

9 Habits of highly successful students

by

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The goal of this paper is to improve the performance of students in the classroom and to produce tangible results in the form of better grades. Just as important, however, is to promote intellectual growth and enthusiasm for learning. We want the student to find excitement in the process of learning and knowing. Successful students share some common behaviors:

To be a successful student, you need to...

1. Approach education with a positive attitude
 - Contribute to the class. Take part in the class discussions. Volunteer to answer questions.
 - Accept responsibility for learning. Learn to look for the missing pieces.
 - Believe in yourself. Millions of students have travelled through this road before.
2. Actively participate in the learning process
 - Sit in the front of the class.
 - Ask questions. Overcome the fear of "looking bad".
 - Communicate! Ask for help and advice, teachers appreciate that.
 - Take notes and re-write your notes. If teacher puts it on the board, you put it in your notes.
 - Always do the assignments and then a few more.
 - Attend class regularly.
3. Extend learning beyond the classroom
 - Take advantage of resources. Ask your teacher about those resources.
 - Get involved in clubs and activities.
 - Pursue cooperative education opportunities. Form study groups.
 - Stay up on the latest trends in the field.
 - Attend workshops and seminars. Talk to your counselors and advisors.
4. Set goals
 - Recognize your potential.
 - Build on strengths and overcome weaknesses.
 - Reward yourself.
 - See the big picture.
 - Dream.
5. Persist
 - Analyze and solve problems.
 - Learn from failure.
 - Accept criticism.
6. Practice self-discipline
 - Maintain a balanced lifestyle.
 - Prioritize and organize.

- Make time to study.

7. Get connected

- Share your knowledge. Take turn and explain the problems to other students.
- Seek out professors. You will see a different side of the teacher in a one on one setting.
- Develop friendships. Studying with partners helps every one. Find a role model. Look for students who do well in class and imitate them.
- Become team players. You will learn differently when you teach.
- Network among friends, professionals, etc.

8. Keep Laughing

- Hold on to your sense of humor.
- Remember to have some fun.

9. Use the Five Year Rule

- Ask yourself: "Five years from now, how important will this problem be? Nine times out of ten, the answer is "Not very important." The five year rule can keep you from blowing the situation out of proportion.



Improve Your Study Skills

Listening and note taking go together. It's hard to take effective notes without careful listening.

Preparation before class:

- Do the assigned reading before the class.
- Check your course outline or syllabus to see how each class fits into the overall course.
- Briefly review your notes from the last class so you'll be able to connect the new material to what you already know.

Active Listening

1. Desire to become a better listener. There is a difference between hearing and listening.
2. Stop talking. One mouth and two ears means listen twice as much as you talk.
3. Hold a pen or pencil in hand, ready to take notes. It helps you focus.
4. Look at the speaker. It helps you to maintain concentration.
5. Leave your emotions behind. Judge content not delivery.
6. Get rid of distractions. Do not eat or chew while in lectures. Do not doodle.
7. Get the main points.
8. Don't argue mentally. There will be time for that later.
9. Listen for what is not said. Predict what the speaker will say next. Pay attention to the speaker's body language.
10. Avoid jumping to conclusions.
11. Avoid hasty judgments.
12. Recognize your own prejudices.
13. Be a patient listener.
14. Be aware that your posture affects your listening. Sit up and lean forward.

Note Taking

7 Important Reasons for Note-Taking

1. It triggers basic lecturing processes and helps you to remember information.
2. It helps you to concentrate in class.
3. It helps you prepare for tests.
4. Your notes are often a source of valuable clues for what information the instructor thinks is most important (what will show up on the next test).
5. Your notes often contain information that cannot be found elsewhere (in your textbooks).
6. You create a visual aid for your material.
7. Studying becomes much easier.

