

Some tips for becoming a good student:

1. Learn new subjects so that you understand and remember them for the long term
2. Stay physically fresh and clear minded during study sessions
3. Choose the best time to study and absorb new information
4. Save countless hours by getting the most out of each class
5. Become highly skilled at taking exams
6. Become an effective and efficient writer
7. Foster the right teacher-student relationship
8. Use optimal nutrition to boost your brain power and learning capacity

... How to Improve Your Marks ...

Some of these tips may seem simple, or obvious. You would be surprised, however, at the difference they will make in your learning and understanding, and in the results you obtain for work you hand in, or for tests.

In order to see a big improvement in your marks, you must successfully practice these suggestions in every class, every day.

1. Write or Print Neatly

No kidding, this really works! When you hand in something that's messy, the teacher will be forced to read it *very slowly and carefully* in order to find the important stuff. The teacher will find *every single spelling and grammar mistake you made!*

On the other hand, if what you hand in is very neatly printed or handwritten, the teacher can read it more quickly, and is less likely to find all the little mistakes. Also, let's face it, teachers are human, too ... they are probably going to be a little more generous with an assignment that looks nice, than they are with one that looks like it was written by a chimpanzee with arthritis!

2. Be Organized

Neatness and organization are skills that may be hard to develop, but will pay off in the long run. If you can never find the right notebook, are constantly losing your homework and assignments, mostly because you are messy and disorganized, you are not only aggravating your teachers, but you are probably losing valuable marks for late or missing homework assignments as well!

The first thing you need to do is to put the notes from each subject into its own, clearly labelled binder. Have some spare binders at home that you can transfer notes to, when the binders get full. Keep the notes in order, and in good shape. Never, ever, copy notes or do homework from one class, into the binder from another class.

Keep your locker neat. The only school things you should ever see when you open it are binders and textbooks. Loose papers should be filed, or discarded. This way, you will always be able to find what you need for each class.

Keep your notes for each subject organized ... neat, and in order. Have dividers separating the

topics, so you can find something quickly.
It's far easier to succeed when you're organized!

3. Improve Your Spelling

Marks are deducted for misspelled words in all classes, not just English. This is a really silly way to lose marks. *There is no such thing as a poor speller ... only a lazy one who could spell better!* See our '**How to Become a Better Speller**' page for more information about how to improve your spelling.

4. Keep Good Notes

Notes are taken for several reasons, and these reasons are different for some subjects than others. But in all classes, a complete set of notes, including returned *corrected* tests and assignments, will make it much easier for you to study for tests. You will know all the things that could be tested, and you will have actual questions and correct answers to practice. See our '**Preparing for Exams**' page, for more information.

But there is more involved in keeping a good notebook than this. Use your notebook as a *record of what you have learned, and what you've had problems with*. This is especially true for subjects like Math or Science, but applies as well to other areas.

For example, all your homework questions, after they've been taken up in class or marked and returned, should be *correct*. But don't just fix them; make a note beside the ones you got wrong! These are the questions you will need to look at, and try again, when studying for a test.

Start a special section at the back of each of your notebooks, where you can keep a record, in point form, of each of the facts, ideas, topics, or specific problems you've had difficulty with. This will give you some things to concentrate on when studying, and will serve as an indicator when you visit your teacher. (See #5 below.)

5. Talk to Your Teacher Often

You *will* have problems understanding some things. When the lesson includes something you don't understand, ask about it right away. Get some after-school help within a day or two. Don't wait until the end of the term; by then, there will be too many things to catch up on, besides your regular studying, and in the meantime *what you don't know may have affected how well you've been doing in other areas!* This is especially true in math, where what you're learning this month requires that you *understand perfectly something you did three months ago!*

Back in grade one or two, you had to *master* reading and numbers, or you didn't pass. The mastery level was somewhere around '90%'. That was because those skills were essential for everything else that followed. But in the higher grades, you can pass with a mark of 50%. If this happens to you, you will go on to the next course *not knowing half of what you were supposed to learn!* In math, this will mean you will probably not pass that next course.

