



How To Get Good Grades In Ten Easy Steps

This book is full of helpful
advice and practical tips that will
help you succeed in school.



Woodburn Press
P.O. Box 329
Dayton, Ohio USA 45409
www.woodburnpress.com



How To Get Good Grades

In Ten Easy Steps

Woodburn Press



Step Six - Know How to Read a Textbook

When you know how to read a textbook, you understand and remember what you read.

Textbook authors have already done a lot of your work for you. They have inserted subtitles that tell you what you're going to be reading about. They've put all of the important words in **bold** or *italic* print, and they've added pictures, charts, graphs, lists of vocabulary words, summaries, and review questions. The textbook authors have provided these "learning tools" in order to make it easier for you to understand and remember the information they're presenting.

In this section, you will discover how to use these learning tools. You will also learn how to **Scan**, **Read**, and **Review**. Knowing how to scan, read, and review will help you remember what you read.



Scan. Scanning gives you a quick overview of the material you're going to be reading. To scan, read the title, the subtitles, and everything in **bold** and *italic* print. Look at the pictures, graphs, and charts and read the introduction, the review questions, and the summary.

On the following page is an article about the Beatles taken from a music history textbook. If you were to scan this page, you would read the title and each of the section headings: **The Beatles dominate the music industry**, **The Beatles get their start in Liverpool**, **The Beatles change their image**, **The Beatles find success in the U.S.**, and **The Beatles go their separate ways**. You would read everything in bold print, look at the chart, and read the **Review Questions**.

Scanning provides you with a great deal of information in a short amount of time. (Look at how much you learned about the Beatles just from reading the section headings.) In addition to providing you with an overview of the material, scanning also provides you with an "information framework." Having this framework of main ideas makes it easier to understand and remember the more detailed information.



The Beatles



The Beatles dominate the music industry

The Beatles were a British rock group that dominated the rock and roll industry during the 1960's. The Beatles had an enormous impact on music. They were, in fact, the single most important component in the creation of the modern day "pop" culture. The four members of this dynamic group were **Paul McCartney**, **Ringo Starr**, **George Harrison** and **John Lennon**. Their playful, yet irreverent public image captured the imagination of an entire generation.

The Beatles get their start in Liverpool

In the summer of 1957, John Lennon and Paul McCartney began playing together in Liverpool, England. Later that year, Paul invited guitar player George Harrison to join the group. The band was becoming popular around the area and they were booked to play a series of concerts in Hamburg, Germany. The group perfected their musical skills in the Hamburg beerhalls playing standard American rock and roll songs.

The Beatles change their image

On returning from Hamburg, the Beatles were discovered by Brian Epstein. He became their manager, and he changed the image of the band, exchanging black leather jackets and tight jeans for collarless suits and a new style of haircut. In May of 1962, Epstein landed the Beatles their first recording contract. Shortly before entering the studio, drummer Ringo Starr was added to the group. The early Beatles' recordings were instantly successful, and soon the band was headlining tours.

The Beatles find success in the U.S.

In 1964, the Beatles' music was released in the United States. The sales were tremen-

dous, breaking all previous records. The band came to New York in April, where screaming fans met them at the airport, and 70 million people watched them on the *Ed Sullivan Show*. Throughout the 1960's the Beatles' popularity grew. Their *Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band* album was released in 1967 to unprecedented critical acclaim. A series of artistically creative and commercially successful albums followed.

The Beatles go their separate ways

By the end of 1968 the members of the group had begun to go in different directions. Paul McCartney continued to write "pop" melodies while George Harrison immersed himself in eastern spirituality. John Lennon grew more distant from the band as he grew closer to his wife, Yoko Ono. In April of 1970, McCartney released his first solo album and announced the end of the Beatles.

Throughout the 1970's, the Beatles' music continued to be popular, and they were constantly hounded to reunite. Lennon's death in December of 1980 ended such speculation. The Beatles were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1988.

