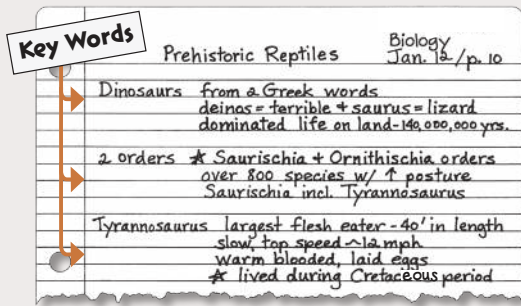


# Use Key Words

Using key words (topics, people, events) in your notes will help you organize your thoughts and make your notes easier to understand.

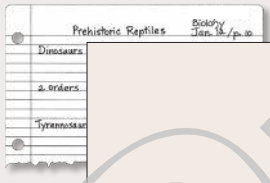
## Leave a margin for key words

Leave a wide space or margin on the left side of each page. As you're taking notes, write key words in the left-hand margin.



## Use key words to study for tests

When you're studying for a test, cover up the right side of your notes, look at each key word, and test yourself to see what you can remember about that topic, place, person, or event. Uncover your notes to see what information you missed or got wrong.



# Notetaking Tips

Your class notes are your best test prep resource. It's therefore important that you have good notes to study from.

To take notes faster, use abbreviations and symbols, and don't worry about punctuation, spelling, or grammar.

- |   |                    |     |                  |
|---|--------------------|-----|------------------|
| = | same or equal      | ★   | most importantly |
| ≠ | not equal          | ∴   | therefore        |
| > | greater than       | w   | with             |
| < | less than          | w/o | without          |
| ~ | approximately      | b/c | because          |
| ↑ | up or increasing   | esp | especially       |
| ↓ | down or decreasing | v   | very             |

While the information is still fresh in your mind, take a few minutes to go over your notes.

- ▶ Make sure key words are written in the left-hand margins.
- ▶ Rewrite anything that's confusing.
- ▶ Fill in missing information.
- ▶ Highlight the most important information.

*Studies have shown that about 50% of what a person hears is forgotten in 20 minutes.*

*Listening in class isn't enough.  
You need to write down the information you want to remember!*

# Taking Notes

Tips and strategies to help you take better class notes



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Taking Notes

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## Taking Notes

- ▶ Do you usually take too many notes? Not enough?
- ▶ Do you have a hard time knowing what to write down?
- ▶ Are your notes disorganized, confusing, or difficult to read?
- ▶ Do you wish you had a better notetaking system?

*If you answered “Yes” to any of the above, now is the time to work on improving your notetaking skills.*

### Taking notes increases your focus

You can think much faster than anyone can talk. This is one of the reasons your mind sometimes wanders when you are listening to a lecture. When you're taking notes, your mind doesn't have time to think about anything else. *Taking notes, therefore, helps you stay focused on the material being presented.*

### Good notes can improve your test scores

Because tests usually cover material that's been presented in class, having good notes to study from can significantly improve your test grades.

## Have a Notetaking System

**Develop a notetaking system that works for you. Here are some suggestions.**

### Use three-ring notebooks/binders

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

Using three-ring notebooks or binders for class notes makes it easy to hole punch and insert handouts and copies of notes where they belong. And when studying for a test, you can take your notes out of your notebook and spread the pages out.

*Whether you use spiral notebooks, binders, or three-ring notebooks for your class notes, the important thing is that you have a system for organizing your notes that works for you.*



### Format your notes

- ▶ Start a new page for each day and class. At the top of the page, write the name of the class, date, page number, and the topic of your notes.
- ▶ Use only one side of the paper and skip lines between ideas/topics. This will give you space if you want to add something later.
- ▶ Leave a wide margin on the left side of each page for key words (e.g., people, places, topics, events).