You should plan on attaining a mark of *at least 60%* in a course if you plan on passing the next level.

6. Attend All Classes

In senior high, particularly in science and math courses, the main reason that students don't do well is because they miss too many classes! Whatever level you are at, if you are often absent, *your mark will go down!* Nothing can substitute for a full period of class time, asking questions, and practicing problems. More than *one or two days' absence per month* are too many, if you want a

good mark.

Believe it or not, students have gone through senior high courses and missed 20% of the classes ... and actually expected to *pass!*

They might as well have not taken the course at all!

7. Attempt All the Homework

Believe it or not, there actually *is* a reason for homework. Most of your learning happens when *you* attempt to answer some questions, *not* while you are listening to the teacher. Extra practice is necessary to help you really learn the material ... and there is never enough class time to do all of it. Doing *most* of the homework, or doing it *most* of the time, *is not good enough*. If you want your marks to improve, you must attempt it all, every day!

Notice also the word 'attempt'. Trying a homework assignment that you get wrong *is better than not trying it at all because it looks too hard*. You can learn, even from your mistakes!

8. Don't Confuse 'Cool' With 'Lazy'

Quite often, the people in high school with the reputation of being 'cool' may not be getting very good marks. This is often because they are always doing 'cool' things in the evening, or on weekends, and don't do much homework. In order to be better liked, and considered 'cool' yourself, you may want to be around them more. This is why teenagers often start smoking. It's also why high-school students who *could* get better marks, don't. Try to remember this: in fifteen years, the person you thought was 'cool' will be 30 years old, will still be hanging around town, (he didn't have the marks for college), and will be spinning his tires on the main street trying to keep his 'cool' image. If you want a shot at becoming a marine biologist and working in the South Pacific, or a social worker employed in a big city, or just want to attend college, *you have to do homework and study! There are no short-cuts!*

Another big reason people do poorly in high school courses is that they don't do much homework, or don't study effectively for exams. *For the month preceding exam week, you should have little or no social life ... you're too busy studying!*

Some students never learn this, until they flunk out of college in their first year, after wasting \$10,000 -15,000!

9. Study With Others

You learn something thoroughly when you try to explain it to someone else. Study for tests with a friend. Make up questions for each other. Explain things to each other. The more you *talk and write* about a topic, the better you'll understand it.

Teachers know this ... it's one of the reasons they ask you questions in class!

10. Have a Regular Work Spot at Home

This is very important. Get into a routine of doing your homework at a certain time, at a special place. Make sure that place has adequate light, and minimal noise. Don't listen to music ... studies have shown that playing music while studying will make it *harder* for you to learn things, and you'll *remember less!* (with the exception of classical music, which seems to help!)

Make this your regular homework spot. Don't let others work there, if possible, so you can keep all the materials you'll need handy, without worrying about them disappearing.

Make a regular homework schedule, and stick to it. Do the same when studying for tests or exams.

11. Do Homework Even When You Don't Have Homework

On the nights when you have no homework in a subject, take some time to go over the notes and examples you did in class that day. Rewrite your notes if they aren't completely organized and neat. Write out a question or two to ask the teacher the next day. *This really helps!* Successful university students *have* to do this; it's a procedure *you* should get in the habit of practicing *now*.

12. Don't Rely on a Calculator for Basic Computations

Do as much as you can in your head. Memorize basic math facts. By grade 9, you should be able to do all of these things in your head:

- - multiply numbers up to 12×12
- - add, subtract, multiply, and divide integers (eg: $-12 + 17$)
- - do simple powers (eg: 2^6)
- - do simple square roots

That way, in senior high courses where the solution to a problem may take 15 minutes and a page of calculations, you won't be forced to use your calculator every twenty seconds to do a simple math fact. *The time you save by not using your calculator will save you many hours for other things! Like learning how to do those page-long questions!*