Best Selling Beatles' Albums (in millions)

The White Album	16
Best of 67 - 70	14
Best of 62 - 66	13
Abbey Road	11
Sgt. Pepper	10

Review Questions

- 1.) How many Beatles were there? Which two were the first to play together?
- 2.) What year did the Beatles start their recording career? When did they break up?
- 3.) After their break up, did the Beatles ever reunite? Why or why not?

Read. When your reading has a purpose, it's easier to stay focused and you're better able to understand what you read. To give your reading purpose, try turning each subtitle into a question. For example, you could turn the subtitle, **The Beatles change their image**, into the question, "What did the Beatles do to change their image?" Keep your question in mind as you read, and when you finish the section, see if you can answer your question. Your question will give you something specific to look for, and it will help keep your mind from wandering. You will, therefore, remember more of what you read.

Before you start to read a section, look to see if there are any vocabulary words, names, places, or events in **bold** or *italic* print. Then ask yourself, “Why is this word, person, place, or event important?” You should, of course, have an answer to that question when you finish reading the section. For example, after reading “**The Beatles** change their image,” you should know who **Brian Epstein** is.

When you have completely finished your reading, you should also be able to answer all of the **Review Questions**.

Review. Okay, you’ve scanned and read the assignment. This is when most students will say, “I’m done,” and close their book. Taking a few extra minutes for review, however, will make a huge difference in what you’re able to remember later. When you review, you lock the information into your brain before it has a chance to evaporate.



To review, go through the same process you did when you scanned the material. This time, as you read the subtitles, briefly restate the purpose or point of each section to yourself using your own words. As you look at the vocabulary words and the words in **bold** and *italic* print, think about what they mean and why they are important.

If you really want to lock the information into your brain, review everything again a day or two later. When you go to study for the test, you’ll be amazed at how well you already know the material.

It may take a little practice to get the **Scan, Read, and Review** process down, but you’ll soon realize that this process doesn’t mean more work - it just means better grades.



Step Six Know How to Read a Textbook

- ▶ **SCAN** by reading subtitles, words in bold and italic print, summaries, charts, and review questions.
- ▶ **READ** with a purpose.
- ▶ **REVIEW** by scanning the material to check your understanding.



Step Seven Study Smart

Students who “study smart” find that they spend less time studying, and yet they get better grades.

Find a good place to study. Although it’s usually best to have one place where you study regularly, it doesn’t matter where you study as long as it has a surface for writing, it’s well lit, quiet, and comfortable. Your study area should also be equipped with paper, pens, pencils, calculator, dictionary, and thesaurus.



Some students need it to be quiet when they study; others like to have music playing in the background. If you like to listen to music while you do your homework, try playing classical music very softly.

“I like to listen to music while I’m doing busywork-type homework, but not when I’m studying.” Maria

“The library is a really good place for me to study. It’s quiet, and I don’t have any of the distractions that I have at home.” Greg

Get started. Getting started on your studying is often the hardest part. Don’t put it off until later, don’t make excuses, and don’t wait until you’re “in the mood.” If you have a hard time getting started, begin with something simple or a subject that you like.

Know your learning style. We all learn differently. Some learn best by seeing the material (visual learners) and some learn best by hearing the information (auditory learners). Some learn best by doing (kinesthetic learners) and some learn best through the use of technology. Think about how you learn, and adjust how you study accordingly.

Visual learners learn best from films, pictures, reading, and demonstrations. If you’re a visual learner, take notes, use flash cards and diagrams, form pictures in your mind, and use color in your notes.

Auditory learners learn best from presentations, discussions, films, and music. If you’re an auditory learner, read aloud, have discussions, listen to tapes, and review information out loud.

If you're a kinesthetic learner, you learn best when you're doing hands-on activities. Move around while you study, use objects whenever possible, and role play ideas and concepts.