## Develop Your Listening Skills



**In order to take good notes, you need to have good listening skills.**

### Be an active listener

*Imagine this scene: You're listening to music and a new song by your favorite artist comes on. You stop what you're doing and listen carefully. You want to hear every word so that you can understand the meaning of the lyrics.*

In this scene, you went from passive listening to active listening. When you're actively listening in class, you aren't just hearing the words; you're also thinking about and trying to understand the information that's being presented. *You must be an active listener in order to take good notes.*

### Recognize important information

To take good notes, you must be able to identify the information that's most important. If you listen carefully, you'll find that teachers often give verbal clues telling you what information they believe to be the most important.

To help you recognize important information, listen for the following:

- ▶ louder or slower speech
- ▶ information that's repeated
- ▶ phrases such as “the main point”



**To get the most out of your classes, engage your body, as well as your mind.**

### **Come to class alert and ready to learn**

It's hard to be engaged and pay attention in class when you're tired or hungry. Get at least eight hours of sleep a night and wake up early enough to eat a good breakfast.

### **Take notes**

You can think much faster than anyone can talk. This is one of the reasons your mind sometimes wanders when you're listening to a lecture. But, when you take notes, you don't have time to think about or do anything else. Taking notes, therefore, helps you stay focused. And having good notes to study from is an added bonus.

To make your notes more interesting, try alternating between different colors of pens or highlighters.

### **Watch your body language**

Use body language that shows you're engaged and paying attention. Sit up straight and look at your teacher when he/she is speaking. If you act interested and engaged, you just may find that you feel more interested and engaged.

**All students get distracted and daydream sometimes, even when they're trying to pay attention.**

**When you catch your attention drifting, notice it, and refocus on the class.**

- ▶ If your mind drifts to something you need or want to do later, quickly write it down and then redirect your attention back to class.  
Likewise, if you have an idea or thought that doesn't relate to the class, write it down, and get back to paying attention.
- ▶ Use self-talk. If you find yourself thinking about a personal issue or concern, catch yourself, and tell yourself that you will think about that later—not now.
- ▶ When your mind starts to wander, remind yourself that the more you learn in class, the less you have to learn on your own.

***"Concentrate all your thoughts upon the work at hand."*** Alexander Graham Bell



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Staying Engaged

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# Staying Engaged

**Tips and ideas on how you can get the most out of your classes**





## Keep Your Mind Engaged

## Participate in Your Classes

### Staying Engaged

- ▶ Do you sometimes daydream during class?
- ▶ Are you often bored when listening to a lecture or presentation?
- ▶ Do you have a hard time remembering what you learned in class?

***If you answered "Yes" to any of the above, try to work on being more engaged in your classes.***

Having good attendance is the first step to succeeding in school. But just showing up isn't enough. You also need to be engaged in your classes—otherwise you are just wasting your time.

When you're engaged, you're more likely to learn, remember, and be interested in what's being taught in your classes. And the time goes a lot faster.

***Read on for tips to help you stay engaged and get the most out of your classes.***

**Here are some tips to help you stay focused and keep your mind engaged.**

#### When you come to class...

- ▶ Have all of your homework done. It's hard to stay engaged when you don't know what everyone is talking about.
- ▶ Be well-rested, alert, and ready to learn—and bring everything you need with you to class.
- ▶ Leave all of your concerns and problems at the door. (You can pick them back up after class.)

#### Eliminate distractions

- ▶ If you're allowed to have cell phones in class, turn yours off and put it away.
- ▶ Put away anything that isn't directly related to what you are doing in class.



#### Get excited

- ▶ Try giving yourself a reason to focus and pay attention. Challenge yourself to take notes good enough to share with others, or imagine that you will have to report on what was taught in the class.



**The best way to stay engaged in your classes is to participate. Ask and answer questions and interact with your classmates.**

#### Ask and answer questions

Don't be afraid to ask questions about something you aren't clear on or want to know more about. Just make sure your questions relate directly to the current discussion.

When your teacher asks questions, raise your hand to answer. If your teacher puts you in small discussion groups, actively engage in the discussions.

