

Customized

EduGuide

YOUR ROADMAP TO STUDENT SUCCESS

**Improve My High
School Study Skills**

www.eduguide.org



Compiled by:





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Improve My High School Study Skills

Do I need this EduGuide?

Yes, if you want to learn how to study smarter—not harder—in order to improve your grades and succeed academically, this EduGuide is for you. Read on to discover what your learning style is and how to use it to read, take notes, and prepare for tests more effectively.

How does it work?

- **Quizzes** help you know where you stand.
- **Real Life Stories** tell the experiences of real people.
- **ShortCuts** help you take immediate action. Choose one or go through them all.

What will I learn?

- What your preferred learning style is and how it affects the way you study
- How to organize your time and create an effective study plan
- How to listen better in class
- How to take notes that will make sense when you study them later
- How to read academic material so that you can understand and remember it

Quick Solutions

- What can I do in fifteen minutes? Take the [“What is My Learning Style?”](#) quiz or the [“Which High School Study Skills Do I Need to Work On?”](#) quiz.
- What can I do in an hour? Get a day planner and write down your schedule for the coming week using the techniques discussed in the ShortCut [“Help Me Get Organized.”](#) Or do a class reading assignment using the reading strategies you learned.



Help Me Create a Study Plan

According to a study by Joan Carver, an educational researcher and expert on helping students improve their high school study skills, the best study plan is the following:

1. **Simple.** A good plan is uncomplicated.
2. **Specific.** A good plan states what you're going to do and where, when, and how you're going to do it.
3. **Positive.** A good plan states what you're going to do (not what you're going to stop doing).
4. **Repetitive.** A good plan includes something you can repeat frequently.
5. **Independent.** A good plan is based on you doing the work; it doesn't depend on somebody else.
6. **Immediate.** A good plan can be started soon, usually within twenty-four hours.
7. **Committed.** A good plan includes *I will* statements.

Write down your study plan. Why? Because when you write something, you're more likely to do it.

Here's an Example

This is a study plan for completing an assigned reading. Does it include the seven traits listed above?

I will read at least ten pages of *Animal Farm* between four and five every afternoon until I've finished the book. I'll read in my bedroom where it's quiet and there are fewer distractions. After I finish every page, I'll pause to ask myself what happened in the story. I'll answer out loud to help me remember.

Now It's Your Turn

Create a study plan for one of your assignments.

- Write down your plan.
- Make sure it includes Joan Carver's seven steps.
- Check it over.

Don't underestimate the power of making plans. Remember: if you fail to plan, you plan to fail.



Help Me Use Learning Styles Strategies to Study Smarter

Practical Study Tips for Auditory, Visual, and Kinesthetic Learners

Auditory Learners

Auditory learners process and remember information best when they hear it and repeat it. Use this knowledge to customize your high school study skills with teacher-tested auditory learning styles strategies.

Read aloud and repeat. Highlight key concepts as you read. Then read the highlighted material aloud. To memorize facts, repeat the information aloud several times.

Record and review. To boost retention, record lectures (get permission first). Then review the material at home. If you take written notes, read them into a recorder and play them back. You can also read, record, and listen to textbook chapters.

Discuss. Explain new concepts to a family member or study partner. When you have required reading, retell the main points of the selection in your own words.

Practice word association. Use rhymes and acronyms to help recall facts. Here are two examples: In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue; Roy G. Biv (the colors of the rainbow: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet).

Use CDs. Ask your librarian if a required book is available on CD. To increase comprehension of a book on CD, follow along the text as you listen.

Ask for help. Ask friends and family members to quiz you orally as you prepare for tests.

Visual Learners

To study most efficiently, focus on the strengths of a visual learning style.

Use color. Buy a rainbow of pens and highlighters. When you take notes, use different colors for different concepts. Write key concepts three times in three different colors. Highlight important passages and points in standout shades.

Look at the pictures first. Before you read a passage from a textbook, first look at the illustrations to get an idea of the topic. When you read the chapter, review the graphics to help you remember key concepts.

Picture what you read. As you read, get a clear idea of what's going on by picturing the action in your mind.

Use flashcards. Use flashcards to help you memorize facts. For example, for a history class, write a date on one side of a card and key events that took place on that date on the reverse.

Get it in writing. Remember to take notes on everything your teacher writes on the board or displays using presentation software. Ask the teacher to supply written assignments whenever possible.

Kinesthetic Learners

Kinesthetic learners process information and solve problems most efficiently when they turn learning into a hands-on activity. Try some of these kinesthetic learning strategies.

Get a grip on it. If you can, choose projects that let you use your hands. If you are studying the solar system, for instance, build a model of it.

