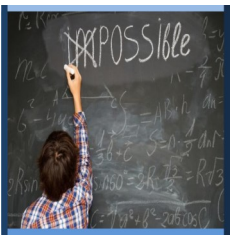
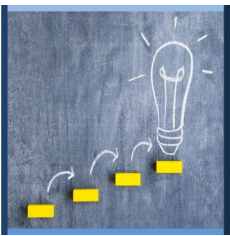


4S Skills for Secondary School Success



Student Manual

2025 Edition



Unit 3: Managing My Learning



High School Challenge Game – Team 1

High school involves many more challenges than students are used to in middle school. In this game you will be organized in small group teams to:



1. Read and discuss **your** challenge scenario
2. Identify the strategy that best captures the challenge (from the given list)
3. Write it on the board for the class to see (which team can be first??)

Challenge 1: It's just the second day of school and Tim already needs help. He has seven different classes to keep track of his notes and handouts and homework assignments. He can't find his algebra homework or remember what he was to do for English. There are weekly quizzes in biology but he can't remember which day the next one is on. Tim needs a strategy and plan for: _____

Challenge 2: Nora is excited to be on the junior varsity girls' soccer team at high school. The team practices every day after school. When Nora gets home, she is exhausted and falls asleep after dinner. When she wakes up around 8:30 pm, she still has homework and reading to do for her classes, but also wants to chat with her friends and watch videos. She hasn't turned in all her homework this quarter. Nora needs a strategy for: _____

Challenge 3: Katrina sits on the couch to start her homework, but her brother walks in and promptly turns on the TV to watch sports. She moves to the kitchen, but it is also busy, as her dad is beginning to prepare dinner. It is hard to concentrate on her work. Katrina needs help in: _____

Challenge 4: Jose opens his social studies book to read the first half of the chapter as his teacher assigned. He dives right into the reading and finishes quickly. The next day, when his teacher begins to ask questions about what the students have read, Jose realizes that he doesn't remember many of the important details. He needs a strategy for: _____

Challenge 5: Jamal listened intently and participated actively in a class discussion in his English 9 class. He thoroughly enjoyed the conversation. Now he has an assignment related to the covered content. Yet he is having a hard time recalling the rich details from the discussion. Jamal could use a strategy for: _____

Challenge 6: As Tameka looks over the biology test, she sees lots of concepts that are familiar. But she can't remember enough details to know which of the answer choices is correct. She also has trouble organizing her thoughts to write a paragraph for the short answer questions. She is not happy when she gets her test grade. Tameka needs: _____

Challenge 7: Juan is excited about entering high school and participating in many extra-curricular activities. He thinks he would like to pursue a career in healthcare, but isn't sure of his next steps toward realizing this dream. He needs a plan to make progress in school so he can get to where he wants to be afterwards. Juan needs a strategy for: _____

STRATEGY LIST

Managing Time and Setting Priorities	Setting Goals
Strategies for Remembering Information	Attentive Reading
Finding Space for Effective Studying	Taking Useful Notes
Getting and Staying Organized	

High School Challenge Game – Team 2



High school involves many more challenges than students are used to in middle school. In this game you will be organized in small group teams to:

1. Read and discuss **your** challenge scenario
2. Identify the strategy that best captures the challenge (from the given list)
3. Write it on the board for the class to see (which team can be first??)

Challenge 1: It's just the second day of school and Tim already needs help. He has seven different classes to keep track of his notes and handouts and homework assignments. He can't find his algebra homework or remember what he was to do for English. There are weekly quizzes in biology but he can't remember which day the next one is on. Tim needs a strategy and plan for: _____

Challenge 2: Nora is excited to be on the junior varsity girls' soccer team at high school. The team practices every day after school. When Nora gets home, she is exhausted and falls asleep after dinner. When she wakes up around 8:30 pm, she still has homework and reading to do for her classes, but also wants to chat with her friends and watch videos. She hasn't turned in all her homework this quarter. Nora needs a strategy for: _____

Challenge 3: Katrina sits on the couch to start her homework, but her brother walks in and promptly turns on the TV to watch sports. She moves to the kitchen, but it is also busy, as her dad is beginning to prepare dinner. It is hard to concentrate on her work. Katrina needs help in: _____

Challenge 4: Jose opens his social studies book to read the first half of the chapter as his teacher assigned. He dives right into the reading and finishes quickly. The next day, when his teacher begins to ask questions about what the students have read, Jose realizes that he doesn't remember many of the important details. He needs a strategy for: _____

Challenge 5: Jamal listened intently and participated actively in a class discussion in his English 9 class. He thoroughly enjoyed the conversation. Now he has an assignment related to the covered content. Yet he is having a hard time recalling the rich details from the discussion. Jamal could use a strategy for: _____

Challenge 6: As Tameka looks over the biology test, she sees lots of concepts that are familiar. But she can't remember enough details to know which of the answer choices is correct. She also has trouble organizing her thoughts to write a paragraph for the short answer questions. She is not happy when she gets her test grade. Tameka needs: _____

Challenge 7: Juan is excited about entering high school and participating in many extra-curricular activities. He thinks he would like to pursue a career in healthcare, but isn't sure of his next steps toward realizing this dream. He needs a plan to make progress in school so he can get to where he wants to be afterwards. Juan needs a strategy for: _____

STRATEGY LIST

Managing Time and Setting Priorities	Setting Goals
Strategies for Remembering Information	Attentive Reading
Finding Space for Effective Studying	Taking Useful Notes
Getting and Staying Organized	

High School Challenge Game – Team 3



High school involves many more challenges than students are used to in middle school. In this game you will be organized in small group teams to:

1. Read and discuss **your** challenge scenario
2. Identify the strategy that best captures the challenge (from the given list)
3. Write it on the board for the class to see (which team can be first??)

