

Middle School **Study Skills Packet**

Dear Parents:

This packet is designed to help your student become better organized.

How well do you know yourself?

Think about your study habits as you answer these questions.

- 1: What time is it when I study now? _____
What is the best time for me to study? _____
How much time do I spend studying right now? _____
How much time do I need every day to study? _____



Here's how I can change my study time _____

- 2: Where and how do I study now?
Quiet room _____ Radio on _____ TV on _____
Take a break _____ I don't take any breaks _____

How would I study the best?

By myself in my room _____ Where the family can help _____ Where it's quiet _____

Here's how I can change my study habits _____

- 3: What subjects are easy for me? _____
What subjects are hardest or me? _____

Here's what I can do to make my hardest subjects easier _____

- 4: Do I use a calendar/planner to plan my study time? _____

Here's what I can do to change _____

- 5: Do I ask for help when I need it?

Here's what I can do to change _____

Organizing at Home

Turn off the TV and turn on your thinking power!

Choose a place to study

Find a spot that's comfortable
Study in the same place everyday.

Choose a time to study

Pick a time when you're most alert.
Study EVERY DAY

Plan how long to study

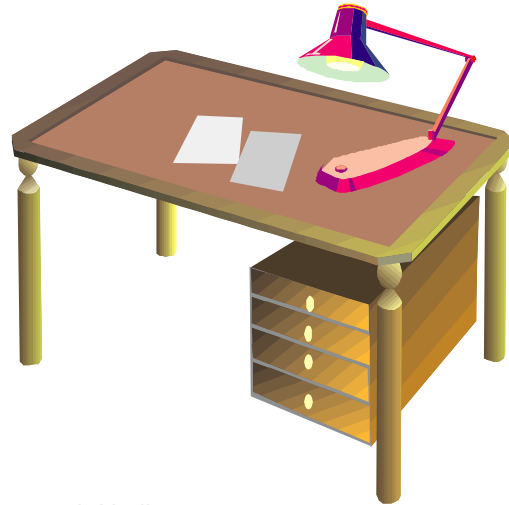
Study at least 90 minutes every day.
Study in short bursts, and then relax.

Gather your equipment

Get the supplies and references
Keep your supplies in one place
Make files of class work

Find a Study Buddy

Choose a friend or classmate to help you
Ask for help when you need it: Parents, Teachers or Homework Hotline



Turn off the TV and Turn on your Thinking Power!

Lots of teens think they can play The Study Game with only a few minutes preparation. Or they put off homework till it's too late, and then skip it completely. Why? Television. Too much TV watching is a big problem for many students today. It can keep even the brightest people from doing well in school. Don't kid yourself! You can't do your best thinking with the TV on. If you try, you'll pay the penalty in poorer work. It's the biggest favor you can do...for you!

Now that the TV's off, what else can you do at home to prepare for better grades?

Choose a Place to Study

Find a spot that's comfortable. Music is okay-but only at a low level in the background. Study in the same place every day. Get in condition and it's easy to follow this new habit.

Choose a Time to Study

Pick a time when you're most alert to study. Maybe you like to get your homework done as soon as you get home from school. Great! Maybe you'd rather relax for a while and study after dinner. That's fine too. The point is to choose a time, then make the most of it. Study every day. It's the mental workout that keeps you in condition and on top of your game.

Plan How Long to Study

Set aside between 30 (5th grade) and 90 minutes (9th grade) of study time every day. You may need more time, depending on your classes. Sometimes you'll have to study longer because of papers, projects or tests. You may feel that others study much less. But others may not have your goal of getting great grades!

Study in short bursts of about 20-30 minutes each. You remember things best from the beginning and end of each study session. So take breaks often to stretch, get a glass of water, a healthy snack, etc. It helps relieve the "brain drain".

Gather your Equipment

No athlete functions without the right equipment. Get a dictionary, atlas, almanac, pens and pencils. Get a typewriter if you can. Your parents may help with supplies. Check used bookstores and office supply stores for bargains. Keep all your supplies in one place where they're ready to go to work. Make files. Don't throw away any coursework until a class is over. Keep all returned homework, quizzes and other papers. Use this material for review before tests.