#### Look for ways to be engaged

If the teacher's teaching style doesn't provide much opportunity for participation, you can still participate by making eye contact with your teacher, nodding, and writing down questions you might want to ask your teacher later.

And even if you don't ask and answer questions in class, when you're paying attention, you send a positive message to your teacher—"I'm here to learn."

*There is nothing a teacher likes more than a student who is genuinely motivated and engaged in the classroom experience. Be that student!*



# Types of Tests

## Essay questions

- ▶ Read each question and start with the easiest one.
- ▶ Brainstorm before you begin writing. Jot down the key words, ideas, and points you want to cover.
- ▶ Use complete sentences and write neatly.
- ▶ In the opening paragraph, tell the reader what he/she can expect to learn from your essay. In the middle paragraph(s), present examples, facts, and details to support the points you're making. In the final paragraph, restate the most important points, draw conclusions, or write a summary.

## Math tests

- ▶ Before you begin to solve a problem, estimate the answer.
- ▶ Show all of your work and write neatly.
- ▶ If you're having difficulty with a problem, try drawing a picture or diagram.
- ▶ Don't spend too much time on any one problem. Finish the test, and then go back to the problems you had trouble with.
- ▶ If you have time, do the problems again to see if you come up with the same answers.



# Reduce Test Anxiety

**A little anxiety before a test improves your concentration and alertness. Excessive worry or test anxiety, however, can lower your test scores.**

If test anxiety is interfering with your test performance, try the following:

- ▶ Replace irrational thoughts (*I have to ace this test*) and negative thoughts (*I'll never pass this exam*) with thoughts that are realistic and positive (*I've studied hard - I'll do fine*).
- ▶ Mentally practice going through the test. Visualize yourself walking into the classroom, taking the test, and answering the questions correctly.
- ▶ Walk into the classroom with your head up and your shoulders back. If you act more confident, you just may feel more confident.
- ▶ Before you start, take a deep breath and slowly release it. Relax, and do your best.

***If you continue to have problems with test anxiety, talk to your counselor.***



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Taking Tests

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# Taking Tests

**Strategies and tips to help you do your best on quizzes and tests**



# Test-Taking Tips

# Types of Tests



**Whenever you're taking a quiz, test, or final exam, keep these tips in mind.**

## Get off to a good start

- ▶ Have everything you need for the test when you go to class.
- ▶ As soon as you get your test, write anything you want to remember at the top (names, formulas, dates, etc.). Then read the directions.



## Develop a plan

Before you begin answering questions, quickly look over the entire test and decide how much time you'll spend on each section or question. For example, if a test has 25 multiple choice and 2 essay questions, you could plan to spend 10 minutes on the multiple choice questions and 20 minutes on each essay.

## Don't get stuck on difficult questions

Put a dot or a light mark by any answer you aren't sure of. After you've gone through all of the questions, go back to the ones you've marked and try them again.

## Check your answers

If you have time, check all of your answers, even the ones you know are correct. You may have made a careless mistake. Use all of the time you're given.

# Taking Tests

- ▶ Do you get overly nervous when you take tests?
- ▶ Do you sometimes run out of time?
- ▶ Do you have a hard time answering essay questions?
- ▶ Are your test grades lower than you'd like them to be?

*If you answered yes to any of the above, now is the time to work on improving your test-taking skills.*

Doing well on tests involves more than studying the material. You also need to be a smart test taker.

Smart test takers know strategies that improve their confidence and help them choose the right answers.

***In this InfoGuide you'll find a number of test-taking strategies that will help you perform better on tests—and get better grades.***

**Different types of test questions and formats require different strategies.**

## Multiple-choice questions

- ▶ Try to come up with the answer in your head before you look at the answer choices.
- ▶ Read all of the answer choices. If you're not sure which answer is correct, cross out the choices you know are wrong and make an educated guess.

