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High School

# Study Habits for High School Success: Tips and Tricks for Underclassmen



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*In this article, [CollegeAdvisor.com Admissions Expert Laura](https://www.collegeadvisor.com/admissions-expert-laura-provides-some-tips-for-incoming-high-school-students-to-build-new-study-habits-and-succeed-in-their-classes) provides some tips for incoming high school students to build new study habits and succeed in their classes. For more guidance on the college applications process in general, [sign up for a monthly plan to work with an admissions coach 1-on-1](#).*

The first day of high school is an exciting new experience, but your first assignment can be a bit intimidating. This article will discuss the best study habits to set yourself up for success as you enter your freshman or sophomore year of high school.

While every single one of these study habits and methods might not work for everyone, this list covers some of the most common and useful tools and tricks for achieving academic success, acing that big test, and staying on top of your assignments!

# Create Active Work and Study Habits

## 1. Read with a pen in your hand.

Marking up the pages of your book as

you read can help you to remember the reading better. Highlight, underline, list observations, circle recurring themes, and write in definitions. When it comes time to write an essay or prepare for a test, you'll find half the work has already been done in the margins of your reading!

## **2. Take notes during class.**

This one might seem obvious, but especially if your school allows iPads or computers in class, it can be pretty easy to get distracted. Writing notes by hand in a notebook is the best way to remember content, and that can make it easier when studying for exams down the line. You'll feel like you already know it.

To keep yourself engaged, challenge yourself to write down five or ten bullet points you learn as your teacher talks. Then, you can go back and highlight anything you have questions about after class.

Try to make sure you write legibly. Nothing is worse than going back over notes that you just can't read... trust me, I would know.

## **3. Make flashcards.**

This is one of the oldest study habits in

the books... and there's a reason it's been around for so long! Testing yourself pushes you to learn content more actively rather than just reading the same paragraph over and over again.

Index cards are always on sale at the beginning of the school year, so it might help to pick up a few packs while you're grabbing other supplies. Then, you'll always have them on hand when needed.

# Study Habits: Practice Time Management

## 1. Create a to-do list.

If your brain is like mine and you take tremendous satisfaction from accomplishing a concrete task, try writing everything down that you want to get done for the day (or week) on a to-do list. Breaking down large tasks, like making a review guide, into smaller and more manageable tasks, such as reviewing one chapter at a time, can help you feel less overwhelmed. And you'll feel even more productive as you cross off each smaller task on the list.

## **2. Use the Pomodoro Technique!**

The Pomodoro Technique is a proven time management method that looks like this:

1. First, grab a to-do list and a timer.
2. Set your timer for 25 minutes, and focus on a single task until the timer rings. When your session ends, check off one “Pomodoro” round as done and record what you completed.
3. Enjoy a five-minute break!
4. After four “Pomodoros,” take a longer, more relaxing 15-30 minute break.

This can be a great way to set definitive times as “work” and “break.” Just follow the 25-minutes-on and 5-minutes-off rule, and after 2 full hours enjoy a nice, long 30-minute break.

## **3. Try deleting social media from your phone.**

This sounds kind of extreme... but it works for some people. If you find yourself too frequently falling down the TikTok rabbit hole, try uninstalling the app for a few hours, and then redownloading it at the end of your study session as a reward.

## **4. Break it up.**

Sometimes I can't stand to look at my assignment for one more minute. In those scenarios, the best thing to do is listen to your body and your mind. Go for a 20-minute walk, take a shower, eat a snack, talk to a friend, etc.

Remember to take breaks. You're more likely to feel study burnout if you don't allow yourself to walk away every now and then.

# Study Habits: Find the Best Study Environment

## 1. Find a space that works for you.

Maybe it's your desk, but maybe it's outside, or on the floor, or in the library, or even in a coffee shop. Figure out if you work better surrounded by people or if other people are too much of a distraction for you.

## 2. Avoid distractions.

Once you learn what distracts you (like other people, or social media) and what helps you focus (like music—try lo-fi beats or Alpha waves), you can

create the most productive space possible for your work time.

# Work with Others

## 1. Form study groups.

Team up with people from your classes to work together on collaborative review guides, or get together and do individual work. Sometimes being surrounded by a few other people who are also working productively can inspire you to stay focused.

## 2. Teach your friends and family.

Sometimes the best way to understand the material is to teach it to someone else. That way, when they ask you questions about the subject, you'll be testing your depth of knowledge. You can also see what material you might need to review.

A good rule of thumb for this method is if you can't explain a concept to someone else, like a parent, then you might struggle to explain that concept during an exam.

## 3. Ask for help.

That's what teachers are for! If you have a question about the material, make an appointment (whether in person or online) before or after school, or during a study period. Teachers are more than willing to help explain a concept. Chances are, they'll be glad that you took initiative and are excited about mastering the material.

Plus, it can never hurt to start forming a good relationship with a teacher early on. They may be able to help you out when it comes time for college applications.

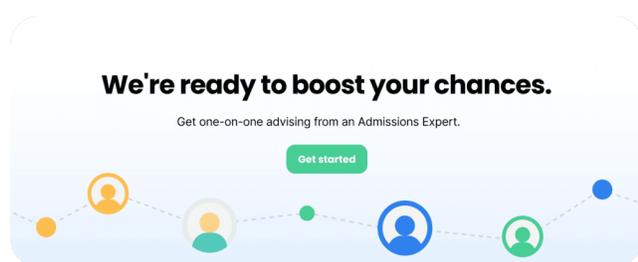
## Final Thoughts

Don't feel disheartened if the jump from middle school to high school feels more challenging than you expected. If the feedback you're getting about study habits—whether via teachers or via grades—shows that you might need to switch things up, don't be afraid to revolutionize your methods and try something totally new!

And remember, different things work for different people. Some people work best with others around them, and some need total silence. Some people like to talk through concepts with parents or friends, and some people prefer to self-test with flashcards.

Keep in mind that you cannot compare yourself to others when it comes to academics, even though it can be challenging not to do so.

Most importantly, when entering ninth or tenth grade, focus on finding the methods that work for *you*, not for someone else. Once you unlock the key to your best academic habits, you'll be in a great place as you look to the future ahead!



*This article on best study habits for middle schoolers transiting to high school was written by Laura Frustaci, Harvard University '21. If you want to get help with your college applications from Laura or other CollegeAdvisor.com Admissions Experts, register with CollegeAdvisor.com today.*



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