Find a Study Buddy

Choose a friend or classmate to help you with drills (language, vocabulary, etc.)

Ask a classmate who gets good grades for help in a subject that's hard for you. Exchange phone numbers so you can get assignments when you are out sick or need help on an assignment.

Concentration: Strategies & Skills

It takes a lot of concentration to put your game plan into action.

Physical conditioning

- Eat balanced snacks
- Exercise every day
- Get plenty of sleep

Visualize success. Think neat and complete

- Don't rush
- Write clearly and accurately

Do the hard stuff first. Use problem-solving techniques.

- Understand what you're supposed to do.
- Re-read all the instructions. Review class notes
- Say the problem out loud.
- Ask for help

Mental conditioning

- Acronyms. Rhyming. Association. Repetition

Lack of concentration can hurt your grades in many other areas of school besides reading. Is your mind wandering during class discussions – or worse yet, quizzes or tests?

It takes a lot of concentration to put your game plan into action. And doing better in school calls for some good strategic thinking.

The first step in improving concentration is getting in shape – and that means your mind and your body. With the right balance of mental and physical conditioning, you can perform at your best.

Physical Conditioning

Let's look at the physical side first. Nutritious food, regular exercise and plenty of rest keep your body (and your brain!) in top shape.

Don't skip meals. Always eat breakfast, even if it's just toast or fruit. It's important to eat something. How can you do your best in class with an empty stomach and a brain that's low on fuel?

Don't depend on sugar-loaded candy and soft drinks (refined carbohydrates) for energy when you're tired. Switch to fruits, vegetables and whole grains (natural carbohydrates) for snacks and meals.

Get some exercise every day. It relieves stress and makes your body function better...including your brain!

Get plenty of sleep. If you're sleepy in class, how much will you hear or remember? Plan to do your homework so you can get to bed early and feel rested in the morning.

Mind Over Matter

Positive thinking is a big part of conditioning too. Keep your spirits up. Be enthusiastic.

Practice seeing yourself turning in homework on time. Picture yourself passing a test or working an algebra problem with ease. See yourself winning that scholarship or award. Believe you can make the grade.



“When I was in school, one of the things that helped me learn was memory techniques. I still use some of these skills today. Joe Montana

Think Neat and Complete

Don't sabotage yourself by being careless or sloppy! Rushing can cost you a penalty you'll regret.

Write clearly. A neatly written essay test usually gets a higher grade than the same test written sloppily. Avoid messy cross-outs, margin scribbles, etc.

Write numbers accurately and plainly in subjects like math. Line up columns when you copy a problem so you'll get the right answer and your teacher can see it without having to guess!

Try These Problem-Solving Techniques

Be sure you understand what you're supposed to do. (Here's where writing your assignments can really pay off.)

Re-read all instructions in your Assignment Log.

Review class notes. Your teacher may have given you the formula or example you need to solve the problem.

Say the problem out loud. Hearing and seeing a question or problem often helps clear the way to a solution. Try working the problem backward. Sometimes it helps to go back over every step [of a problem]. See if you left something out.

Ask a parent or a study buddy for help if you still can't solve the problem. Call a homework hotline if one's available.

Concentration: Reading

Active reading will focus learning.

Know your textbook. Warm up before reading.

Think about what you're reading.

Visualize

Use the SQ3R method

Survey

Quickly skim the assignment
Read headings, captions, etc.

Question

Ask what you want to learn.
Ask questions teachers might ask.

Read

Stay busy. Take notes
Look up words you don't know

Recite

Answer the question you asked.
Say the answers out loud.

Review

Look over what you've read
Relate class notes to your reading

Reading takes up more homework time than anything else. Bo-o-oring, some people might say. Sure, if we're just moving our eyes back and forth across the page, doing nothing else. No wonder lots of people fall asleep, even with a good book! But reading doesn't have to be tedious or dull.

What can you do? Try active reading.

Active reading gives you the edge. It keeps you alert and helps even not-so-favorite subjects come alive. So you can step up to the challenge when it's time to write a paper or take a test and give it everything you got.

The key is concentration. This means focusing on what you're doing, getting "inside" the material you're reading, keeping your eyes on the ball.