Challenge 1: It's just the second day of school and Tim already needs help. He has seven different classes to keep track of his notes and handouts and homework assignments. He can't find his algebra homework or remember what he was to do for English. There are weekly quizzes in biology but he can't remember which day the next one is on. Tim needs a strategy and plan for: _____

Challenge 2: Nora is excited to be on the junior varsity girls' soccer team at high school. The team practices every day after school. When Nora gets home, she is exhausted and falls asleep after dinner. When she wakes up around 8:30 pm, she still has homework and reading to do for her classes, but also wants to chat with her friends and watch videos. She hasn't turned in all her homework this quarter. Nora needs a strategy for: _____

Challenge 3: Katrina sits on the couch to start her homework, but her brother walks in and promptly turns on the TV to watch sports. She moves to the kitchen, but it is also busy, as her dad is beginning to prepare dinner. It is hard to concentrate on her work. Katrina needs help in: _____

Challenge 4: Jose opens his social studies book to read the first half of the chapter as his teacher assigned. He dives right into the reading and finishes quickly. The next day, when his teacher begins to ask questions about what the students have read, Jose realizes that he doesn't remember many of the important details. He needs a strategy for: _____

Challenge 5: Jamal listened intently and participated actively in a class discussion in his English 9 class. He thoroughly enjoyed the conversation. Now he has an assignment related to the covered content. Yet he is having a hard time recalling the rich details from the discussion. Jamal could use a strategy for: _____

Challenge 6: As Tameka looks over the biology test, she sees lots of concepts that are familiar. But she can't remember enough details to know which of the answer choices is correct. She also has trouble organizing her thoughts to write a paragraph for the short answer questions. She is not happy when she gets her test grade. Tameka needs: _____

Challenge 7: Juan is excited about entering high school and participating in many extra-curricular activities. He thinks he would like to pursue a career in healthcare, but isn't sure of his next steps toward realizing this dream. He needs a plan to make progress in school so he can get to where he wants to be afterwards. Juan needs a strategy for: _____

STRATEGY LIST

Managing Time and Setting Priorities	Setting Goals
Strategies for Remembering Information	Attentive Reading
Finding Space for Effective Studying	Taking Useful Notes
Getting and Staying Organized	

High School Challenge Game – Team 4

High school involves many more challenges than students are used to in middle school. In this game you will be organized in small group teams to:

1. Read and discuss **your challenge scenario**
2. Identify the strategy that best captures the challenge (from the given list)
3. Write it on the board for the class to see (which team can be first??)

Challenge 1: It's just the second day of school and Tim already needs help. He has seven different classes to keep track of his notes and handouts and homework assignments. He can't find his algebra homework or remember what he was to do for English. There are weekly quizzes in biology but he can't remember which day the next one is on. Tim needs a strategy and plan for: _____

Challenge 2: Nora is excited to be on the junior varsity girls' soccer team at high school. The team practices every day after school. When Nora gets home, she is exhausted and falls asleep after dinner. When she wakes up around 8:30 pm, she still has homework and reading to do for her classes, but also wants to chat with her friends and watch videos. She hasn't turned in all her homework this quarter. Nora needs a strategy for: _____

Challenge 3: Katrina sits on the couch to start her homework, but her brother walks in and promptly turns on the TV to watch sports. She moves to the kitchen, but it is also busy, as her dad is beginning to prepare dinner. It is hard to concentrate on her work. Katrina needs help in: _____

Challenge 4: Jose opens his social studies book to read the first half of the chapter as his teacher assigned. He dives right into the reading and finishes quickly. The next day, when his teacher begins to ask questions about what the students have read, Jose realizes that he doesn't remember many of the important details. He needs a strategy for: _____

Challenge 5: Jamal listened intently and participated actively in a class discussion in his English 9 class. He thoroughly enjoyed the conversation. Now he has an assignment related to the covered content. Yet he is having a hard time recalling the rich details from the discussion. Jamal could use a strategy for: _____

Challenge 6: As Tameka looks over the biology test, she sees lots of concepts that are familiar. But she can't remember enough details to know which of the answer choices is correct. She also has trouble organizing her thoughts to write a paragraph for the short answer questions. She is not happy when she gets her test grade. Tameka needs: _____

Challenge 7: Juan is excited about entering high school and participating in many extra-curricular activities. He thinks he would like to pursue a career in healthcare, but isn't sure of his next steps toward realizing this dream. He needs a plan to make progress in school so he can get to where he wants to be afterwards. Juan needs a strategy for: _____

STRATEGY LIST

Managing Time and Setting Priorities	Setting Goals
Strategies for Remembering Information	Attentive Reading
Finding Space for Effective Studying	Taking Useful Notes
Getting and Staying Organized	

High School Challenge Game – Team 5

High school involves many more challenges than students are used to in middle school. In this game you will be organized in small group teams to:



1. Read and discuss **your challenge scenario**
2. Identify the strategy that best captures the challenge (from the given list)
3. Write it on the board for the class to see (which team can be first??)