## True / False questions

- ▶ Look for key words. For example, statements with absolute words such as *all*, *always*, *never*, *every*, and *none* are usually false.
- ▶ Statements with words such as *usually*, *often*, and *generally* are often true.
- ▶ If any part of a statement is false, then the entire statement is false. But if part of a statement is true, the entire statement may or may not be true.



## Open book tests

- ▶ Put self-stick notes or bookmarks in your textbook to help you locate information quickly.
- ▶ Make sure the most important information in your notes is highlighted.
- ▶ Have all of the information you know you're going to need on one sheet of paper.



**Group members often have different levels of commitment and ideas on how a group should function. These differences can sometimes present challenges and lead to conflict.**

### Common Challenges

- ▶ Group member(s) not pulling their weight
- ▶ Disagreements on project details, such as timelines, goals, and division of work
- ▶ Personality clashes
- ▶ Tensions among team members that may or may not be related to the project itself

### How to Handle Group Conflicts

- ▶ Don't ignore the conflict, even if it feels awkward to acknowledge it.
- ▶ Keep your group's goals in mind, and remember that conflict will make it more difficult for your group to successfully complete the assignment.
- ▶ Try not to take sides. This will likely just make things worse.
- ▶ Discuss a plan to work past the conflict, even if it's just getting to the end of the project, and not resolving the actual conflict.
- ▶ Ask your teacher for help.

**Employers and colleges are looking for young people who can communicate clearly, solve problems, and work in collaboration with others. They are also looking for people who have the following traits:**

- ▶ **Reliability** – you do what you say you're going to do, and you don't make excuses
- ▶ **Honesty** – you're straightforward about your abilities, and aren't afraid to provide honest, constructive feedback
- ▶ **Positive attitude** – you maintain an upbeat and optimistic attitude, even when a project is difficult, frustrating, or boring
- ▶ **Flexibility** – you have your own ideas, but you're open to change and the suggestions of others
- ▶ **Confidence** – you have the self-assurance to express your ideas and ask for help when you need it
- ▶ **Diligence** – you do your share of the work to the best of your abilities

*Developing the above traits will serve you well in all facets of your life!*



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Doing Group Work  
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# Doing Group Work

**Tips and strategies to help you improve your group experiences**





## Doing Group Work

- ▶ Do you dread having to do group work?
- ▶ Do you sometimes feel that other group members don't do their share of the work?
- ▶ Do you ever get frustrated with how disorganized groups are, or how long things take to get done?

*If you answered "Yes" to any of the above, this InfoGuide will help you improve your group experiences.*

If you'd rather do assignments on your own, you're not alone. Many students don't enjoy group work. But at some point, you'll likely have to work on a group project in at least one of your classes.

Being able to work as part of a group is an important skill. It's a skill that colleges and employers value—and one that will help you succeed in school, and beyond. **Look at group work as an opportunity to develop and improve this important skill!**

## Group Roles

**Group members take on a variety of roles. Some roles are positive, and some are not.**

### Positive roles

In successful groups, members assume positive roles that help the group complete their task.

- ▶ **Leader** – takes charge of the group
- ▶ **Secretary** – records the group's ideas and plans
- ▶ **Encourager** – supports and helps group members stay positive
- ▶ **Contributor** – offers new ideas and ways to complete tasks



### Negative roles

Unfortunately, people sometimes take on negative roles that make group work more difficult.

- ▶ **Blocker** – opposes every idea, but doesn't offer suggestions
- ▶ **Disrupter** – uses group time to play around or be in the spotlight
- ▶ **Non-participant** – doesn't contribute or do his/her share of the work

*Think about the roles you've assumed in the past—and how well you have contributed to the groups you've been a part of. Are there things you can do to be a more positive and productive group member in the future?*

## Group Tips



**Here are some tips to ensure that your groups work well together and are able to successfully complete assignments/projects.**

### Set goals

- ▶ Make sure the task or project is manageable and that everyone understands what you need to do.
- ▶ Set short-term and long-term goals, and assign equal tasks to each group member.
- ▶ Create deadlines to ensure that all tasks are completed in a timely fashion.