Your textbook: The Silent Coach

What's in a textbook? Take a look. Your book is one of your most important study aids. So spend a few minutes getting acquainted with the books for all your subjects. It's well worth your time.

Title Page: What is this book about?

Introduction: This is a note to readers. Skim this section. What do the editors say about using this book?

Table of contents: How is the book organized? What's in it? What part are you most interested in?

Index: The quickest way to find the page where your book discusses a specific event, person, place, idea, organization, etc.

Glossary or vocabulary: This is the first place to look for the definition of an unfamiliar word used in your book. If you don't find it here, go to a dictionary.

Appendixes. Maps, charts, lists: See what's there. These special tools at the back of your book can be a big help as you study.



**To learn English or Elvish you have to READ!
Reading out loud helps you learn because you hear
and see what you are reading at the same time.**

Warm Up Before Reading

Your brain is an organ just like your heart and it works best after a warm-up. So when you've looked over your book and you're about to start reading, try this: Think about the subject you're getting ready to read.

Visualize. Studying about the Civil War? Imagine what the soldiers and civilians wore. Picture what you already know about that period. Now you're ready to step up to serve with a tried-and-true method of active reading.

Don't Like to Read?

Get ready to change that! It's easy to make reading interesting and fun when you read about what you like.

What are your hobbies? Do you enjoy football or fashion? Rock music or rock collecting? Camping or cross-stitch? Whatever your interests, there's plenty of reading material available.

Go to the library. Check your local magazine stand or bookstore. Borrow reading materials from friends.
Read Newspapers, Magazines and Books!

You can often use your "fun" reading for schoolwork too. The articles you've been reading about your favorite quarterback could be the basis of an essay for language arts. The historical novel you're reading could be the subject for a social studies book report.

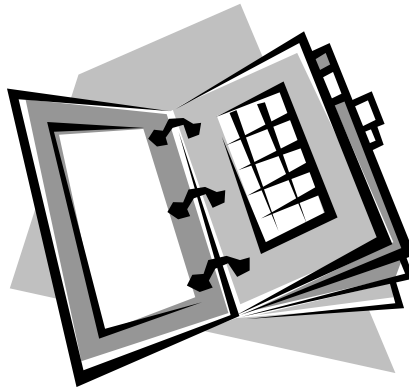
Everything You Read Makes You a Better Reader!

7 Ways to Organize Your Materials

Have you ever left your homework at school? Have you ever lost a book? Well, keep reading: You'll find seven helpful ways to organize your materials...so you don't forget!

1. Use an assignment notebook? Planner? It's great for:

- Writing down each homework assignment
- Remembering which books to take home
- Remembering to do all your homework



2. Use one binder for your class notes? Here are some tips:

- Put the date on each page. Then you'll know when you took your notes.
- Use the three-ring binder with tab dividers for different subjects. Then all your notes for all your subjects will be in one place.

3. Do you code your notebooks, textbooks, and workbooks? A color or design code will help you find all your books in your locker. Then you won't forget to take anything home! Here's how to use a code:

- If you use a three-ring binder, color or design-code the tab dividers to match your textbook and workbook for each subject.
- Be sure to label each tab with the subject name.

If you use a different notebook for each subject:

- Choose a color or special design for each subject. Use one color or design on each notebook, textbook, and work book for that subject. Then, all your books for English will look the same; all your books for Math will look the same, etc.
- If you choose a special design for each subject, cover your textbook with brown grocery bag paper. Draw the design for that subject on the cover. Also write the subject name on the brown cover, such as ENGLISH. Draw the same design on that subjects' notebook and workbook and label them.
- If you choose a color for each subject, cover your textbook and workbook with colored paper. Make your notebook the same color. If you don't have colored paper, use brown grocery bag paper. Then, use markers to give you the color you chose.



4. Do you keep your papers your teachers return to you? These papers can really help you.

- They can help you review for tests.
- They can help you write reports.
- Put them in subject folders that are coded the same as your other books.
- File the papers by date.