If you're a technological learner, use computers, the Internet, and technology to keep you interested, motivated, and focused.

"I must be a visual learner because I have to see what I'm trying to learn." John

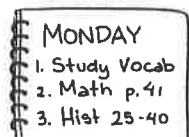
As a general rule, the more senses you involve and the wider variety of methods you use while studying, the more you remember. William Glasser, an expert in the field of education, stated that,

"Students learn 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see, 50% of what they see and hear, 70% of what is discussed with others, 80% of what they experience personally, and 95% of what they teach to someone else."

Organize your study time.

- ▶ Before you start to study, make a plan. Decide exactly what you want to get done, and the order in which you are going to do it.
- ▶ Prioritize your work to make sure you have enough time for the things that are the most important.
- ▶ Focus on one thing at a time.
- ▶ If you have something that seems overwhelming, break it down into smaller parts.
- ▶ Always allow more time than you think you'll need.
- ▶ If you have something to memorize, work on that first. Go over it again at the end of your study session.
- ▶ Do difficult assignments first, while you're still fresh and alert.
- ▶ Alternate types of homework (read English, do math, read history).
- ▶ Know when and how to take breaks. Research has shown that students learn the most during the first and last ten minutes of any study session. After studying for 20 minutes, try taking a short break (get a drink, get up and stretch, go for a short walk).

"When I study, I take short breaks between subjects." Brad



Know how to study for tests.

- ▶ Know what the test is going to cover so you'll know what to study. For essay tests, it's important to understand the big picture and to know main points and key facts. For fill-in-the-blank and multiple-choice tests, you need to know more detailed information.
- ▶ Have all of your reading done ahead of time.
"I try to get all of the reading done a couple of days before the test. Then I just need to skim and review." Greg
- ▶ Pay particularly close attention in class the day before a test. This is when teachers often go over information that you need to know.
- ▶ If your textbook has review questions, know the answers to all of these questions. Also, go through your textbook and make sure you know the meanings of all the words in **bold** and *italic* print.
- ▶ When reviewing a topic, ask yourself, Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How (5Ws + H).
- ▶ If a teacher gives you a review sheet, study it until you know everything on it. Then use it to come up with questions that might be on the test.
- ▶ You really know something if you can explain it in your own words. Try teaching the material to yourself in front of a mirror.
- ▶ Review often and review out loud. When you review, you move information from your short-term memory into your long-term memory. *Review is the key to learning anything!*
- ▶ Write down any names, dates, formulas, and/or facts you need to remember on index cards. Take these cards with you the day of the test, and go over them as often as you can before the test.

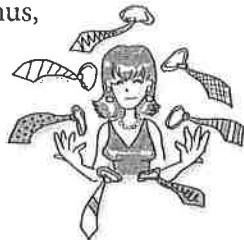


Use tricks to help you memorize information.

- ▶ Use flashcards to memorize vocabulary words, facts, and lists.
"If you have a lot to memorize, spread it out over a period of time, and just keep going over and over it." Brad
- ▶ Write down what you want to memorize and stare at it. Close your eyes and try to see it in your mind. Say it, and then look at it again. Do this until you know it.

- Before you go to sleep, go over any information that you want to remember. Your brain will commit it to memory while you sleep.
- Use acronyms to help you memorize. For example, the acronym HOMES can help you remember the Great Lakes (Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior).

- Use the first letter of the words you want to remember to make up a silly, ridiculous sentence. For example, if you need to remember the names of the planets for a test, just make up a silly sentence like, "My very elegant mother juggled seven ugly neckties." (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune). As soon as you get your test, say this sentence to yourself, and at the top of your test, write MVEMJSUN (the first letter of each planet). When you need to write in the names of the planets on the test, you'll have your memory cue ready.



