

Study Skills
for
High School Students
2009

Table of Contents:

<u>Time Management Tips</u>	3
<u>Organization</u>	4
<u>How to use your Agenda Book</u>	6
<u>Sample Agenda Book Page</u>	7
<u>How to study vocabulary</u>	8
<u>Writing a Thesis Statement and How to Support It</u>	9
<u>Reading for Understanding</u>	11
<u>Taking notes on readings</u>	13
<u>Note Taking Strategies</u>	15
<u>Test Preparation Strategies—TOP TEN</u>	16
<u>Reviewing Your Work and Self-Assessing</u>	17

Time Management Tips

1. Set goals for yourself: short and long term
2. Record assignments: Use an agenda book or pocket calendar.
3. Make a “to do” list daily: Prioritize what you want to accomplish that day.
4. Use spare time wisely: Read on the bus ride when going home, to games or while waiting for practice to begin. Also when given class time to begin your homework, USE IT!!!
5. It is okay to say “NO” to interruptions: Keep focused on your goals!!! For example, if an employer asks you to work an extra shift it is okay to say no if you are preparing for a quiz or test the next day.
6. Find the right time and place: Know how you learn best, what time of the day you concentrate the best as well as choosing an environment that will make you successful.
7. Get plenty of sleep: Lack of sleep can make you irritable and less productive. Plan your time so that you are in bed at a decent hour.

Organization

You overslept! As you leave your bedroom, you trip over a pile of dirty laundry and snag a pen from the floor. Your History project that's due today is completely missing. You can't find the vocabulary paper that you did last night. You miss breakfast and the bus. You have to sign in late, missing most of Science class and the test that you failed to remember.

Sound a little too familiar? By improving your organizational habits, you can avoid this nightmare. Planning, devoting time to it every day, and being willing to stay with it will not only improve your grades but also decrease stress levels at the same time.

Here are some tips and reminders to help you improve your organizational habits.

Organize a study area.

Designate a specific work area at home where you can keep **all** of your school materials. (This may involve having to **clean your room!**) But this can be wherever you feel comfortable working. When you get home in the afternoon, put everything right there. Keep it organized and free of clutter, and all of your things will be easy to use, and especially **easy to find**.

Use your agenda book for more than a passbook.

Record not only homework assignments but also due dates for projects. Fill in all of your commitments, (practices, club meetings, etc.) This gives you a better sense of your available time and helps you to use it wisely.

Keep each subject separate.

Set up different folders, 3-ring binders, or notebooks for each subject. Be sure to follow any directions that a teacher may give – you may be required to have a 3-ring binder or a spiral notebook for a particular class. Otherwise, use the method that works best for you. Take a few moments **every day** to keep up with this organization. Be sure that papers are in the correct folder, punch holes to put papers into binders, and put materials in some type of order. Chronological order is usually most effective, so be sure to **date every paper that you receive**.

Get ready the night before.

Make a habit every night of pulling your things together. Since you now have an organized study area, this should be a breeze. Make sure an alarm is set and you know what you're wearing. Then get **plenty of sleep**.

Helpful Links

For Students:

http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/149089/6_simple_organization_tips_for_students.html?cat=4

http://kidshealth.org/teen/school_jobs/school/back_to_school.html

<http://studypoint.com/blog/index.php/category/organizational-skills/>

For Parents:

http://stress.about.com/od/studentstress/a/back_to_school.htm

<http://www.schoolwisebooks.com/blog/?p=48>

How to use your Agenda Book

- Bring your agenda book to school and home everyday!!!
- Make an entry EVERYDAY for EVERY CLASS!
- Use a consistent format.
 - Class, Assignment, Due Date
 - Example: Science, Separation of a Mixture Lab Report, 9/10
 - Write due dates as dates and avoid using things like tomorrow or next Friday.
- Use abbreviations to save space.
 - Examples
 - NH=no homework
 - T=Test
 - Q=Quiz
 - RN=Review Notes
 - V=Vocabulary
 - LR=lab Report
- Color Code!
 - Each class could be a different color.
 - Use a consistent color to track grades.
- Use the agenda book to manage assignments and time!
 - Include work or extra curricular activities when planning your use of time after school.
- Update the status of your assignments.
 - Use check marks (✓) when an assignment is complete.
 - Use an arrow (→) when you need to carry an assignment over to another day.
 - Assignments that are carried over should also be rewritten on the next day.
 - Also note the grade earned so you can keep track of your progress within a course.
- Use a large binder clip to keep track of where you are in the agenda book.