7 Ways to Organize Your Materials (cont.)

5. How do you carry your books to school?

- If you use a back pack or book bag, clean it out every day. That way, you won't lose your books or your homework.
- If you don't use a backpack, make sure loose papers are in your notebooks before you go outside. Books are heavy enough without chasing after papers in the wind!

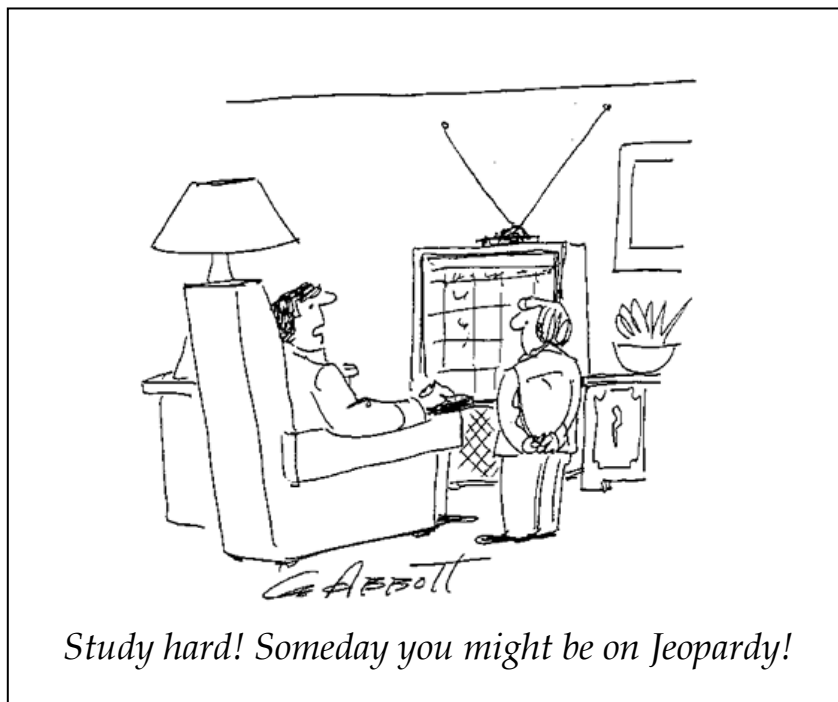


6. Do you have identifying information on your books?

- Label your books, notebooks, workbooks, assignment notebook, folders, and your backpack with:
 - a) Your name
 - b) The name of the book
 - c) The name of the class
 - d) The period you have the class
 - e) The name of the teacher
 - f) The room where the class meets.

7. Can you find things in your locker? The codes on your books will help. Here are some other tips.

- Keep your locker as neat as possibly by throwing junk away each day.
- If you share a locker, decide which part is yours. Then you can keep all your books and materials together.
- Use grocery bags, plastic bags, or small cartons to organize your part of a shared locker.
- Loose paper, pens, books, and folders can turn your locker into a jumbled mess



Tips to Effectively Study for Tests

- **Begin Early**

Start at least 1 week prior to a unit test and 1-2 weeks prior to a final. This way you, not the test, will be in command.

- **Identify trouble spots:**

Work on understanding trouble spots first. Don't hesitate to look to other sources (including your teacher) for help.

- **Study in spurts:**

Several one-hour reviews are much more effective than one marathon cram session.

- **Be Tricky**

Mnemonic (ne-mon-ic) devices are extremely effective. Make up a sentence (or word) with the same initial letters as the list you need to memorize. For example, "Roy G Biv" = red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet.)

- **Don't Stare – Be Active**

Outline, diagram, re-word, and condense main ideas, recite lists aloud. The more different ways you see and use the information, the better you'll remember it.

- **Pay Attention**

Don't ignore in-class reviews. Listen for clues like, "There are several reasons that", "This relates to", and of course, "This is on the test".

- **Index It**

If there's something you just can't get, write it down on an index card. Carry the card with you everywhere and go over it every chance you get – between classes, on the bus, just before bed, etc.

- **Make Up Your Test**

As you study look for points that would make good test questions. Write them down and test yourself as your review.

- **Do It All**

Go through all materials at least once the night before, and skim your notes just before the test.

- **Sleep On It**

Don't pull an all-nighter just to fall asleep during the test. You'll do much better after a good night's sleep. It helps to eat something shortly before the test.

