

## Making The Grade

"Here" I said, handing my mother my progress report as I walked into her room. I braced myself for the inevitably screaming I was sure to hear. "My teacher says you have to sign this."

My mother looked at the card, then at me. "How could you be getting a 'D' in Earth Science?"

Some students have a natural ability for academics. They receive excellent marks, yet rarely crack open their textbooks. Others have to study night and day to get the same marks. It's not that some students are smart, and others are dumb. It is a matter of tapping into what study methods work for each student.

Here are seven ways you can study more effectively and improve your grades:

### Track Assignments

The first step is to keep track of assignments. Some loose-leaf binders come with school-year or all-year calendars. If you don't find one you like, consider buying a teachers' planning calendar from an office supply store. It can be inserted into the front of your binders and used to record assignments. Your teachers may provide you with assignment sheets. These sheets can be slipped in front of the calendar. The day the assignments and tests are announced, work out a study schedule.

### Commit To A Regular Time And Place For Homework

You should study every day to continue to make progress. Homework time doesn't have to be a hassle if you are flexible with your schedule. Some students like to start their homework right after school. With their homework finished, they are free to go out or watch television. Other students prefer to relax first, then do their homework with a fresh perspective. Once you have committed to a homework time, stick to it.

Where you study is as important as setting a regular study time. You may enjoy studying at your bedroom desk or lying on the floor in the living room. No matter where you study, the environment should be noise-free and well-lighted. You should be able to spread out your books and papers. Also make sure you have all the supplies you need within your reach.

### Be Conscientious

Every night make sure your homework is done, is correct and is orderly. Neat homework and projects earn higher grades. In the business world, if you make a sloppy presentation, you will lose the client's account. Also turn your homework in on time.

After the test and assignments are handed back, sit down with them and see where you made mistakes. Why were the errors made and how could you prevent similar errors in the future? Write notes on the assignments and tests. Make a file for the test and notes, for cumulative tests later.

### Use Memorization Techniques

In order to remember lists, try inventing a combination of letters (an acronym). Each letter will give you a clue to an idea you need to remember. For example, BRASS is an acronym for how to shoot a rifle--Breath, Relax, Aim, Sight, Squeeze. You could also make up a sentence where the first letter of each word is a hint to what you need to recall. For instance, Dumb Martians Just Sit Nearby Eating Tender Noodles is the phrase to remember the order of the Eight Is Enough children--David, Mary, Joanie, Susan, Nancy, Elizabeth, Tommy, Nicholas.

For remembering names, devise a relationship between the name and the physical characteristics of the person. For example, Shirley Temple might be remembered as having "curly"--which rhymes with Shirley--hair around her temples.

When you have an ordered or an unordered list you need to memorize, you can create a story linking the ideas together. The more crazier, the better. If your vocabulary words are success, assistant, cemetery, scrutinize, you might create a story of a successful assistant scrutinizing tombstones in a cemetery, searching for her boss' grave.

### Studying For Tests

Write down a study checklist of what will be covered on the test. Make a list of notes, formulas, ideas and text assignments that you are responsible for.

Create flashcards--put topics or questions on the front and answers on the back. Have a friend, parent or sibling quiz you. Keep running through the flashcards while you brush your teeth, are on the bus, when you are in the restroom and when you are doing chores.

Produce a mock test. One with only the questions and another with only the answers. Hide the answers in a drawer or give them to a parent. Take the test and when completed, compare your responses with the ones on the answer sheet. Keep repeating this process until you know the material backward and forward.

If you want to make studying for a test fun, team up with a friend and play the game show Twenty-One. A parent or sibling should host, reading off the questions. You and your friend compete against each other until one of you reaches twenty-one points.

#### Avoid Getting Involved In Too Many Activities

If you want to participate in an extracurricular activity, you can reschedule your study time. However, if baseball, ballet or any other activities make you stay up late trying to finish your homework, then you are involved in too many activities.

#### Play Educational Games

After the homework is finished, pull out a board game. Monopoly encourages mental calculation when counting money and determining moves, and Clue requires logical deductive skills. Try to figure out the measurements when doubling a recipe in the kitchen.

Playing word games with your family or friends can improve spelling skills. Scrabble, anagrams, Wheel of Fortune and word jumbles can teach you to spell new words.

II Timothy 2:15 says to study to show yourself approved unto God.

If you care enough about your grades to take the time to develop conscientious study habits, you receive better marks, learn self-discipline and will have more options when it comes to selecting colleges. No matter what you choose to do in life, you should have a good education to fall back on. Not everything in life comes easy. The key is to make up your mind to work hard for the things you want. And not to let anyone or anything get in your way.

#### About the Author

Annagail Lynes is editor of VisionHope Magazine. She specializes in writing articles for young adults about dating, school, parents, peer pressure and other youth-related issues. Get your Free Sample Issue of VisionHope, plus free articles and free pen pal ads at <http://visionhope.ontheweb.com>

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