References:

Lacroix, P (2009, June 19). Agenda Book. Retrieved July 16, 2009, from www.coebrownacademy.com Web site: <http://www.coebrownacademy.com/AssistedStudy/Agendabook.htm>

Sample Agenda Book Page

September 8-14



vocab
jeopardize jep' er dīz (v.)
 to endanger or put at risk

2008

September

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

October

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

09

Monday

8 Spanish, v-p. 10-15, 9/9 ^{252/114}

Algebra, p. 2 #1-8, 9/9

Science, LR on Mixtures, 9/10

Concert Choir, NH

3 HW

4 ↓

5

6

7 Dance Rehearsal

8 Lab Report

9

10

Tuesday

9 Spanish, Q on V, 9/10 ^{253/113}

Algebra, p. 6 #1-8, 9/10

Science, LR on Mixtures, 9/10

Concert Choir, Memorize lyrics, 9/12

3 Lab Report

4 HW

5 ↓

6

7 Dance Rehearsal

8 Concert Choir

9

10

How to study vocabulary

Study Tips:

- Keep an organized notebook
- Spend a little time (5 - 15 minutes) studying vocabulary every night.
- Use flashcards to practice (see links section)
- Make an effort to use your new vocabulary in your every day speech.
- Use context clues to find the meaning of unknown words in readings
- Use a mnemonic device to remember acronyms

EX: PEMDAS – Parenthesis, Exponents, Multiplication, Division, Addition, Subtraction

- Make up a story using your vocabulary words
- Build Sentences with vocabulary to practice using the words
- Put your vocabulary words to music or in art work
- Foreign Language Students – NEVER trust translation sites!
- Study and quiz with a classmate

Helpful Links

www.studyspanish.com , www.kitzkikz.com/flashcards/

Writing a Thesis Statement and How to Support It

I. What is a thesis statement?

A thesis statement tells the reader what the essay he/she is going to read is about. It is usually found at the end of the introduction UNLESS otherwise specified by the teacher. Thesis statements should be specific and cover ONLY what is in the paper. The rest of paper MUST contain evidence and specific examples to support that statement.

II. How do I write a thesis statement?

Thesis statements should be debatable and demonstrate personal opinions. If the thesis is easily agreed upon by or accepted as fact, then there is no reason to try to persuade people to read the rest of the essay. The statement should be specific. A statement that is too broad or narrow will cause the writer to lose focus and take on more than he/she can cover.

Example of a thesis which is narrow or non-debatable

Romeo and Juliet is a tragic love story.

Example of a thesis which is debatable and specific

The tragedy of Romeo and Juliet lies in Romeo's impulsive behavior and inability to control his emotions.

III. How do I generate ideas for essay topics?

The best way to start to generate ideas for essays is to make a list of topics that interest you. Make a statement about each topic that is general and then try to make it more specific. Most essays start with a general feeling or idea about a certain topic. Once you choose a topic that interests you, develop an opinion about the topic and you will have the start of a thesis statement. You should always develop a thesis statement before you begin to write or research a topic. This will keep you focused throughout your research and writing.

IV. What are the parts of an essay?

Introduction- An introduction captures the reader's attention and sets the tone of the paper. Try to avoid using quotes or questions in an introduction. Rhetorical questions are a great tool for argumentative or persuasive essays but are not appropriate for every essay.

Body- The body of the paper is where the reader is given specific information that supports the author's thesis statement. These examples must explain HOW they support the thesis statement.

Conclusion- The conclusion reminds the reader what the essay was about and should leave the him/her with something to reflect upon.

V. In addition to structure what should I be aware of while writing an essay?

Content- Use specific examples that support your thesis statements and explain how they support it.

Organization- Be aware of the structure in which you present your ideas so that there is a fluency to your essay. This means present your ideas in a logical way: chronologically, compare/contrast, etc.

Tone- Be aware of your audience. Formal essays should be treated differently than informal essays. You are writing for teachers not your friends; avoid using slang or inappropriate language.

Word Choice- You should always attempt to use more complex vocabulary when writing a formal essay. Try to avoid simplistic language by keeping a dictionary or thesaurus handy.

Conventions- Be aware of spelling, punctuations, and grammatical errors when writing a formal essay.

Reading for Understanding

When reading anything, there are a few questions you should ask yourself to truly understand what you are reading.

1. What is the topic you are reading about?
2. Who wrote the text and for what purpose?
3. Is there any possible bias the author(s) may have regarding the subject?
4. What is the tone of the reading (dramatic, sarcastic, other)?
5. What do you think you already know about the topic?