Get more from reading. When you read, follow along with your fingers or a bookmark to boost comprehension. Use bright colors to underline, circle, and highlight concepts. Rewrite relevant facts or key concepts in your own words. Act out a passage from a book you are assigned or put on a skit to demonstrate what you are studying.

Take a break. To focus better and avoid boredom, study for a short time (no longer than thirty minutes), and then take a physical activity break.

Explore. Take field trips. Look for exhibits or programs that relate to topics you are learning about in class. For instance, if you are studying ancient Egypt, go to a museum that has ancient Egyptian artifacts.



Help Me Manage My Academic Stress

When you're stressed, it's hard to concentrate and keep to a study schedule. If you make these six tips part of your high school study skills plan, you will keep your stress level under control:

1. **Eat healthy food.** Start the day with a healthy breakfast—whole grain toast or oatmeal, milk, yogurt, cheese, fruit, eggs, meat—and you'll get better grades than students who skip breakfast or eat junk food.
2. **Sleep.** Teenagers need eight to ten hours of sleep a night. You may not think you're tired, but if you are stressed, lack of sleep could be a major reason. Try this: for one week, sleep a full eight hours or more every night and notice how you feel. If you feel better, keep it up.
3. **Study when you're most alert.** Schedule your study time when your energy is highest. If you know you feel sluggish from four to five in the afternoon but are energetic from seven to eight in the evening, study then.
4. **Exercise.** Students who swim or jog regularly (at least twice a week) are less stressed, less anxious, less confused, and do better in school than students who don't exercise.
5. **Laugh.** If you feel yourself stressing out (you can't focus, you're feeling panicky), take a break from studying. Go to a funny Web site or watch a good sit-com for half an hour. Laughter can restart a stuck brain.
6. **Ask for help when you need it.** If you are struggling in a subject, don't wait for the teacher to do something; stay after class and ask your teacher for help. Smart students know that asking questions is the quickest way to defuse test anxiety and lessen stress.



Help Me Listen Better

Critical listening is an important study skill. If you don't understand something you hear, you won't understand it when you're studying for a test. Here are some studying tips to help you get more from your listening. Note: Don't try to use all these suggestions immediately. Try one or two a week, and add new tips as you incorporate the previous ones into your study routine.

Listen with the intention of understanding. To learn, you have to understand what the teacher is saying. Use these strategies to engage your "listening ears:"

- Try to repeat what the teacher says in your mind.
- Ask yourself, Did that make sense? If not, ask for clarification.
- Nod. Moving your head in agreement can engage you, especially if you learn best through movement.
- Make connections between what the teacher says and what you already know. If you can't make a connection, ask the teacher to make one.

Listen for teacher cues. Be alert for key phrases that emphasize important information. When you hear key phrases, write down the information that follows. Here are some examples of key phrases:

- The most important points are
- The chief cause is
- The most significant effect is
- The main reason is
- Remember that
- There are five characteristics of
- The result is
- The key message is



Help Me Take Better Notes

Good note taking is one of the most important study skills students need to succeed in school. These studying tips will help you get more out of lectures and class handouts.

- **If it's on the board, write it down.** Teachers use the board and projectors to present important information. If they emphasize a point by writing on the board or using a projector, it's important enough to go into your notebook.
- **If it's on a handout, take notes in the margins.** Don't rewrite information that's already been prepared for you in a handout. Instead, add notes to yourself and clarifications the teacher offers in the margins.
- **Write down definitions and examples.** Pay special attention to definitions and examples that illustrate and explain new concepts.
- **Don't try to write down everything the teacher says.** You'll never keep up. Aim for notes that paraphrase the main concepts. Write down words the teacher emphasizes, key questions, and important points.
- **Make up symbols and abbreviations.** This can be fun, plus you'll save time when you use your own shorthand system for taking notes. This [downloadable.pdf](#) from the University of Central Missouri and [this link](#) at the University of North Dakota can help you get a start.
- **Pay extra attention at the beginning and end of class.** Teachers usually introduce the lesson at the start of the class. If you keep the agenda in mind as the class continues, you'll follow the lesson more easily. Teachers often review important concepts at the end of class. During this review, be sure you've got the important concepts in your notes.
- **Review your notes.** Students who review their notes the same day they take them—even for just five minutes—remember more than students who don't look at their class notes until they're studying for a test.
- **Keep track of dates.** Put the date on every page. If your binder pops open and your notes spill out, the dates will help you get the pages back in order. Dates can also help you remember exactly when you learned something.



Help Me Read Smarter

You've got to have a clear understanding of material you read for school to succeed at high school academics. These studying tips will help you understand and remember what you read in textbooks.