### Structure your meetings

Begin each group meeting by going around the table and allowing everyone (even the quiet ones) to give an update on their individual progress.

To help keep your group on track, have a set agenda for your meetings: 1. Progress Reports; 2. Problems or Concerns; 3. Questions; 4. What's Next.

### Don't take negative feedback personally

If your group suggests changing one of your ideas or tasks, be open to their suggestions. Remember, the goal is to create the best product possible.



## Meet with Your Counselor

## Make a Four-Year Plan

**Your counselor is an expert on the courses and programs available at your school.**

*Here are some questions you may want to ask your counselor.*

- ▶ What courses should I take next year?
- ▶ What required courses do I still need to take?
- ▶ What courses do I need for college?
- ▶ Am I on track to graduate on time?
- ▶ What courses should I take to prepare for a career in \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., business, math)?
- ▶ Should I go to summer school?
- ▶ What courses do I need to take to be eligible to play a sport in college?
- ▶ Should I be taking any honors or advanced classes?
- ▶ What are the advantages and disadvantages of dual-credit courses?
- ▶ I like hands on courses. Are there any courses or programs I should consider?
- ▶ I'm having a hard time in several of my classes. Is there any help available for me?

**Your counselor can help you choose courses that will put you on the road to success!**



**Having a four-year plan will ensure that you take the required courses, the courses you need to achieve your goals, and the electives you want to take.**

*In the lines below, list the courses you've taken, and the courses you are planning to take.*

9th Grade

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10th Grade

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11th Grade

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12th Grade

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Taking the Right Classes

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# Taking the Right Classes

Information to help you schedule courses that will be right for you



# Choose Your Courses Wisely



## Taking the Right Classes

- ▶ Are you unsure which courses you need to graduate?
- ▶ Do you have questions about which courses you should take for college? To prepare for a specific career?
- ▶ Are you uncertain about the courses you should take next year?

*If you answered "Yes" to any of the above, learn more about the courses your school offers, and about which ones you should take.*

To succeed in school, you need to be in the right classes. If you're in courses that are too hard, you'll be frustrated and discouraged. If you're in courses that are too easy, you'll be bored. And if you're taking courses that don't interest you, you'll have a hard time staying motivated.

**You want to choose courses that are right for your abilities, courses that will help you achieve your education and career goals, and courses you will enjoy.**

**Choosing the right classes is the first step to academic success.**

### Explore your options

In order to meet the needs of their students, most schools have a variety of academic programs. These often include:

- ▶ career and technology programs for the students who like a more "hands on" approach to learning
- ▶ programs allowing students to take college courses in high school (dual enrollment)
- ▶ advanced, honors, and AP classes for students who excel in specific subjects
- ▶ assistance for students who need extra help

*If you have questions about the programs available at your school, see your counselor.*



### Consider taking summer school

Taking a class during the summer can be a good way to earn credits toward graduation, and lighten your course load for the following school year.

In order to stay on track for graduation, students who are short on credits, or have failed a required course, should go to summer school whenever possible.

### If you want to go to college

Students planning to go to college should follow a college prep program, and take the following recommended courses in high school:

- 4 years of English
- 3 years of science
- 3-4 years of math
- 3 years of social studies
- 2-3 years of one foreign language
- 1 year of fine or performing arts

Competitive schools and programs consider the above to be the minimum requirements. They recommend that students challenge themselves by taking advanced courses whenever possible.

### If you're interested in a specific career

Choose electives that relate to the career field(s) you're considering. For example, if you're thinking about a career in business, take as many accounting, math, and computer courses as you can. This is a good way to find out if a career field might be one you would enjoy.



### If you want to play a sport in college

Athletes going to NCAA Division I and II colleges must have a minimum GPA in a specified number of *core courses*.