Challenge 1: It's just the second day of school and Tim already needs help. He has seven different classes to keep track of his notes and handouts and homework assignments. He can't find his algebra homework or remember what he was to do for English. There are weekly quizzes in biology but he can't remember which day the next one is on. Tim needs a strategy and plan for: _____

Challenge 2: Nora is excited to be on the junior varsity girls' soccer team at high school. The team practices every day after school. When Nora gets home, she is exhausted and falls asleep after dinner. When she wakes up around 8:30 pm, she still has homework and reading to do for her classes, but also wants to chat with her friends and watch videos. She hasn't turned in all her homework this quarter. Nora needs a strategy for: _____

Challenge 3: Katrina sits on the couch to start her homework, but her brother walks in and promptly turns on the TV to watch sports. She moves to the kitchen, but it is also busy, as her dad is beginning to prepare dinner. It is hard to concentrate on her work. Katrina needs help in: _____

Challenge 4: Jose opens his social studies book to read the first half of the chapter as his teacher assigned. He dives right into the reading and finishes quickly. The next day, when his teacher begins to ask questions about what the students have read, Jose realizes that he doesn't remember many of the important details. He needs a strategy for: _____

Challenge 5: Jamal listened intently and participated actively in a class discussion in his English 9 class. He thoroughly enjoyed the conversation. Now he has an assignment related to the covered content. Yet he is having a hard time recalling the rich details from the discussion. Jamal could use a strategy for: _____

Challenge 6: As Tameka looks over the biology test, she sees lots of concepts that are familiar. But she can't remember enough details to know which of the answer choices is correct. She also has trouble organizing her thoughts to write a paragraph for the short answer questions. She is not happy when she gets her test grade. Tameka needs: _____

Challenge 7: Juan is excited about entering high school and participating in many extra-curricular activities. He thinks he would like to pursue a career in healthcare, but isn't sure of his next steps toward realizing this dream. He needs a plan to make progress in school so he can get to where he wants to be afterwards. Juan needs a strategy for: _____

STRATEGY LIST

Managing Time and Setting Priorities	Setting Goals
Strategies for Remembering Information	Attentive Reading
Finding Space for Effective Studying	Taking Useful Notes
Getting and Staying Organized	

High School Challenge Game – Team 6



High school involves many more challenges than students are used to in middle school. In this game you will be organized in small group teams to:

1. Read and discuss **your** challenge scenario
2. Identify the strategy that best captures the challenge (from the given list)
3. Write it on the board for the class to see (which team can be first??)

Challenge 1: It's just the second day of school and Tim already needs help. He has seven different classes to keep track of his notes and handouts and homework assignments. He can't find his algebra homework or remember what he was to do for English. There are weekly quizzes in biology but he can't remember which day the next one is on. Tim needs a strategy and plan for: _____

Challenge 2: Nora is excited to be on the junior varsity girls' soccer team at high school. The team practices every day after school. When Nora gets home, she is exhausted and falls asleep after dinner. When she wakes up around 8:30 pm, she still has homework and reading to do for her classes, but also wants to chat with her friends and watch videos. She hasn't turned in all her homework this quarter. Nora needs a strategy for: _____

Challenge 3: Katrina sits on the couch to start her homework, but her brother walks in and promptly turns on the TV to watch sports. She moves to the kitchen, but it is also busy, as her dad is beginning to prepare dinner. It is hard to concentrate on her work. Katrina needs help in: _____

Challenge 4: Jose opens his social studies book to read the first half of the chapter as his teacher assigned. He dives right into the reading and finishes quickly. The next day, when his teacher begins to ask questions about what the students have read, Jose realizes that he doesn't remember many of the important details. He needs a strategy for: _____

Challenge 5: Jamal listened intently and participated actively in a class discussion in his English 9 class. He thoroughly enjoyed the conversation. Now he has an assignment related to the covered content. Yet he is having a hard time recalling the rich details from the discussion. Jamal could use a strategy for: _____

Challenge 6: As Tameka looks over the biology test, she sees lots of concepts that are familiar. But she can't remember enough details to know which of the answer choices is correct. She also has trouble organizing her thoughts to write a paragraph for the short answer questions. She is not happy when she gets her test grade. Tameka needs: _____

Challenge 7: Juan is excited about entering high school and participating in many extra-curricular activities. He thinks he would like to pursue a career in healthcare, but isn't sure of his next steps toward realizing this dream. He needs a plan to make progress in school so he can get to where he wants to be afterwards. Juan needs a strategy for: _____

STRATEGY LIST

Managing Time and Setting Priorities	Setting Goals
Strategies for Remembering Information	Attentive Reading
Finding Space for Effective Studying	Taking Useful Notes
Getting and Staying Organized	

High School Challenge Game – Team 7



High school involves many more challenges than students are used to in middle school. In this game you will be organized in small group teams to:

1. Read and discuss **your** challenge scenario
2. Identify the strategy that best captures the challenge (from the given list)
3. Write it on the board for the class to see (which team can be first??)

Challenge 1: It's just the second day of school and Tim already needs help. He has seven different classes to keep track of his notes and handouts and homework assignments. He can't find his algebra homework or remember what he was to do for English. There are weekly quizzes in biology but he can't remember which day the next one is on. Tim needs a strategy and plan for: _____

Challenge 2: Nora is excited to be on the junior varsity girls' soccer team at high school. The team practices every day after school. When Nora gets home, she is exhausted and falls asleep after dinner. When she wakes up around 8:30 pm, she still has homework and reading to do for her classes, but also wants to chat with her friends and watch videos. She hasn't turned in all her homework this quarter. Nora needs a strategy for: _____

Challenge 3: Katrina sits on the couch to start her homework, but her brother walks in and promptly turns on the TV to watch sports. She moves to the kitchen, but it is also busy, as her dad is beginning to prepare dinner. It is hard to concentrate on her work. Katrina needs help in: _____

Challenge 4: Jose opens his social studies book to read the first half of the chapter as his teacher assigned. He dives right into the reading and finishes quickly. The next day, when his teacher begins to ask questions about what the students have read, Jose realizes that he doesn't remember many of the important details. He needs a strategy for: _____

Challenge 5: Jamal listened intently and participated actively in a class discussion in his English 9 class. He thoroughly enjoyed the conversation. Now he has an assignment related to the covered content. Yet he is having a hard time recalling the rich details from the discussion. Jamal could use a strategy for: _____

Challenge 6: As Tameka looks over the biology test, she sees lots of concepts that are familiar. But she can't remember enough details to know which of the answer choices is correct. She also has trouble organizing her thoughts to write a paragraph for the short answer questions. She is not happy when she gets her test grade. Tameka needs: _____

Challenge 7: Juan is excited about entering high school and participating in many extra-curricular activities. He thinks he would like to pursue a career in healthcare, but isn't sure of his next steps toward realizing this dream. He needs a plan to make progress in school so he can get to where he wants to be afterwards. Juan needs a strategy for: _____

STRATEGY LIST

Managing Time and Setting Priorities	Setting Goals
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Getting and Staying Organized	

What I need to bring with me daily:

In class I need...	I need to bring home...