- Look for an easy or logical connection. For example, to remember that Homer wrote the *Odyssey*, think, "Homer is an *odd* name."
- Information is easier to remember if it's grouped or categorized. Use lists and diagrams to group related terms, facts, and ideas.
- Use ridiculous, unforgettable images to help trigger your memory. For example, a ridiculous image could help you remember that Hawthorne wrote *The Scarlet Letter*. Just visualize a large red letter "A" with a big thorn sticking in it saying "Ha!" It can be fun coming up with your own ridiculous images, and they work.

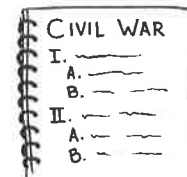


Use tricks when making a presentation or speech.

- Use props when possible. Props (posters, books, sports equipment) give you something to look at and something to do with your hands. You can also put notes on the back of your props.
- To help add enthusiasm and energy to your voice, pretend that you're telling your best friend something really important.
- Good speakers make eye contact with the people in their audience. If this is difficult for you to do, look at their foreheads instead.

Know how to write a paper. The key to writing a good paper is to spread it out over as much time as possible. Writing a paper should be a process, not a one-time event. When you have a paper to write, go through the following ten steps.

1. Choose a topic.
2. Gather information.
3. Make an outline.
4. Write a rough draft.
5. Read your paper out loud.
6. Think of ways to improve your paper, and then rewrite it.
7. Have someone else read it.
8. Write the final draft.
9. Check for spelling and grammatical errors.
10. Make sure your paper looks neat, and turn it in on time.



When you're writing a paper, it's very important to put it away at least once or twice. When you take it out and read it again, you'll see and hear things that you didn't notice before.

Be sure to always identify another person's words or ideas by using quotation marks or footnotes. If you present another person's words or ideas as your own, it's the same as cheating. It's called plagiarism.



Step Seven Study Smart

- Find a good place to study.
- Get started.
- Know your learning style.
- Organize your study time.
- Know how to study for tests.
- Use tricks to help you memorize information.
- Use tricks when making a presentation or speech.
- Know how to write a paper.





Step Eight Be a Good Test Taker

To do well on any test, you must study hard and be prepared. You can further improve your test performance by using these test-taking tips.

Get off to a good start. Have everything you need for the test with you when you go to class (pencil, erasable pen, calculator). If you have a couple of minutes before the test starts, try to relax.

As soon as you get your test, write anything that you want to remember (facts, dates, equations, formulas) at the top of your test. Put your name on the test, and read the directions carefully.

Develop a plan. Before you begin answering questions, quickly look over the entire test and develop a plan. For example, if a one-hour test has 25 multiple-choice questions and 2 essay questions, you could plan to spend 10 minutes on the multiple-choice questions, 20 minutes on each essay question, and 10 minutes checking over your answers.

Mark the questions that you want to return to. Put a dot or light check mark by any answer that you aren't sure of. After you've gone through all of the questions, go back to the ones that you've marked, and try them again.

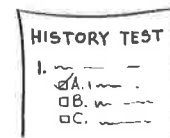
Don't spend a lot of time on difficult questions, and don't panic if you don't know the answers to the first few questions. Sometimes it takes a few minutes for your brain to get in gear.

"If you're not sure of an answer, always go with your first instinct." Greg

Increase your odds on multiple-choice questions.

- ▶ When you read a multiple-choice question, try to come up with the answer in your head, before you look at the answer choices.
- ▶ If you're not sure of an answer, eliminate the choices you know are wrong by crossing them out. Then make an educated guess.
- ▶ If two of the choices are similar or opposite, one of them is probably the correct answer.

- ▶ Read all of the answer choices. At least a couple of the answers will probably sound like they could be correct. Don't be tempted to mark the first answer that sounds good.



"Use the test to help you take the test. Sometimes questions give you information that can help you answer other questions." John

Look for key words in true/false questions. Statements with *all*, *always*, *never*, *every*, and *none* in them are usually false. Statements with *usually*, *often*, *sometimes*, *most*, and *many* in them are usually true. Read True/False questions very carefully. One word will often determine whether a statement is True or False.