Suggestions for Developing Note-taking and In-class Skills

1. Listen actively —if possible think before you write — but don't get behind.
2. Be open-minded about points you disagree on. Don't let arguing interfere with your note-taking.
3. Ask questions if appropriate, especially if you don't understand a term or concept.
4. Develop and use standard and/or consistent method of note-taking including

- punctuation, abbreviations, margins, etc.
5. Take and keep notes in a LARGE notebook. The only merit to a small notebook is ease of carrying, and that is not your main objective. A large notebook allows you to adequately indent and use an outline form.
 6. DATE YOUR NOTES and keep separate sections for each class.
 7. Leave a few spaces blank as you move from one point to the next so that you can fill in additional points later if necessary. Your objective is to take helpful notes, not to save paper.
 8. Do not try to take down everything that the lecturer says. It is impossible in the first place and unnecessary in the second place because not everything is of equal importance. Spend more time listening and attempt to take down the main points. If you are writing as fast as you can, you cannot be as discriminating a listener. There may be some times, however when it is more important to write than to think.
 9. Listen for cues as to important points, transition from one point to the next, repetition of points for emphasis, changes in voice inflections, enumeration of a series of points, etc.
 10. Many lecturers attempt to present a few major points and several minor points in a lecture. The rest is explanatory material and samples. Try to see the main points and do not get lost in a barrage of minor points that do not seem related to each other. The relationship is there if you will listen for it. Be alert to cues about what the instructor thinks is important.
 11. Make your original notes legible enough for your own reading but use abbreviations of your own invention when possible. The effort required to recopy notes can be better spent in rereading them and thinking about them. Although neatness is a virtue in some respect, it does not necessarily increase your learning.
 12. Copy down everything on the board, regardless. Did you ever stop to think that every blackboard scribble may be a clue to an exam item? You may not be able to integrate what is on the board into your lecture notes, but if you copy it, it may serve as a useful clue for you later. If not, what the heck—you haven't wasted anything. You were in the classroom anyway.
 13. Sit as close to the front of the class as possible. There are fewer distractions and it is easier to hear, see and attend to important material.
 14. Get assignments and suggestions precisely----ask questions if you're not sure.

Methods of Note-Taking

Split Page Method

Because both class lectures and the textbook are the primary sources of course content, here's a way to combine them in the note-taking process:

- + Divide your notebook page in half lengthwise.
- + Draw a line down the middle of the page.
- + Take class notes on one side of the page and outline the text on the other side.
- + If helpful, add a third column for questions you need to ask the instructor.

The Cornell Method

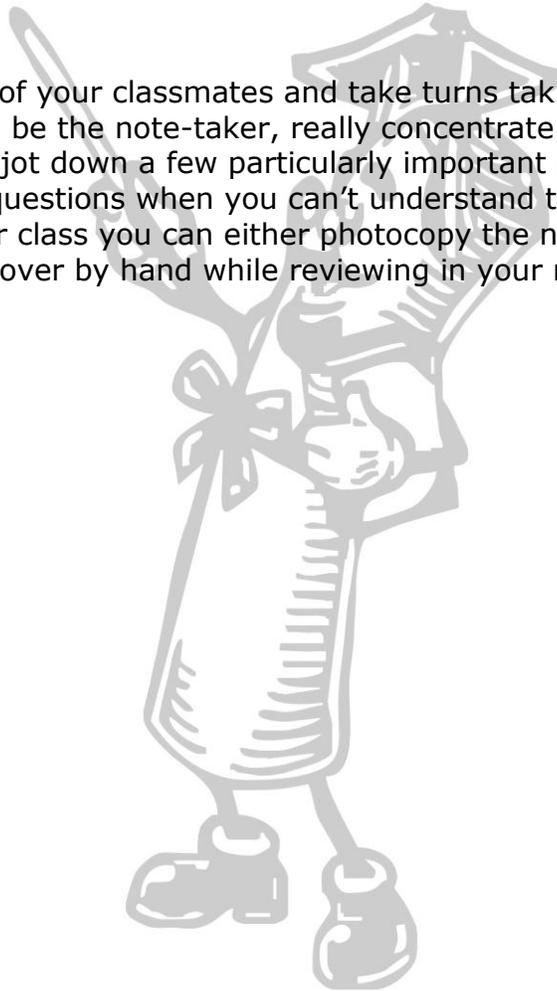
- + This method provides a systematic format for condensing and organizing notes without time-consuming recopying. After writing the notes in the main space, use

the left-hand space to label each idea and detail with a key word or "cue."