My personal organization system looks like this...

This is what I like about it...

This is what I want to change...

Daily Log

For each half hour write down what you did yesterday. If you don't remember, that's okay; just give your best approximation.

7:00 a.m.	_____
7:30 a.m.	_____
8:00 a.m.	_____
8:30 a.m.	_____
9:00 a.m.	_____
9:30 a.m.	_____
10:00 a.m.	_____
10:30 a.m.	_____
11:00 a.m.	_____
11:30 a.m.	_____
12:00 p.m.	_____
12:30 p.m.	_____
1:00 p.m.	_____
1:30 p.m.	_____
2:00 p.m.	_____
2:30 p.m.	_____
3:00 p.m.	_____
3:30 p.m.	_____
4:00 p.m.	_____
4:30 p.m.	_____
5:00 p.m.	_____
5:30 p.m.	_____
6:00 p.m.	_____
6:30 p.m.	_____
7:00 p.m.	_____
7:30 p.m.	_____
8:00 p.m.	_____
8:30 p.m.	_____
9:00 p.m.	_____
9:30 p.m.	_____
10:00 p.m.	_____
10:30 p.m.	_____

Organizing Two Student Schedules

Eighth grade is going to be a busy year for students at Northbrook Middle School. The school day starts at 8:30 and runs until 2:30. Most students walk or take the bus, and spend about half an hour each way commuting to or from school.



Anthony has decided to play on the soccer team, which practices Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons from 3:00-5:00. Games will also be scheduled during those times. It takes him half an hour to get home on the bus. Every Saturday he works at his uncle's store from 9:00-4:00. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, he has to come straight home after school to watch his nine-year-old sister until his mom gets home from work at 7 p.m. He knows that he has a research paper due in November. He'll have to block out several extra hours a week in October to research, write, and revise the paper. He also plays guitar and practices 30 minutes a day. He thinks he'll usually have two hours of regular homework every night.



Jasmine is also in the eighth grade at Northbrook Middle School. She has landed a role in the school play, which holds rehearsals Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday from 3:00-5:00 during October. She takes voice lessons from her drama teacher on Thursday from 4:00-4:30, and practices singing for 30 minutes four times a week. For exercise, she plays basketball with friends on Saturday and Sunday at 2:00. She

usually babysits on Saturday nights, and has a sleepover or hangs out with her friends on Friday nights. She has to do chores at home for two hours on Saturday, and goes to church from 9:00-12:30 Sunday morning. She also has the same English language arts teacher as Anthony, and has to turn in the research paper due in November, just as he does. She generally has two hours of homework a night.

Can you help Anthony and Jasmine organize their October schedules? Use the blank schedule sheet on the next page.

_____’s October Schedule

Help Anthony or Jasmine organize their schedules by using the sample appointment book page below. Fill in the appropriate spaces with his or her weekly activities.

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7:30 a.m.							
8:00							
8:30							
9:00							
9:30							
10:00							
10:30							
11:00							
11:30							
12:00 noon							
12:30 p.m.							
1:00							
1:30							
2:00							
2:30							
3:00							
3:30							
4:00							
4:30							
5:00							
5:30							
6:00							
6:30							
7:00							
7:30							
8:00							
8:30							
9:00							
9:30							
10:00							
10:30							

Study Habits Inventory

Habits that can help me succeed in school	I do this a lot	I do this at times	I'd like to try this	I doubt if this would help me
1. I regularly use a planner.				
2. I do my homework every night.				
3. I do my homework at the same time every night.				
4. I do my homework in the same place every night.				
5. I turn off the television and music while I do my homework.				
6. I listen to classical/instrumental music while I study.				
7. I use headphones to block out noise around me.				
8. I break up big tasks into smaller steps.				
9. I put my phone away or turn it off while I do my homework.				
10. I know how to refocus myself when I get distracted.				
11. I set nightly goals to help me finish my work.				
12. I let my parents/guardian know about upcoming tests or assignments so they can help me stay on track.				
13. I plan ahead to make sure I finish long-term projects on time.				
14. I have contact information for someone in each of my classes to call for homework help if I miss school				
15. I review my class notes regularly so I don't have to cram for a big test				

The Multi-tasking Brain?



Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many more students switched to doing homework and classwork on laptops, tablets, and even phones. One thing that is different about doing schoolwork on an electronic device is that there are so many possible distractions! Tiktok, YouTube and other videos, Instagram and social media, games...

they're all at our fingertips, right there on the screen with that English or math assignment. Sounds great, right? You can multi-task and have fun while you work! You can have it all!

There's just one problem with that plan: it doesn't work. You may feel like you're getting more done, but you actually accomplish less, not more. Unfortunately, our brains aren't wired for multi-tasking.

What happens next? It depends. Maybe you don't get enough sleep, and find it hard to pay attention in class the next day. Maybe you turn in work that's sloppy or just not your best effort—or you get behind and submit assignments late. Parents and teachers become frustrated, too—no one really enjoys being a nag!

So why does your brain have such a hard time with multi-tasking? Thousands of years ago, our ancestors needed to be highly focused to survive in their dangerous, unpredictable world. Their brains were designed to help them stay alive! And we inherited the same kind of brain—one that's meant to do one thing at a time.