*Before you say "I can't".....say "I WILL!"
Then give it your best shot!*



PARENTS, YOU MAKE THE DIFFERENCE!!

How to Help Your Student Make the Grade

- **Your attitude towards school is very significant in your child's mind. Always be positive about school and the value of getting an education.**
- **Education Counts**
 - **Knowledge is power! It provides choices for people.**
 - A young person with a college degree will earn four times as much money as a young man or woman without it. (See attached cost worksheet)
 - When students stay in school, work hard and graduate, they open up for themselves a broader world to live in.
- **Don't Let Your Child Miss School**
 - Do whatever it takes to keep your child in school. This may even mean taking a day or so off from work to sit with your child in the classroom if he or she has been 'ditching' school.
 - Be sure your child gets to school on time. Students who are continually late arriving to school get so far behind in schoolwork they give up trying.
 - Be sure to buy an alarm clock and allow plenty of time for your student to get up, eat a healthy breakfast and arrive to school on time.
- **Great Expectations**
 - A study conducted by the University of Florida indicates that one of the most important things parents can do for children is to expect them to achieve in school.
 - When parental expectations are combined with teacher expectations, students DO ACHIEVE.
 - Encourage and support through positive communication and action. Negative comments may help you vent frustrations, but they don't help your student grow and learn.
 - Be sincere and truly expect the very best from your children. They won't let you down.
- **Focus on Strengths**
 - Find activities that your student can excel in and enjoy, and then support their continued success in these areas. "The key is to help your student develop his or her own identity in terms of the things he or she does well."
- **Become Involved**
 - Attend Back-To-School night.
 - Know the dates of all parent conferences and when progress report notices will be sent home. Remember that good news travels fast, but bad news may not travel at all.
 - Ask and write down how much homework is expected and how much time should be spent on it each night. If you are a non-English speaking parent, take an English speaking teenager along with you.
- **Limit Television, Phone Calls, Video and Computer Games**
 - Studies indicate that the average child watches more than six hours of television A DAY! That's more time than they spend at school in the classroom.
 - Studies also show that the kids who do best in school watch the least amount of television. Instead, they read a book, do their homework or go for a walk.
 - Set a positive example by reading books, newspapers and magazines instead of watching TV yourself.



How to Help Your Student Make the Grade (cont.)

➤ **Balance Work and Play**

- Personal satisfaction and happiness are important qualities in the successful learner. “Never underestimate the value of play for creating energy and renewal for less enjoyable, but necessary tasks.

➤ **Values are Vital**

- Students no longer support traditional sources of authority. Students instead turn to their peer group to decide what is right and wrong.
- Students still look to their parents as role models, but what they see today is “winning is everything”, a “me-first attitude” and a “get ahead at any cost” way of living.
- Teachers spend nearly 40 percent of their day dealing with discipline problems. Little teaching can go on in such classrooms; students suffer academically while teachers burn out.

➤ **Know the Teacher**

- Joining together with the teacher, you can make the most important difference in your child’s education.
- If a problem comes up, talk to the teacher first. Teachers appreciate you coming to them directly. Bring your child along for the meeting. Sometimes the message that goes home is not exactly what happened at school.

➤ **Teachers need a treat**

- Sometime during the school year, surprise your student’s teacher by sending a treat.
- Teachers want the best for your child and showing them you are pleased that they share this concern goes a long way.
- **Together, teachers and parents can make the grade.**



\$ How much is attending class worth? \$

Before we answer that, let's compare some lifetime earnings:

Eighth grade graduate	\$770,960.00
High school graduate	\$1,063,680.00
College or technical degree	\$1,674,880.00*
	*Based on 40-year work life, Bureau of the Census; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1998

Now let's figure the difference between a high school graduate and an eighth grade graduate:

High school earnings	=	
Eighth grade earnings	=	
Extra earnings	=	

Take the extra earnings and divide it by the number of years you attend high school:

$$\underline{\hspace{10em}} \div 4 = \underline{\hspace{10em}}$$

This is what you earn each high school year by getting a high school diploma.