1. **Preview the book.** Read the contents page. Are there chapters? What are the titles? Is there a glossary that defines terms at the end of the book? Is there an index at the end of the book that lists topics and the pages you can find them on? Remember: the words in the glossary and the topics in the index are listed in alphabetical order.
2. **Turn to the assigned chapter.** What is the title? What can you learn from the headings? Often headings give the important ideas that will be covered in the chapter. Look at the illustrations and read the captions to get a fuller idea about the chapter. Are there graphs, charts, maps, diagrams? What do they show? Graphic aids can sum up some kinds of information more clearly than words alone can. Are there study questions at the end of the chapter? Look for the answers as you read.
3. **What are you supposed to learn?** Did your teacher give you an assignment sheet? Comprehension questions? A graphic organizer? Before you begin reading, make sure you've got all the worksheets you need. Then fill them in as you read.
4. **Underline, highlight, and write in the margins.** If you are allowed to write in your book, highlight important ideas and write comments and questions in the margins. If you aren't, write comments and questions in a notebook along with the corresponding page numbers.
5. **Take notes.** Paraphrasing key concepts will help you figure out how well you understand what you're reading. Summing up the most important ideas will help you recall what you read.
6. **Draw a picture.** Sometimes the best way to summarize information is by drawing a picture. Here's an example. Learning about photosynthesis? Draw the sun and its rays hitting the leaf of a plant. Add details to show the process the plant uses to turn light energy into glucose, oxygen, and water. You can draw diagrams to compare and contrast or to show cause and effect relationships, scale, a series of events, a complex system, or a cycle.
7. **Stop if you don't get it.** If you don't understand a passage, reread it. Try to use the context—the words and sentences around the part you don't understand—to figure it out. If you're still puzzled, decide how important that information seems to be. If it's important, ask the teacher or another student to explain the information to you.
8. **As you read and after you've finished, ask yourself questions.** Try these: What main point is the author making? Does this information support the author's argument or contradict it? Why is this fact important to the author's overall message? What did I learn that I didn't know before? If somebody asked me to explain what I just read, what would I say?
9. **Adjust your speed.** Is the material difficult to understand or packed with facts? Slow down. Speed up if the material is familiar and easy to understand.



Help Me Take Tests with Confidence

Ten Ways to Be Test Wise

To reduce test anxiety, add these strategies to your high school study skills.

1. **Review your notes** for about five minutes every night. Frequent review helps your brain store information in long-term memory.
2. **Take notes on assigned readings.** Organizing and summing up information helps you remember it.
3. **Use mnemonic devices.** Words or rhymes can help you remember facts. For example, the word *homes* can help you recall the names of the Great Lakes (Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior).
4. **Find out as much as you can about what the test will cover.** Listen carefully for hints in the days before the test. Teachers often stress and review information that will be worth big points on a test.
5. **Ask about the question formats.** Will there be multiple-choice questions? Short answers? Essays? Will you have to draw a diagram? A time line? Make up practice questions about the test material in the format you expect to encounter. Then answer them. If you're not sure what kind of questions will be on the test, assume you will have to write an essay. Pulling together the information necessary to answer an essay question will help you answer a question in any format.
6. **How important is the test?** If it's a quiz worth a tiny fraction of your final grade, don't spend days studying for it. Set your priorities based on a test's importance to your grade.
7. **Bring everything you need to the test.** For example, if you need a calculator, don't depend on your best buddy to have an extra.
8. **Read the test directions carefully.** What does the question ask you to do? Compare and contrast? Show all your work? Give examples? Stick to what the question requires—no more and definitely no less.
9. **Answer the easy questions first.** Your confidence will rise, and you can use that momentum as you focus on the harder questions.
10. **Ask for help.** If you don't understand a test question, ask your teacher to clarify it for you.



Real Life Story: Organization 101

College Students Give Teens Advice, Studying Tips

EduGuide Staff

EduGuide asked three successful college students to give teens advice on managing their study schedules, classes, activities, and time with friends. Here are some of their suggestions.

Sarah Kawaguchi, a senior at McGill University in Montreal, juggles an intense premed program with volunteering and hanging out with friends. "If I were to give a first-year student only two pieces of advice regarding staying organized in university, they would be the following: plan ahead and write things down," she says.

Sarah recommends leaving more than enough time to prepare for a midterm, write a paper, or complete an assignment. That way unexpected complications won't mean you have to sacrifice things you want or need to do in order to finish everything.

She explains how she structures her time. "If I have a philosophy paper due the same day as a biology midterm, I will always write the paper first and study biology second so that the midterm material is fresh in my mind. Starting a paper a month early may seem strange, but ultimately planning ahead allows me to be less pressed for time and more flexible in terms of participating in extracurricular activities and spending time with friends."