When finding the main idea in any reading, you must first differentiate between the *topic* you are reading about and the *main idea* in each paragraph or section of the reading.

The Topic:

The topic of a passage is the person, place, object, or idea under discussion. It is the subject that the author has chosen to discuss, describe, or explain.

The Main Idea:

The main idea of a passage or reading is the central thought or message.

The Difference Between Topic and Main Idea:

The difference between a topic and a main idea will become clearer to you if you imagine yourself overhearing a conversation in which your name is repeatedly mentioned. When you ask your friends what they were discussing, they say they were talking about you. At that point, you have the topic but not the main idea. Undoubtedly, you wouldn't be satisfied until you learned what your friends were saying about you. You would probably pester them until you knew the main idea, until you knew, that is, exactly what they were saying about you. The same principle applies to reading. The topic is not enough -you need to discover the main idea.

Tips for finding the main idea:

1. As soon as you can determine the topic, ask yourself "What general point does the author want to make about this topic?" Once you can answer that question, you have probably found the main idea.
2. The main idea is not always at the beginning of the reading. Sometimes the main idea is first, followed by supporting detail. The main idea could also be found in the middle of the reading, "sandwiched" by supporting detail, or it could be found at the end of the reading preceded by the supporting detail.

3. Pay attention to any idea that is repeated in different ways. If an author takes time to restate the same point numerous times, it is most likely the main idea.
4. Once you feel sure you have found the main idea, test it. Ask yourself if the examples, reasons, statistics, studies, and facts included in the reading lend themselves as evidence or explanation in support of the main idea you have in mind. If they don't, you might want to revise your first notion about the author's main idea.
6. If you are taking a test that asks you to find the *thesis* or *theme* of a reading, don't let the terms confuse you, you are still looking for the main idea.

References:

Flemming, Laraine. "The Main Idea." *Reading Resources*. 15 October 1999. 16 Jul 2009
<<http://users.dhp.com/~laflemm/reso/Introrr.html>>.

Taking notes on readings

Taking notes on class readings can be as important as taking notes on class lectures. Not everyone can remember or understand something they only read once, so if you can take efficient notes on readings, you can save yourself a lot of time and effort when you need to review readings for quizzes and tests!

Here are some general tips to follow when taking notes on readings.

- 1. Budget enough time for taking notes.** The time you spend taking clear, efficient notes initially, will save you review time and increase your knowledge retention.
- 2. Date your notes, and write full bibliographic information next to the date,** including author, title, publication, date of publication, city, publisher, and volume number for journal articles. Do this so you don't waste time later writing a paper or other assignment that may call for proper citation.
- 3. Compose your notes in a concise and legible fashion.** If you can't read your notes you are either writing too much or may need to consider using a computer. Use short and meaningful phrases, and abbreviate when necessary. Don't use abbreviations that you won't recognize later.
- 4. Create a system of note-taking that allows YOU to write quickly and get down basic concepts,** but which will also allow you to quickly find information in your notes later. Consider using an outline format, for example, or clearly separating your notes into different sections (or columns if you are using a steno pad or a computer).
- 5. Use the structure of the book (or article) as the structure of your notes.** For instance, chapters correspond to major headings, chapter sections to subheadings. You also may want to include page numbers in case you need to refer back to the text at a later time.
- 6. Note anything that is pertinent to the author's argument.** Important points tend to come in introductory and concluding paragraphs, where details and more complete explanations or arguments are located in the body of the text.

7. **Distinguish facts from opinions, and quotations from summaries**, in a way that will make it clear which is which when you review your notes.

8. **Review your reading notes the next day**, and do it again a few days later. This is a time-efficient way of retaining the material.

9. **Record any comments or questions you may have in your notes**. Asking clarifying questions of your teacher will not only help you understand the text, but it will also show your teacher that you are taking ownership of your own learning!

References:

N/A, "How To Take Reading Notes." *eHow*. N/A. 16 Jul 2009
<http://www.ehow.com/how_9258_reading-notes.html>.