Know how to approach essay questions.

- ▶ Read each question and then start with the easiest one. This will help give you confidence. It will also give you time to think about how to answer the harder questions. Note how many points each essay is worth, and adjust the time you spend on each accordingly.
- ▶ Before you do any writing, do some brainstorming. Jot down the key words, ideas, and points that you want to cover in your answer. If you have time, organize your ideas into a simple outline. If not, just number your ideas in the order you want to present them.
- ▶ Begin writing. Use clear, concise, complete sentences and write neatly. In your opening paragraph, restate the question, and tell the reader what he/she can expect to learn from your essay. In your middle paragraphs, present examples, details, and facts to support the points you're making. In your final paragraph, restate the most important points, draw conclusions, and write a brief summary. Finally, reread your entire essay and make corrections.
- ▶ If you don't know the answer to an essay question, take a couple of minutes to write down what you do know about the subject. You may hit on something and get partial credit. If you don't have time to complete an essay, write your teacher a note explaining that you ran out of time. Then briefly list the points you would have covered. Again, you might get partial credit.



Improve your math test scores. 1) Before you start to solve a problem, try to estimate what the answer will be. 2) If you're having difficulty with a problem, try drawing a picture or a diagram. 3) Don't spend too much time on one problem. If you get stumped, go on, and come back to it later. 4) Show all of your work. Even if you get the wrong answer, if you were on the right track, you may get partial credit.

Be prepared for open book tests. To help you locate information quickly during an open book test 1) highlight your notes; 2) write down all of the information you know you'll need on a separate sheet of paper; and 3) put self-stick notes in your textbook to help you locate specific information.



Check your answers. If you have time, check all of your answers, even the ones you know are correct. You may have made a careless mistake. *Always use all of the time that you're given.*

Go over all returned tests. Once your test is returned, go over each question you missed and write in the correct answer. You may see one or more of these questions again. Keep a record of your test scores, and keep returned tests in folders.



Step Eight Be a Good Test Taker

- **Get off to a good start.**
- **Develop a plan.**
- **Mark the questions that you want to return to.**
- **Increase your odds on multiple-choice questions.**
- **Look for key words in True/False questions.**
- **Know how to approach essay questions.**
- **Improve your math test scores.**
- **Be prepared for open book tests.**
- **Check your answers.**
- **Go over all returned tests.**





Step Nine Reduce Test Anxiety

A little anxiety before a test improves your concentration and alertness. Excessive worry, or test anxiety, can lower your test score.

It's possible for students with test anxiety to get themselves so worked up that they can't think clearly. The brain, like a computer, contains a great deal of information. This information is useless, however, if you're not able to "access" it when you need it. Having test anxiety is like not having the password for your computer. The information is there, but you can't get to it.

To reduce test anxiety, study enough to feel confident that you know the material. Then try to replace the worry and negative thinking with thoughts that are positive and relaxing. Some of the following suggestions may help you.

- Start studying early. Cramming only increases test anxiety.
- Mentally practice going through the test. Close your eyes and see yourself confidently walking into the room, taking the test, answering the questions correctly, and receiving the grade you want. Go through this mental exercise several times before the test.
- The night before a test, review the material, and then get a good night's sleep. 
- Walk into the test with your head up and your shoulders back. If you act confident, you just may find that you feel more confident.
- Try these four common relaxation techniques:
 1. Take a deep breath. Then slowly release your breath, along with any tension. Do this until you feel your body relax.
 2. Start at the top of your head, flexing, and then relaxing each part of your body. 
 3. Close your eyes and visualize warm sunshine washing over you, melting away the tension, and relaxing all of your muscles.
 4. Think of a place where you feel very relaxed and calm. Close your eyes and visualize being in that place.

The more you practice these techniques, the better you'll get. If you continue to have problems with test anxiety, talk to your counselor.