Of course, sometimes it does feel like you're doing two things at the same time. However, that's not what's really happening! Instead, your brain is switching back and forth between networks—as if you were putting one conversation on hold to pick up another call. And, every shift costs time and mental energy. What's the result? Less work done, and less information remembered.

Now, turn to the next page to do a personal inventory.

Personal “Multitasking” Inventory

List all the “other” things you like to do during your time for homework and studying (for example, TV, music, answering calls or texts, TikTok, Instagram, snacking, web surfing, playing games, etc.). Discuss your list with your partner.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Based on Judy Willis, “Conquering the Multitasking Brain Drain,” Edutopia, 10.25.2016:

<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/conquering-the-multitasking-brain-drain-judy-willis>

Images: <https://pixabay.com/vectors/laptop-girl-woman-people-computer-40935/>

Brain by Wes Breazell from The Noun Project <https://thenounproject.com/term/brain/189789/>

Secrets of Effective Readers: Putting It into Practice

With your cooperative learning team or partner, discuss the following situations. Write your answers to the five pre-reading steps.

1. **Set a purpose for reading.**
2. **“Wake up” or activate prior knowledge.**
3. **Note text features (titles, sub-titles, pictures, charts, etc.)**
4. **Ask questions.**

A. Millie is searching the internet to find out about Red Cross babysitting classes for teenagers. She wants to take this class so that she can earn money babysitting.



1. What is her purpose for reading the web sites?

2. What might she already know about this subject?

3. What text features might she find?

4. What questions might she have?

B. Rasheed has to write a research paper for his history class on some aspect of Europe in the Middle Ages. He is interested in castles and other old buildings because his uncle is an architect who designs buildings.



1. What is his purpose for reading?

2. What prior knowledge does he already have about this subject?

3. What text features might he find?

4. What questions might he have?



C. Carlos was born in Monterrey, a city in Mexico, and moved to the United States as a baby. He and his family are returning to Monterrey for a visit this summer. Carlos wants to know about the history of this city, and what interesting things he can see or do there.

1. What is his purpose for reading?

2. What prior knowledge does he already have about this subject?

3. What text features might he find?

4. What questions might he have?

Secrets of Effective Readers

Imagine walking into a new house or apartment. You enter your bedroom, ready to put away your clothes. But you have no closet, no hangers! Furthermore, you have no dresser! No shelves! Nowhere to put your clothes! How can you organize your room? How can you ever find things if your clothes stay unpacked in boxes, or scattered around the floor in random piles? It's a big mess!



Your brain is like that room. When you learn new information—or read something new—your brain wants to file it with similar information. It wants to “wake up” the knowledge it already has about that topic, and connect the new learning to what you already know. That way, it can organize it, remember it, and retrieve it!

Before opening that book or looking at that informational web site, a successful reader prepares his or her mind to receive the new information. You may not always “see” how an effective reader does this—or be aware that you are doing this yourself. But practicing pre-reading skills can make a big difference in how well you learn.

1. Set a purpose for reading.

To prepare your brain for the new information, know WHY you are reading. What do I hope to learn? Do I need to find out something? Am I curious about this topic? Do I need to know this for a test?

2. “Wake up” or activate prior knowledge.

How does this connect to what I already know about this subject? Thinking about what I already know will help me understand and remember more of what I read.

3. Notice text features.

As I look over the text, what illustrations, captions, and headings do I notice? What words are bolded, and do I know what they mean?

4. Ask questions.

I wonder what the title means? What is this text about? What will I learn?



Why Reading Matters—and How to Be a Better Reader

1. What is your purpose for reading this selection?

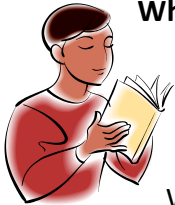
2. What prior knowledge do you have about this subject?

3. What text features do you notice?

4. What questions do you have?

Jack thought he knew how to read—or read well enough. But his science and social studies textbooks leave him frustrated. “I can’t understand them!” he complains. “And they’re boring, too!”

Jack is not alone. Many students have trouble reading well. Even if they understand individual words and can sound them out, they often don’t understand what the passage or book means.



Why Reading Matters

Students need to read well not just to get good grades or pass state tests. Reading well is a key that unlocks many doors. You can become a lifelong learner who is able to satisfy your curiosity, learn new skills and information, and find meaningful jobs.

What might you want to read? Many different kinds of texts help people improve their lives! How about a driver’s education manual so you can get your driver’s license? A review of a new movie? A new novel from your favorite author? A religious book that explores the meaning of life? A bus schedule so you can get to the mall or to an after-school job? You might want to find a recipe for chocolate brownies online or in a cookbook. Or read a manual that teaches you how to change the oil in your car. If your neighbor is from Turkey or Vietnam or Kenya, you might want to learn about life in that country. Maybe you’ll skim an encyclopedia article or look up some information online.

Adults Struggle, Too

Unfortunately, many adults can’t read well enough to cope with daily life. Over 30 million adults can’t understand a newspaper, read an advertisement, or fill out a job application. Half of our nation’s jobless youths ages 16-21 have the same struggles. Without effective reading skills, it’s almost impossible to find a good job.



What Happens When You Read

Reading is not mindless or passive. When you read, your mind is awake and active! Your brain is creating new pathways for learning. Scientists and researchers used to think that only young brains could grow new cells. But we now know that the human brain can grow and change throughout life. Young people's brains can make new connections in response to learning, practice, and stimulation.



Reading vs. Screen Time



You've probably noticed that watching television, YouTube, or TikTok is much easier than reading. It demands far less concentration. That's because when you look at a screen, your brain goes into neutral—almost as if it is partially asleep. It does not process or analyze the information it is receiving. It is passive, not active.

Studies show that fast-paced screen images may actually change your brain—for the worse! Even one or two hours of passive screen time every day can affect your ability to do well in school. Unfortunately, many people spend six or seven hours watching television or looking at devices every day.

