

Ideas to Help Students Get Organized – by Marcia Gracia

As a student, it's always the perfect time for you to get ORGANIZED. Here are a few tips to help you manage your time, avoid clutter, set goals, and stay on an organized path to success.

GOALS

Set REALISTIC goals at the beginning of the school year, and break those large goals into mini-goals. Write these goals down on index cards and keep them in a highly visible place where you can see them every day. Writing down your goals makes them more concrete, and MOTIVATES you to keep working towards them.

DON'T RUSH

Wake up EARLY enough for school to arrive well ahead of time. If you need 30 minutes to get up, shower and dress, pad that time by waking up at least 45 minutes prior to your departure. To ensure you don't turn off your ALARM clock and go back to sleep, place your clock at the far end of your room. This way, you actually have to get out of bed to turn it off, and you're most likely to stay up.

PREPARE YOUR WARDROBE

Before you go to bed each night, choose, iron and lay out your clothes for the next day. This way, you'll be all set to dress and go in the MORNING.

AVOID CLUTTER

At the beginning of the school year, you have no clutter. Be careful not to BUILD clutter as the year progresses. Create separate folders for school announcements, tests that have been graded, papers you must give to your parents and so on. As papers become outdated, such as an event that has passed, TOSS them immediately.

MAKE TO DO LISTS

Always spend a minimum of 15 minutes per day, preparing your TO-DO list for tomorrow. In doing so, you will know exactly what tasks you have to accomplish the next day.

EFFECTIVE STUDY AREA

Designate a quiet, well-lit area for studying. Don't study in front of the television, or in an area of your home where you're bound to be DISTRACTED. Hang a "do not disturb" sign on your door. If you can't find a quiet spot at home, go to the library. In addition, you should study while sitting at a table or desk. Avoid studying in a very comfortable chair or a bed, which may cause you to feel DROWSY.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Get a good night's rest. This will ensure you are ALERT and ready to learn the following day. Eat three healthy meals each day, along with fruit for snacks. Don't overload on sweets, which cause many people to feel TIRED.

AVOID OVERLOAD

While you may sign up for extra school ACTIVITIES, such as basketball or cheerleading, don't take on too much. First determine how much study time you need. Then, choose one or two recreational activities that you enjoy.

USE A STUDENT PLANNER

Use a good student planner or organizer. The ones that have pocket folders, dividers, and planning calendars are ideal. You should also use ONE calendar to plan all of your school and personal activities, rather than two or more. When you use more than one, you run the risk of scheduling CONFLICTS and missed appointments. This is very important. Heed the old proverb, 'A man who wears two watches, never knows the correct time.'

COLOR-CODE

You may consider color-coding similar activities on your CALENDAR. For example, highlight all upcoming tests in yellow, study time in green and recreational activities in pink.

WRITE IT DOWN

When you learn of an upcoming test, event, or anything you must prepare for or attend, immediately jot it in your PLANNER. Don't wait for later, or you may forget about it.

STUDY TIME

Determine how many study hours you need, and SCHEDULE study time in your planner. For example, if you need six hours of time to study for a test, you may break that time up into six sessions, of one hour each. Choose the six days, and make a "study time" notation in your calendar. Set aside time every day for study, and make it CONSISTENT. For example, set your study time for each afternoon from 4:00pm to 6:00pm. Whatever you do, avoid last minute studying and cramming.

BREAK IT UP

Break up big tasks, into SMALLER, bite-sized jobs. For instance, if you have to study three chapters in your history book, study one chapter at a time each day. If you have to work on a project, break it down into three or four STAGES.

EAT YOUR BROCCOLI FIRST

Imagine eating your dessert before your broccoli. What would be left for you to look forward to? Just the same, do your homework for your most DIFFICULT subjects first. Then, everything else will be a breeze, and therefore, more enjoyable.

GET ASSISTANCE

If you don't understand a lesson, immediately ask for HELP. Don't let it get to the point that you're totally confused. A sibling, friend, parent or teacher can be a lifesaver.

WHOOPS!

If you find yourself getting off track, simply take a deep breath and get BACK on track. It is better to get slightly off the path, rather than giving up.

REWARD YOURSELF

Designate enticing rewards for each goal you set, such as a night at the movies, or a quiet, relaxing walk in the park. As you achieve each of your goals, reap your rewards. This will keep you MOTIVATED throughout the year.

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