Sarah recommends keeping a planner to track details and get a global picture of assignments, exams, meetings, and other commitments. "Writing things down has been particularly important to me. One of the biggest changes from high school for most first-year students is having final exams worth sixty, seventy, sometimes even one hundred percent of the final course mark, while the most they were ever worth in high school was fifteen or thirty percent of the grade," Sarah explains. "Understanding exactly how much time I will have to study for each final exam allows me to start early and not have to cram everything in at the last minute."

Cassie Robertson, a junior at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, explains that organization is a big challenge for college students. Their schedules have much less structure than in high school, and no one tells students where or when to study. Time management becomes critical. "The best way to manage time and get organized is to make a schedule," she says. "Living in a dorm means that there are always people around to talk to and hang out with, and if you don't budget your time, you won't end up getting your work done."

One of Cassie's strategies is working in the library rather than her dorm room. "If I do my work in the library, I avoid the possibility of getting sidetracked by socializing," she explains.

Katherine Chasmar, a third-year student at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, has these four main strategies for staying organized and getting all her schoolwork done.

- Plan ahead. When you get course outlines at the beginning of the year, get out your calendar and mark down dates of exams and due dates of papers.
- Make lists. Each week, note assignments and readings to be completed. Next to each task, put the estimated number of hours required to complete it and the date you need to have it done. Then prioritize tasks in order of importance.
- Avoid clutter and distractions. A clean workspace improves concentration and productivity.
- Develop a schedule. Try to get in the habit of studying, going to bed, exercising, and enjoying personal activities at particular times.



Want a Long, Healthy Life? Stay in School

Health Linked to Education Level, Says Issue Brief from the Commission to Build a Healthier America

Sara jo Schwartz

A September 2009 report from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Commission to Build a Healthier America points to mountains of evidence that links years of schooling with better personal health and wellness. Here are examples from two studies: college grads live at least five years longer than non-high-school graduates; 26.7 percent of white non-Hispanic college graduates rate their health as less than very good versus 69.4 percent of white non-Hispanic high-school dropouts who do.

Not only are better-educated people healthier than less educated ones, but the children of people with more education are healthier, too. For instance, babies of mothers who are high school dropouts are twice as likely to die before the age of one as are the babies of college grads; children whose parents dropped out of high school are six times more likely to be in poor or fair health than are the kids of parents who graduated from college.

The report describes three ways education level links to health: health knowledge and behaviors, employment and income, and social and psychological factors. Let's take a look at each category.

Health Knowledge and Behaviors

Common sense suggests that the more people know and the clearer they think, the better their health choices will be. Sure enough, research has found that greater educational attainment has been associated with healthful eating, getting exercise, and avoiding risk factors such as drinking excessively and smoking. In addition, better-educated people are quicker to change risky health behaviors in response to new evidence than less-educated people are.

Employment and Income

We all know that more education is the key to higher wages, but the actual numbers are quite startling. According to U.S. Census Bureau information, high school graduates' lifetime earnings (in 1999 dollars) are \$1.2 million, compared with \$2.1 million for college graduates and \$4.4 for those with professional degrees. A comfortable income helps people get the health care they need when they need it. Wealthier people are also able to live in safer neighborhoods with access to recreational facilities and other services, including grocery stores stocked with reasonably priced, healthful food.

Low-wage workers, on the other hand, have fewer resources to cope with medical, child-care, and other day-to-day difficulties. Understandably, they experience greater stress as a result. They also live in more dangerous neighborhood with fewer parks, well-stocked grocery stores, and other health-enhancing features.

Social and Psychological Factors

Studies reveal that better-educated people feel more control over their lives than less-educated people do. This sense of control encourages skills and habits such as problem solving and perseverance that lead to better health care and outcomes. More education is also linked to higher social standing, another factor strongly associated with better health. Social support is yet another way that education is related to health. People with more education have greater social support, both emotional and practical, and greater social support is linked to better physical and mental health.

The report concludes that education is the key to better health and a longer life for parents, kids, and generations to come. For details, and to learn more, visit the [Commission to Build a Healthier America](#). Read the “[Issue Brief: Education Matters for Health](#).”

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Due to the dynamic nature of our quizzes, they are only available on the web. Follow the addresses below to take a quiz on our website.

Am I Reading Smart?

<http://www.eduguide.org/Parents/TakeQuiz/tabid/114/quizId/38/view/StepTakeQuiz/Default.aspx>

What Is My Learning Style?

<http://www.eduguide.org/Parents/TakeQuiz/tabid/114/quizId/39/view/StepTakeQuiz/Default.aspx>

Which High School Study Skills Do I Need to Work On?

<http://www.eduguide.org/Parents/TakeQuiz/tabid/114/quizId/40/view/StepTakeQuiz/Default.aspx>