What Successful Readers Do

Successful readers have a collection of thinking strategies to understand and remember what they read. They know *why* they want to read something—they have a purpose. They make predictions about what they will read, and connect it to something they already know (prior knowledge). They visualize or make “mind movies,” and ask questions while they read. They monitor their own progress and may reread a difficult passage, speed up, or slow down.

Do You Want to Become a Better Reader?



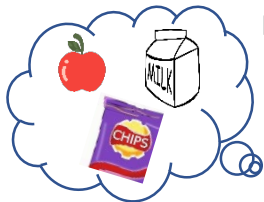
Many research studies show that if you read *more*, you will read *better*. In other words, practice makes perfect (or at least helps)! Did you know that reading alone for just 15 minutes a day can expose you to more than a million words a year? Think how much smarter you will become—and how you will become a better reader. Just as you practice basketball or the violin to develop your skills, practicing reading will make you a better reader.

No matter what your reading skill level is today, you can be a better reader—and then a better thinker. Michael King was a poor boy in the segregated South who attended school just a few months each year. When he decided to become a Baptist minister, he could only read at a fifth-grade level. But he loved to read and went to school at night to prepare for college. He eventually earned his degree, became a successful minister and political activist, and raised three children. You may have heard of one of them—his son, the famous Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



Help Your Memory Work Smarter, Not Harder

How many times have you taken a test and wished you could remember more of what you studied? We all struggle sometimes with faulty memories and overloaded brains. But it IS possible to remember more of what you study—and improve your school success!



Memory works in different ways. When you need a few items at the store, you may not write them down. You can remember long enough to get the things you need! But a week later, you probably won't remember everything you bought. Your shopping list was in your **working memory**. Your brain stored that information for a short time—just long enough to use it.

Now think about a favorite song from your playlist. It's much longer than the shopping list—but you probably know every word by heart! Why? It's easier to remember song lyrics than shopping lists—or the information you need for tomorrow's history test—for many reasons. The same principles will help you master knowledge for school, and move it into your long-term memory to use it in life.



Over and Over

You listen to your favorite songs over and over again. **Repetition** moves the lyrics into your brain! The more often you go over something you need to learn, the more likely you are to remember it.

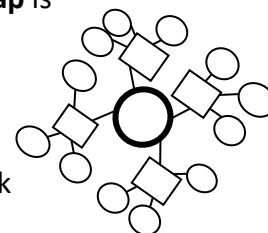
Yet reading a paragraph over and over may not help—it's boring, so your brain might go into sleep mode. You want to repeat the material in different formats, spaced out in time, and use it in various ways. What are some fun ways to repeat what you learn and move it to your long-term memory?

The Power of Pictures

You probably watch video clips of your favorite songs. Seeing a mental picture or mind movie helps wake up your memory to recall the words that match it. This is why graphic organizers are such a great way to study. And guess what—you can make your own!

To remember events from a history lesson, put them in order on a **timeline** or **sequence chart**. Or, use a **cause-and-effect chart** to show how one event leads to another. A **mind map** is another good way to show relationships between ideas, events, or people.

Drawing pictures—even stick figures—also helps put your visual memory to work. Tiny sketches will help you learn new vocabulary terms. If you need to learn the body parts of an insect for science class, copy or trace a picture from your textbook and label the parts.



Say the Words



Rhythm, melody, and rhyme—these are some features you may enjoy in the songs on your playlist. Those sound clues play a big role in making songs memorable, especially if you like to sing along! You can put the same features to work to remember things you study.

Always **talk to yourself** when you study, even softly, under your breath. When words come out of your mouth, they trace new paths that stay in your memory for a long time. This is especially true if you come back to say them again and again, taking breaks in between.

Mnemonics are special techniques to help you remember. To learn an ordered list, you can make up a sentence using words that begin with the same letters. Maybe you have to learn the first six American presidents: Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, and Adams. A sentence like this one: **Why Are Jugglers Munching Magic Apples?**—helps you remember where each president fits in the list. Make up sentences like this to learn names of planets, countries, or steps in math.

Rhymes and **songs** are also great memory aids. Maybe in elementary school you learned “Thirty days hath September, April, June, and November...” to learn which months are shorter than others. Create your own songs, poems, or raps to move new knowledge into your long-term memory.

Finally, if you have a **study buddy**, question each other on material you’re learning. Talking with a friend and putting information into words helps make it stick in your brain.



Get Moving!

Do you ever dance along while you listen to your tunes? Those moves also help you remember the song lyrics. Getting your body involved is another way to create strong memory paths.



Start by moving your hands. Writing things down by hand strengthens your memory better than typing on a device. This happens when you create graphic organizers and draw what you study. And studies suggest that creating flash cards by hand—and reviewing them regularly—is a better way to study than using an online app!

What are some other ways to learn by doing? Study partners or a study group can create a short skit to act out an important event they’re learning about in history, or a crucial scene from a novel. Even if you study by yourself, you can act out a scene in front of a mirror. You can represent a scientific model—such as the structure of a cell—using small household items.



Make It Personal



You also remember songs because they have special meaning for you. People remember things that touch their own lives. As you study, make personal connections with the topic. Did an event in history affect people in your family? Could new nutrition facts help you make wiser choices? Do you relate to the characters’ experience in a novel or play? Thinking about things like this will make new knowledge meaningful—and memorable.

When you move information into your long-term memory, it becomes available so that you can use it both now and in the future. It will help you succeed not just on tests, but in life. Strategies that use ALL your senses—sight, sound, touch, and even your feelings—can make long-term learning work for you.

Make the Most of Your Reading with SQ3R

If you were setting a physical goal for yourself—like wanting to run in a 5K race—you would break down your goal into smaller steps. The first week, you might run one kilometer a day. The next week, you would add a second kilometer. Finally, you would work your way up to running five kilometers. Breaking your goal into steps would lead to success.