If you want to play a sport in college, talk to your counselor about the courses you need to take to meet NCAA requirements.



**If you have a hard time motivating yourself to get to school, or have attendance problems that are beyond your control, here are some tips to help you get to school every day.**

### Develop routines

Have a morning routine that gets your day off to a good start. Get up early enough to eat a good breakfast and not be rushed.

Have a nighttime routine that includes getting everything ready for the next day, and getting a good night's sleep.

### Don't give yourself a choice

Don't think of going to school as something you should do. Think of it as something you just always do.

### Get involved

Students involved in school activities generally do better academically and enjoy school more. Find a couple of school related activities that look interesting and give them a try.

### Get help if you need it

If you have attendance problems because you don't have transportation to school, there are problems at home, or you're being bullied, talk to your school counselor. Your counselor can help you deal with any issue that's preventing you from getting to school every day.

**It's important for students to be in school every day; however, schools understand that there are times when students must miss school. Here are some tips for handling an absence.**

- ▶ While your teachers will likely be happy to help you catch up when you return, it's your responsibility to find out what you missed, and to make up the work as soon as possible.
- ▶ If you miss multiple days of school, keep up on the work. Many teachers post assignments online, which makes it easy to know what you need to do. If your teachers don't post assignments, call a classmate or check with the office to see if it's possible to get assignments. Also, see a classmate to get copies of any notes or handouts you missed.
- ▶ If you're sick and go to the doctor, get a doctor's note in case your school or teachers need proof to mark an absence as excused.
- ▶ If you know ahead of time that you will miss school, let your teachers know.

*Remember, you're not attending school for your parents or teachers. You're going to school and getting an education for yourself and your future!*



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Being in School

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# Being in School

Information on why it's important for you to be in school every day



# Reasons to Be in School



## Being in School

- ▶ Are your grades lower than they should be because of your attendance?
- ▶ Have you made up excuses or reasons to miss school?
- ▶ Do you typically miss more than five days of school a year?

*If you answered yes to any of the above, now is the time to improve your attendance.*

**Attendance is the #1 school success factor! To succeed in school, you need to show up every day.**

If your attendance is hurting your success in school, decide right now to make a change. Not for your teachers or your parents, but for you and your future.

***Keep reading to learn more about why you should be in school every day.***

**There are a lot of reasons why being in school every day is so important.**

### When you miss class...

When you're not in class, you miss presentations, discussions, explanations of upcoming assignments, class notes, and information on what may be covered on tests. You also can't ask questions or hear the answers to questions asked by other students.



### Less study time

When you're in school every day, you learn the material as you go, little by little. Studying for tests then becomes mostly review.

When you're not in class, you essentially have to teach the entire class to yourself. This is stressful, time consuming, and not the best way to learn.

### You can't get it from someone else

Don't kid yourself into thinking that missing a class is okay as long as you get copies of the notes. Getting copies of someone's notes, or having a friend tell you what you've missed, is not the same as being in class.

### Higher grades

It's a no-brainer. When you're in school every day, you get better grades. And if your teachers see you trying hard in class every day, they're more likely to give you extra help. They may even bump your grade up if your grade is on the border.

**Being in school every day gives you the opportunity to:**

### Be with friends

School is the best place to make friends and to meet others who have similar interests and goals.

### Become a more interesting person

The more you're in school, the more you learn. And the more you learn, the more intelligent, capable, and interesting you become.

### Be around people who support you

If you look around your school, you'll find teachers, principals, counselors, librarians, tutors, coaches, and secretaries. All of these people are there to support you, and to help you succeed.

### Be part of a community

When you come to school every day, you feel more like you're a part of the school community. You belong.

### Feel proud of yourself

When you're succeeding in your classes, your parents and teachers are proud of you. Most importantly, you feel proud of yourself—and that's a great feeling.



### Prepare for your future

The knowledge you gain and the skills you develop in school will help you be more successful throughout your life—whatever you do.