- + Rule your paper with a 2 ¼ inch margin on the left leaving a six-inch area on the right in which to make notes. During class, take down information in the six-inch area.
- + When the instructor moves to a new point, skip a few lines.
- + After class, complete phrases and sentences as much as possible.
- + For every significant bit of information, write a cue in the left margin.
- + To review, cover your notes with a card leaving the cues exposed. Say the cue out loud, and then say as much as you can of the material underneath the card.
- + When you have said as much as you can, move the card and see if what you said matches what is written. If you can say it, you know it.

Using Group Notes

Form a group with some of your classmates and take turns taking good class notes. When it's not your day to be the note-taker, really concentrate on what is being said in class. You might want to jot down a few particularly important points, but mostly try to participate in class. Ask questions when you can't understand the point your instructor is trying to get across. After class you can either photocopy the notes from your classmate, or better yet, copy them over by hand while reviewing in your mind what happened in class.



Defeating the Forces of Forgetting

The following memory techniques can help retrieve information easily.

1. *Distributed review is more effective than massed practice.* You will remember more if you study 3 twenty-minute sessions as compared to 1 one-hour session.
2. *Sentences.* Make up sentences such as "Please excuse my dear aunt Sally," which corresponds to the mathematical operations: parentheses, exponents, multiplication, division addition, and subtraction.
3. *Words.* Create words. For example, Roy G. Biv may help you to remember the colors of the rainbow: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet.
4. *Story Lines.* If it is easier for you to remember stories than raw information, you may want to process the information into a story that you can easily tell. Weave the data and facts into a creative story that can be easily retrieved from your long-term memory. This technique can be especially beneficial if your professor gives essay exams because the "story" that you remember can be what was actually told in class.
5. *Teach.* "Teach" or explain the information to a friend or classmate without referring to your book or notes.
6. *Write possible test questions.* Actually write out test questions on the material that you think you might get. Then write answers to these questions. Go back and check your answers against the textbook and your notes.
7. *Think.* Think about what you are trying to learn. Find an interest in or application for the material if you wish to memorize it with ease.
8. *Repetition.* Keep telling yourself important points and associate details to these points.
9. *Use positive, pleasant images.* The brain often blocks out unpleasant ones.
10. *Exaggerate the size of important parts of the image.*
11. *Use humor.* Funny or peculiar things are easier to remember than normal ones.
12. *Jingles.* Make up rhymes, songs, poems, or sayings to assist you in remembering information. For example, "Columbus sailed the ocean blue in fourteen hundred and ninety."

TEST TAKING AND HOW TO AVOID TEST ANXIETY

Before the test:

Gather ALL material together:

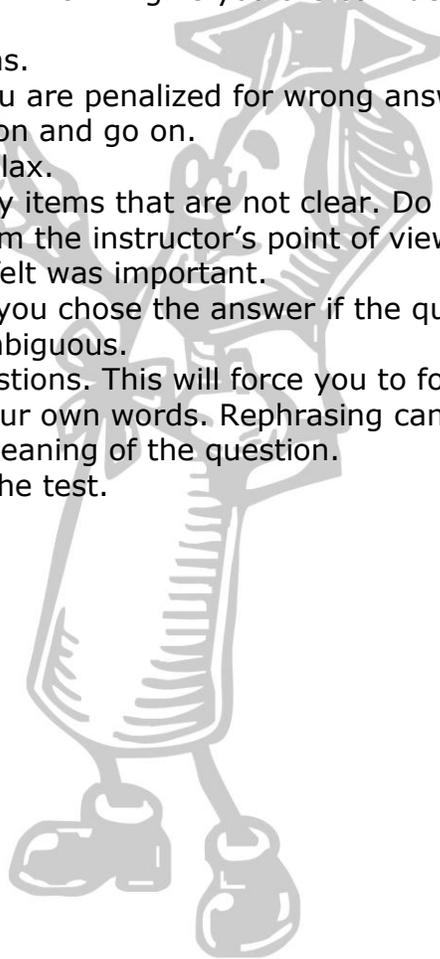
Lecture notes
Textbook marking
Old exams
Homework