You will be more successful reading a difficult or long text if you break the process into steps. Instead of reading a section of your textbook and wondering, “What was that about? Which facts are important? What am I supposed to remember?” you can take steps to master the text.

The SQ3R reading strategy can help you break learning into chunks so that you can understand it and remember it more easily. This method is the granddaddy of study methods; it was invented in 1941, and has been used for many years. Because it actively engages your mind before, during, and after you read, you will comprehend and remember more—and make the most of your study time.

SQ3R stands for **Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review**. You have learned how to do many of these steps as before- or during-reading strategies.

Survey: First, **survey** what you are going to read. To survey means to view, skim over, or examine. By predicting what you will find in the text, you will remember more details.

- Look over the text by previewing the headings, illustrations or pictures. What do they say?
- What does the title say?
- What do I know about this subject?
- What do I want to know?
- Read the first paragraph. Then read the last paragraph or summary.



Question: If you ask yourself questions about the text, you will look for—and remember—answers.



- Make the title into a question. Write it in your notebook. This becomes your purpose for reading.
- Are there questions at the end of the chapter or section? Read them.
- Write down any questions that surface as you read.
- Turn headings and subheadings into questions.
- Jot down any unfamiliar vocabulary words.

Read: Be an active reader!

- Try to find the answers to your questions.
- Annotate (if possible) with a highlighter or pencil when you find answers to your questions. If you cannot annotate the text you are reading, jot down notes in your notebook.
- Use context clues to figure out unfamiliar words. If you don't understand a passage, write down your questions.
- Adjust your speed as you read. If the information is not important, speed up. If it is important, or you don't understand it, slow down.



Recite: Talk to yourself about what you've read. (Yes, it is okay to talk to yourself. But if you are using the method during class, try to talk to yourself in your head rather than out loud!)



- Close your eyes and think about what you've read. Summarize.
- Try to answer the questions you had before reading. Reread to answer your questions.
- Test your understanding. What were the main points?

Review: Look back over the text to make sure you understand the main points.

- Have you answered your purpose for reading? Summarize information by discussing it with a partner, writing a summary, or creating a graphic organizer.
- Think or write about how this information can apply to your life.
- Review your notes within 24 hours, and again a few days later. You will remember much, much more if you do this! Don't wait until the night before a test to cram!



Name _____

Your Turn

Use the space below to create a graphic organizer (or a picture display) to help you remember the important points in the text “Make Your Memory Work Smarter, Not Harder.”

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.



Blank Page for Cornell Note Taking

A blank Cornell note-taking template. It features a vertical line on the left side, approximately one-fifth of the way from the left edge. Two horizontal lines cross this vertical line, dividing the page into three main sections: a top section, a middle section, and a bottom section. On the left margin, to the left of the vertical line, there are three small circles arranged vertically, corresponding to the three sections, intended for binder holes.

It's Not Too Soon

Congratulations--as eighth graders, you are the student leaders in your middle school. Next year you will go to high school, beginning the last leg of your journey through public education. Many eighth graders do not know that today is not too soon to begin thinking about what lies beyond high school. Will you go to college, vocational school, or the military? Will you seek employment? And will you be ready for these options?



Years ago, there were many good jobs available to young people with a high school diploma. Men and women were needed to build bridges, pave roads, and work in offices and factories using only the skills they had learned in high school. But that has changed. Today, many (if not most) well-paying jobs require some training after high school. Whether you decide to go to college, business school, or a training program, mastering certain skills before you go will help you.

One of these skills is note taking. What are the secrets to good note taking? Good note takers keep their notes neat and organized. If you can't read your notes the next day, they will not help you much! Second, to take good notes you must listen well and identify the main ideas—you won't be able to write down everything your teacher says, or copy all the details from the textbook. It's also helpful to use personal shorthand: abbreviations and symbols that allow you to write faster, like @ for "at" or → for "important!" Finally, good note takers go back to their notes and add cues or key words in the margin to help them study later. They may also summarize the main points at the bottom of the page.

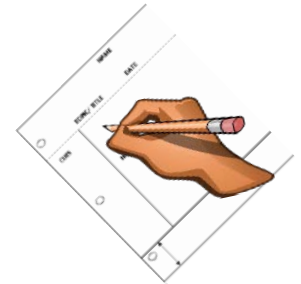


Photo by [Bruce Matsunaga](#)

How Students Take Tests

Are these students doing the right thing?

Read each statement and answer “yes” or “no” in the space provided.

- _____ 1. Joanna takes just a quick look at the directions on a test because she doesn’t want to take time away from answering the questions.
- _____ 2. Anthony carefully reads through the directions, even underlining important points. He then takes a few minutes to glance over the entire test before he begins writing answers to the questions.
- _____ 3. Even before James knows what the questions are, he turns the test paper over and jots down a few notes, formulas, and dates that he wants to remember. Then he looks at the test questions.
- _____ 4. In order to know how much time she can spend on each question, Keisha counts up the number of questions and figures how much time she has for the test, then divides the number of questions into the time to find out how long she can spend on each question.
- _____ 5. Tony is a clock-watcher during a test. He frequently checks the time as he takes the test.
- _____ 6. Amy answers the first few questions, then skips around, answering questions in no particular order.
- _____ 7. Lamar answers the true/false and multiple-choice questions quickly, but when he comes to the short answer questions, he slows down, jots down a few notes, and then writes his answers.
- _____ 8. Carlos moves through the test but gets stuck on question #15. He spends a lot of time thinking about this question, but no matter how hard he tries, he can’t remember the information he needs to answer the question. After several minutes, he goes on to the next question.
- _____ 9. Tonya can’t answer #15, either, but she leaves it and goes on to #16, planning to come back to #15 if time permits.
- _____ 10. Alicia finishes the test with seven minutes left. She uses the time remaining to begin her math homework.

