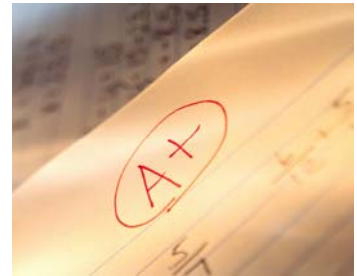


Becoming a Better Student

Who is responsible for your grades?

That's right—you are!

Perhaps you've wanted to get better grades and just didn't know how. But science shows that every student can improve learning with good study habits, practice, and hard work. You can actually grow your brain!



Success in school depends more on hard work and good study strategies than natural ability. In the long run, your ability to focus, set goals, and not give up is more important than how easy or hard school has been for you in the past.

While some students are better in math or music, and others do well in history or art, every student can improve his or her performance. It takes perseverance—not giving up. Are you ready to take the next step?

Decide Where You're Going



Although at this stage in your life, it may feel like everybody else tells you what to do—teachers, parents, coaches, and so on—you will soon make more and more of your decisions. You will decide where you want to go in life, what you want to do, and what kind of person you want to become.

Think about your long-term and short-term goals. Where do you want to go in life? How will you get there? Take responsibility for your choices and decisions. Make a resolution to become a better student, and then take steps to make it happen!

Distractions—or Doing the Right Thing?

Many things can distract you from putting your resolutions into action. Sometimes they seem like good or important things. Do you want to hang out with a friend or study for an upcoming quiz? Watch a movie or work on a research paper that isn't due until next week?

Successful people have learned to resist the pull of instant satisfaction—the desire to get what they want, right now. They say “no” to this desire because they know what is important for long-term success, whether it is studying for a test, showing up at a job, or saving money for a car. Look honestly at yourself—do you really want to be a better student? You will have to say no to distractions. Say yes to doing the right thing, the important thing.



Total Health

Many of the steps you take to become a better student will also result in a happier you. This is especially true when we think about your health.



Good nutrition and physical conditioning result in better circulation of the blood to all parts of the body, including the brain. If you take care of your body, you'll feel more alive and have more energy. Your body and your mind need adequate rest, good food, and regular exercise. Participate in a sport or get regular exercise three to five times a week.

Pay attention to what you eat. Too much junk food like pizza, soda, cookies, chips, and other snack foods will rob your body of health and energy. You'll feel better and work better if you eat a healthy diet with lots of vegetables, fruit, and whole grains, like whole wheat bread or brown rice. Drink water rather than soda. Read nutrition labels—you might be surprised at how much salt or sugar is in that snack! It's okay to have a treat now and then, but choose to eat a healthy diet every day. Better eating habits will help you for the rest of your life.

Set Your Goals and Celebrate Success

In an earlier lesson, you learned how to set priorities and manage your time. Later, you will learn more about how to set specific goals. If we break big goals down into smaller steps, it is easier to track success. For example, if you need to write a report, first you'll need to decide on a topic that interests you. Then you'll write a thesis statement (the main idea your paper is trying to prove). You'll outline your paper, write a rough draft, then review and edit it. Each step is important in reaching your final goal—a finished paper. Don't forget to reward yourself when you reach a goal.

Seek Out Supportive People

We all need friends, mentors, and people who will encourage our efforts. Find a study buddy you can work with or ask for help when you miss class. Part of succeeding in school is knowing *how* and *what* to study, and being part of a study group may help you.

Don't give up in your quest to succeed. The years you spend in middle school and high school are important, challenging years. But many people, including parents, guardians, teachers, and other school staff, want to see you do well. Don't be afraid to ask for help, and take the steps that will help you reach your goals.