Helpful Links

www.manhattan.k12.ca.us/staff/pware/files/cornellnotes.doc - note taking template for readings

http://www.course-notes.org/US_History/Vocabulary - history vocabulary website

<http://www.apstudent.com/ushistory/cards.php> - history vocabulary website

<http://www.quia.com/pop/120023.html> - Identifying main idea game

Note Taking Strategies

1. **Come to class prepared:** Bring a three-ring binder, pocket folder and a writing utensil.
2. **Start a new page for each class:** Put the date at the top of each page. This makes it easier for you to access notes when you miss a class.
3. **Develop a note taking system that works for you:** There are several ways to take notes such as outlining, charting or mapping. Attached is an example of one system, the Cornell note-taking system. Use can use various colors to distinguish between concepts.
4. **Don't try to write down every word the teacher says:** Make sure you listen, write and ask questions as needed.
5. **Write down the major ideas:** Listen for facts, connections and main ideas. This can be difficult so don't get frustrated. Ask the teacher to slow down if needed.
6. **Leave enough space between notes:** When writing leave a lot of space between ideas. Your notes will be easier to read and add to when needed.
7. **Use graphic organizers or pictures:** Sometimes it is helpful to draw pictures that make connections between ideas, sequences or events.
8. **Write down page numbers from your textbook:** This makes it easier to gather information for assignments quizzes or tests.
9. **REVIEW YOUR NOTES:** This is important!!!! Make sure you take the time to look through your notes and develop questions or rephrase them so they make sense to you!!!! Write down any questions you have and ask at the beginning of the next class.
10. **GET NOTES FROM MISSED CLASSES:** Create a partnership with another student that you can rely on and also can rely on you for notes when a class is missed. If not you may need to schedule time after school to do this with your teacher.

Helpful Links

<http://resources.chuh.org/Literacy/notetaking.lasso> - Link to Cornell note taking templates

Test Preparation Strategies—TOP TEN

10. Be Confident.
 - If you feel that you know the material and have put in significant study time, you can look forward to showing off all you have learned.
 - Showcase your best effort. Answer every question to the best of your ability. THINK A!
9. Be Prepared.
 - Come with required materials such as pencils, calculator, notes, formula sheet, etc.
8. Be Alert.
 - When you are given an exam, take a minute to look through all of the questions.
 - READ ALL DIRECTIONS.
7. Be Careful.
 - Avoid careless errors.
 - Take time to review all problems and proof-read all answers.
6. Be Ready.
 - Preparation is the key to success.
 - Complete all reading and problem sets before the exam.
 - Designate study time.
5. Be Smart.
 - Utilize review sessions.
 - Learn your teachers testing style.
4. Be Efficient.
 - Prioritize your time wisely.
 - Do not get stuck on one problem and run out of time.
 - Outline essay answers.
3. Be Neat.
 - Write clearly. Erase thoroughly.
 - Make sure your numerical answers are legible.
 - Many teachers will not give credit if they cannot read your answer.
2. Be Honest.
 - A test is a measure of your knowledge of a particular topic.
 - Academic integrity is extremely important.
 - Resist the urge to cheat—it is never worth it.
1. Be Mature.
 - A test is just that—a test. Keep every exam in perspective.
 - Tests are learning opportunities too. Use them as tool to make yourself a better student.
 - Communicate with your teacher about your performance.

Reviewing Your Work and Self-Assessing

Review your notes daily from class and make comments or generate questions to ask the following class in the margin of your notebook.

- ❖ Look over homework assignments in preparation for quizzes, quizzes in preparation for tests and tests in order to prepare for exams.
 - Teachers will frequent base quizzes, tests and finals on previous homework assignments, quizzes and tests.
 - Great way to *improve your grades!!*
 - Re-do old math problems to make sure that you can still do them!
 - If teachers go over quizzes and tests, put any missed problems and solutions in your notebook so you can study them later.
 - Many teachers have websites with notes, worksheets and review materials. If you are absent, you can keep current by utilizing online resources.

- ❖ Seek online quizzes based on specific content areas to prepare for the real quiz in class!!
 - There are many online resources available on the school website.

- ❖ Pay attention to review sessions before tests and quizzes
 - Before chapter tests, teachers will often spend time reviewing topics to study.
 - Many teachers distribute review packets.
 - Be engaged and ask questions during in class reviews.
 - List topics and prioritize your time for individual studying.
 - Teachers will sometimes ask if there are any questions before they hand out an exam—be prepared to ask for clarification on a topic you did not understand while studying.

- ❖ Take advantage of being allowed to use a formula sheet or “cheat sheet”.
 - Homework quizzes and notebook quizzes should be an easy A.
 - Many teachers allow a formula sheet for large cumulative or final exams.

- Keep a running list of main topics/formulas during the semester.
- ❖ Take advantage of after-school study sessions and homework clinics.
 - Teachers will often run review sessions after-school before exams. They highlight important topics and offer individual instruction.
 - Homework clinics offer individual support and re-teaching.
 - Study groups can help you learn and teaching other students will help you cement your own knowledge.
 - Attend Mid-Year and Final Exam Study Crunch sessions.

Helpful Links

www.Purplemath.com

www.quizthat.com