- ▶ Statements containing absolute words such as *all, always, never, every, and none* are usually false.

Multiple Choice Questions

- ▶ Try to come up with the answer in your head **before** you look at the answer choices.
- ▶ Read all of the choices. If you don't know the answer, cross out the choices you know are wrong, and make an educated guess.
- ▶ If you're not sure of an answer, go with your first instinct.
- ▶ If you have no idea what the correct answer is, choose one in the middle. Research shows the "b" and "c" are correct more often than "a" and "d."

Essay Questions

- ▶ Read all essay questions and start with the easiest one.
- ▶ Before you start writing, jot down the key words, ideas, and points you want to cover. If you have time, write a simple outline.
- ▶ Use complete sentences and write neatly. (Studies have shown that neater papers get better grades.)

Answer Key

Page 10 Answers

Headings and Subtitles	show important terms
Pictures / Graphs	introduce new terms
Bold and Italic Words	introduce main ideas
Chapter Summaries	test comprehension
Vocabulary Lists	give an overview
Review Questions	present information visually

Page 12 Answers

1. Dog barking
2. Phone ringing
3. TV on
4. Radio playing
5. Almost 11:00 – too late
6. Doesn't have math book
7. No room on desk to work

**Take what you've learned from this booklet and apply it.
Do your best in your classes, and have a great year!**

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This book is filled with
expert advice on how you can
improve your academic skills
and get better grades



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