- Exercise to sharpen the mind.
- Get a good night's sleep the night before the exam.
- Don't go to the test with an empty stomach. Fresh fruits and vegetables are often recommended to reduce stress. Stressful foods can include processed foods, artificial sweeteners, carbonated soft drinks, chocolate, fried foods, junk food, sugar, white flour products, chips and similar snack foods.
- Allow yourself plenty of time.

- Relax just before the exam. Practice muscle relaxation techniques.
- Don't try to do a last minute review. Cramming increases anxiety levels.
- Approach the test with confidence. Over prepare. Try simulating the exam conditions.

During the test:

- Preview the test before you answer anything. This gets you thinking about the material. Make sure to note the point value of each question so as to budget your time.
- Quickly calculate how much time you should allow for each section according to the point value (you don't want to spend 30 minutes on an essay question that counts only 5 points).
- Read the directions. Never assume that you know what the directions say.
- Answer the easy questions first. This will give you the confidence and momentum to get through the rest of the test.
- Go back to the difficult questions.
- Answer all questions (unless you are penalized for wrong answer).
- If you go blank, skip the question and go on.
- Change positions to help you relax.
- Ask the instructor to explain any items that are not clear. Do not ask for the answer.
- Try to answer the questions from the instructor's point of view. Try to remember what the instructor emphasized and felt was important.
- Use the margin to explain why you chose the answer if the question does not seem clear or if the answer seems ambiguous.
- Circle key words in difficult questions. This will force you to focus on the central point.
- Express difficult questions in your own words. Rephrasing can make it clear to you, but be sure you don't change the meaning of the question.
- Use all of the time allotted for the test.



10 Tips for Public Speaking

Feeling some nervousness before giving a speech is natural and even beneficial, but too much nervousness can be detrimental.

Here are some proven tips on how to control your butterflies and give better presentations:

1. Know your material. Pick a topic you are interested in. Know more about it than you include in your speech. Use humor, personal stories and conversational language — that way you won't easily forget what to say.
2. Practice. Practice. Practice! Rehearse out loud with all equipment you plan on using. Revise as necessary. Work to control filler words: Practice, pause and breathe. Practice with a timer and allow time for the unexpected.
3. Know the audience. Greet some of the audience members as they arrive. It's easier to speak to a group of friends than to strangers.
4. Know the room. Arrive early, walk around the speaking area and practice using the microphone and any visual aids.
5. Relax. Begin by addressing the audience. It buys you time and calms your nerves. Pause, smile and count to three before saying anything. ("One one-thousand, two one-thousand, three one-thousand. Pause. Begin.") Transform nervous energy into enthusiasm.
6. Visualize yourself giving **your** speech. Imagine yourself speaking, your voice loud, clear and confident. Visualize the audience clapping — it will boost your confidence.
7. Realize that people want you to succeed. Audiences want you to be interesting, stimulating, informative and entertaining. They're rooting for you.
8. Don't apologize for any nervousness or problem — the audience probably never noticed it.
9. Concentrate on the message — not the medium. Focus your attention away from your own anxieties and concentrate on your message and your audience.
10. Gain experience. Mainly, your speech should represent you — as an authority and as a person. Experience builds confidence, which is the key to effective speaking.