Now let's look at how this breaks down per school day:

$$\frac{\underline{\hspace{10em}}}{\text{earnings each high school year}} \div 180 = \frac{\underline{\hspace{10em}}}{\text{earnings each school day}}$$

This is what you earn each day while attending high school.

Now, divide the money earned each day by the number of hours you spend in school each day.

$$\frac{\underline{\hspace{10em}}}{\text{earnings each school day}} \div \frac{\underline{\hspace{10em}}}{\text{hours in school each day}} = \frac{\underline{\hspace{10em}}}{\text{earnings each hour in class}}$$

This is what you earn each hour in class during your high school career.

Where can you get a job like that?



A Homework Guide for the Middle School Parent / Guardian

- ❖ Students will usually have 45 to 90 minutes of homework each night. This could reach upwards of two hours (1/2 hour each: History, English, Math, Science, Band, Foreign Language or other elective).
- ❖ Set aside at least one hour each night for studying. Often students will say that they don't have any homework, or that they did it in Alpha. If so, have them read, write, or organize their notebook during this study time. This is an important habit to get into. (Read a book, magazine, write a letter, etc.) Note: Rarely is a student able to complete all of their homework in Alpha.
- ❖ Encourage school sponsored Homework Club or Tutoring. There are teachers who will answer questions and help students during this time. They also have access to the library resources for projects.
- ❖ Check your student's Planner. Make sure your student has at least one "Study Buddy" in each academic class.
- ❖ Be aware of any large projects that have been assigned. Students receive plenty of time to complete large projects, but they may need help organizing and budgeting time.
- ❖ Keep a separate homework file (manila file folder). Often students do their homework but fail (forget?) to turn it in!! It's lost, misfiled or left at home, etc. Using a single, separate file labeled "Homework File" enables students to keep track of, and easily find their homework.
- ❖ The district has an updated "Paid" tutor list available. Please contact the counseling office if you would like a list.
- ❖ A "Weekly Progress Report" is available at the parent request. The request form is located in the counseling office. Call or stop by the counseling office and we will see to it that your son/daughter gets a full supply of Weekly Progress Reports.



Weekly Planner

Week of _____

- Make a daily schedule.
- Determine when you are in class, practice, babysitting, or doing chores.
- Plan the best time each day for homework and write it on the planner!
- Allow at least 1½ to 2 hours per day for homework.
- Look at all the free time you still have.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
5:00 a.m.					
6:00 a.m.					
7:00 a.m.					
8:00 a.m.					
9:00 a.m.					
10:00 a.m.					
11:00 a.m.					
12:00 p.m.					
1:00 p.m.					
2:00 p.m.					
3:00 p.m.					
4:00 p.m.					
5:00 p.m.					
6:00 p.m.					
7:00 p.m.					
8:00 p.m.					
9:00 p.m.					
10:00 p.m.					

- Make a daily schedule.
- Determine when you are in class, practice, babysitting, or doing chores.
- Plan the best time each day for homework and write it on the planner!
- Allow at least 1½ to 2 hours per day for homework.
- Look at all the free time you still have.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
5:00 a.m.					
6:00 a.m.	Wake up	Wake up	Wake up	Wake up	Wake up
7:00 a.m.	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
8:00 a.m.	School	School	School	School	School
9:00 a.m.	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
10:00 a.m.	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
11:00 a.m.	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
12:00 p.m.	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
1:00 p.m.	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
2:00 p.m.	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
	Go home	School Club	Go home	Go home	Go home
3:00 p.m.					
	Practice	Study	Practice	Study	Study
4:00 p.m.	Sports/Music	Study	Practice	Study	Study
	Practice	Study	Practice	Study	Study
5:00 p.m.	Study	Chores	Study	Chores	Study
	Study	Chores	Study	Chores	Study *
6:00 p.m.	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner
	Study	Free time	Study	Study	Free time
7:00 p.m.	Study	Free time	Study	Study	Free time
	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time
8:00 p.m.	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time
	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time
9:00 p.m.	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time
	Go to bed	Go to bed	Go to bed	Go to bed	Free time
10:00 p.m.					Go to bed

* Do a lot of studying during the week and free up your weekends to have fun with your family!