

**Your success** as a high school student will depend a great deal on how efficiently you use study skills at home and how well you develop learning strategies at school.

The Tennessee Education Association has collected these tips from classroom teachers to help you reach your full potential in high school.



## Study Skills

### Get Organized

- ◆ Use a “daily planner” for noting daily assignments, due dates for papers and projects, and other special activities.
- ◆ Have a notebook for every course. Color code the notebooks so that you don't put the wrong assignment in the wrong notebook or accidentally get the wrong notebook from your locker.
- ◆ Minimize the number of extracurricular activities (sports, jobs, organizations) in which you participate. Too many outside-of-class activities leave you less quality time to devote to schoolwork.

**Study Daily.** Set aside a block of time each day to review previous material and to study new material. Don't try to cram the night before a test. Don't study for too long at one time. Instead, study in short blocks of time with a break now and then.

**Your study spot** should be well lit, comfortable and distraction free. The TV, stereo and telephone often prevent you from concentrating and make your study time less efficient.

**Think** of your daily study time as a way to avoid information overload. Used regularly and wisely, daily study time will reduce your stress level and help you improve your grades.

**Studying is your most important job** for now. The pay off will come in the form of passing grades and higher levels of achievement.

**Rest, relaxation, exercise and proper diet** are all important parts of your preparation for school. A high protein, low sugar breakfast is helpful for maintaining a constant energy level all day.



## Reading Textbooks

**Before you start reading** an assignment in a textbook, it helps to preview the material.

**Previewing** gives your mind an outline of the material you are about to read. The outline will act as a framework into which you can put the details of the chapter. Previewing is a way to help you remember what you read.

Previewing consists of these steps:

- a) Look at all the illustrations, graphs, tables, etc. and read the captions.

- b) Read all of the **boldface** words in the chapter. Topic headings and key vocabulary words are often printed in boldface.
- c) **Read** the first and last paragraphs in the chapter.
- d) **Briefly read** any questions, vocabulary lists, chapter summaries or chapter objectives if they are present.
- e) **Skim** the entire chapter. This means that you scan the material quickly, letting your eyes pick up words and phrases more or less at random.
- f) **Take brief notes.** Jot down words or phrases that are unfamiliar so that you can concentrate on them later.

**Use the glossary** to clarify the meaning of words in the text.

**Use the index** to locate a particular topic or subject in the text.



## Reading Environment

**Read** in a distraction-free environment. Find an area where you can have uninterrupted blocks of time. Your study area is also probably your best reading area.

**Read** sitting where you are the most comfortable, can stay alert, and are able to focus on the material to be read.

**Good lighting** is a must. Light should come over your shoulder to avoid shadows. However, don't read in a dark room under a bright light.

**If you can't read** for a reasonable time without getting tired, restless or straining your eyes, you *may* have a vision problem. Have your eyes tested if there's any question. If you are supposed to wear glasses, *wear* them.



## Taking Lecture Notes

**Don't try** to write down everything the teacher says. Listen carefully until you understand the point that is being made, then write it down in your own words. Pay particular attention to examples.

**Listen** for leading statements. Examples: “The main point is...” or “Be sure to be able to...” or “The facts are...”

**Develop** your own personal abbreviations of words to facilitate faster note taking. Be sure you can remember what your abbreviations mean.

**Don't be afraid** to ask questions when you don't understand. If *you* don't understand, the chances are other people don't understand either.

**Go over your notes** during your regular evening study sessions while they are fresh in your mind. Add whatever you need to make your notes clear. Underline or highlight points emphasized by the teacher. If you let the notes sit until the night before an exam, they may make no sense to you at all. By looking over them while they are fresh in your mind, you'll have time to ask questions if you don't understand.



## Preparing for Tests

**Keep up** with your daily classwork and long-range assignments. Once you fall behind, it's hard to catch up.

**Take notes** during class review sessions. Ask questions about what types of questions to expect. If you don't understand something, *ask your teacher*.

**Pick out** the major ideas and concepts of the test material. Learn the key vocabulary words. Make flash cards of vocabulary or terms. Have someone test you on them.

Here are some other suggestions for preparing for a test.

- ◆ Get a good night's rest.
- ◆ Think positively.
- ◆ Eat a balanced meal prior to the test.

## Taking the Test

**Don't panic.** *Everyone* feels tension before a test. Tension helps you stay alert. Let it work positively for you. This is when your daily study time at home will pay off.

**Arrive** prepared with pencils, paper and other required tools for taking the test.

**Know the time allowed** for taking the test.

**Read the entire test** before you do anything else. This allows you to:

- ◆ Get rid of a few butterflies.
- ◆ Choose the easiest questions to answer first.
- ◆ Budget your time.
- ◆ Let your subconscious mind work on the tougher questions. You'll find that when you come back to them, the answers often pop right out.
- ◆ Pick up clues to some questions in other questions.



A quick preview reading of the entire test will save you time in the long run.

**Look for clues** in the test questions themselves.

- ◆ Use the process of elimination for matching or multiple choice questions.
- ◆ In true/false tests, look for words such as *all*, *always*, *never* and *none*. If you can think of just one exception, the question is false.
- ◆ For essay questions:
  - a) organize your thoughts first,
  - b) write down a few key words and points to make,
  - c) jot down a simple outline,
  - d) then write your answer.
- ◆ If you have trouble interpreting a question, think about the concepts that you studied. One of them will probably be the key to the answer.

**Don't spend too much time** on one question. Skip it and return to it later.

**Know if you will be penalized** for the number of wrong answers or scored only on the answers you get right.

## Course Requirements

For students beginning high school in Fall 2009 and thereafter

**Total Credits Required: 22**

**Math: 4 Credits**

Including Algebra I, II, Geometry and a fourth higher-level math course

**Science: 3 Credits**

Including Biology, Chemistry or Physics and a third lab course

**English: 4 credits**

**Social Studies: 3 credits**

**Physical Education and Wellness: 1.5 Credits**

**Personal Finance: 0.5 credit**

**Foreign Language: 2 credits**

**Fine Arts: 1 credit**

To expand and enhance the elective focus, may be waived for students not going to a university

**Elective Focus: 3 credits**

Math and Science, Career and Technical Education, Fine Arts, Humanities, Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB)

**Capstone Experience:**

Requirements to be determined by local Board of Education

**Educating Our Children,  
Engaging Our Parents, Empowering Our Schools**



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# Survival Guide



## for High School Students and Their Parents



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