Test-Taking Triumph

How do you feel about tests? If you don't like them, you're not alone—many people wish tests would just go away! However, a test can be a positive, helpful thing. Just like a big game or a public performance, a test can give you the satisfaction of a job well done, and can show you areas to improve on so you have a solid foundation for the next phase.



But does every test accurately reflect what you've learned? Not always! Most students have had the experience of walking away from a test feeling that they could have done better. What are some strategies that will help you do your best when you have a test?

Before Your Test

The first tip for test success is: be prepared. Don't wait until the last minute! If you know there's a test coming up, take a few minutes each day to study. This is the time to use your learning skills. Use graphic organizers like mind maps and timelines to visualize information. Ask yourself questions—and answer them without looking at your notes—to make sure you understand how concepts are related. The night before the test, be sure to get a good night's sleep.



Do you get butterflies in your stomach before a test? Don't be disturbed by this; most people do, and that extra charge of energy can even help you do better on the test. But too much nervousness—test anxiety—can block your memory and prevent success.

Turn your nervousness into helpful energy with positive self-talk. Remind yourself, "I can do this. I studied well for this test." Take a deep breath, relax your muscles, and imagine yourself doing something fun or silly.

During the Test

First, write your name on your test paper! Then look over the whole test to see what it's like. Read the directions for each section carefully. Mark questions that look easy and those that will take longer to answer. There are two kinds of test questions—objective and subjective—and these two types require different strategies.

Objective Test Questions

These test questions give you answers to choose from: true-false, matching, or multiple choice. Here are some tips for answering objective questions.

- Answer the questions you know first—then go back to the harder ones.
- Cross out answers that you know are wrong. Then take your best guess among those that are left.

- Don't change your answer unless you're sure it's wrong; your first instinct is usually correct.
- Statements using words like *all*, *always*, and *never* are usually false. Statements using words like *most*, *many*, *frequently*, and *often* are usually true.

Subjective Test Questions

Subjective test questions ask you to write out a response, whether a sentence, a paragraph, or an essay. Some strategies apply for all types of subjective questions, whether the answer is short or long.

- Read the directions carefully! Circle important words, especially for long questions and those requiring two-step answers.
- Budget your time. Make sure you know how many questions you have to answer (sometimes you have a choice). Allow enough time for each question.
- Answer easier questions first, then come back to the harder ones.
- Write neatly, using complete sentences.
- If you don't know an answer, come back to it after doing the others. Make an educated guess—partial credit will usually give you more points than leaving the answer blank.
- If you finish early, take the time to reread your answers and correct any mistakes. Make sure you answered all parts of the questions.



Essay Questions

Essay questions are subjective questions that require a longer answer. When you respond to an essay question, you use the strategies listed above, but you also need to organize your thoughts. It can be helpful to make a mind map or a rough outline of the main points you want to cover—just to make sure you don't forget anything!

What About You?

Think about how you've approached test-taking in the past. Which of these strategies have you already used? Which would you like to add to your skill set? With a little practice, you can tackle test-taking with confidence!

Outlining Practice

Use this format to identify main points and sub-points for the text “Test-Taking Triumph.” (Hint: the headers and sub-headers in the text will give you clues about what the main points should be.) Then, fill in supporting details for each section.

I. Introduction

II. _____

III. _____

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

Conclusion:

Using Outlines for Success

Why outline a chapter or article you have read?

Outlining helps you become a better reader and student. Creating an outline will help you organize your thoughts, remember what you have read, and show what you have learned.

If you have used graphic organizers, you have already learned some of the steps in making an outline. To fill out an organizer, you had to figure out main points and some supporting details. As you saw how each detail supported the main points, you got a “big picture” view. Outlining can help you in the same way.

But **how** do you create an outline? Making an outline is like doing a jigsaw puzzle. You have to figure out how each piece fits together with the whole. To make an outline, first decide what are the main points. Then figure out the supporting points. When you create an outline, you do not need to write in complete sentences. This illustration shows how an outline is structured.

If you are outlining a chapter or article, the author may give you clues about what is important. The first paragraph usually introduces what the chapter is about, or what the author is going to prove. The text may have **bold** headings. This lets you know what a particular section is about. The author may give examples, facts, or statistics to support these points. The last section usually summarizes the main points and lets the reader know that the chapter or article is over.

When might you want to create an outline? Outlines can help you study, especially when the topic is complicated. Creating an outline is also a great way to prepare to write a report or essay. When your ideas are organized, your writing will be too!

Title

I. First Main Point

A. Supporting Point

B. Supporting Point

II. Second Main Point

A. Supporting Point

B. Supporting Point

III. Third Main Point

A. Supporting Point

B. Supporting Point

IV. Conclusion

A. Supporting Point

B. Supporting Point

Setting Goals: Why and How

Introduction

You have probably heard that setting goals is an important part of achieving your dreams. There are many reasons that goal setting is important to learn, especially while you're young.

Why is this important for me?

Isn't this something for older people to do? It's never too early to start setting goals. In fact, you've probably already set and reached a few goals in your life. Have you ever saved up to buy something? Decided to study hard for a test and improved your grade? Decided to join a club or group even though you felt nervous? Then you have been setting—and achieving—goals. Goal setting is an important skill for your personal development. It will motivate you, help you think and plan for your future, and increase your chance of success in any area. As you experience the satisfaction of seeing progress and reaching your goals, you will feel more confident and be encouraged to set new goals. Setting goals and keeping a record of your progress helps make sure you are directing your energy toward the priorities you have set. Are you actually spending time on what you think is important? Or are you getting distracted by other things?



What is the secret to success in setting and reaching goals?



Set your own goals rather than reacting to what is around you or following the crowd. Base your goals on your interests, talents, and values. Life is a journey--If you map out your goals, you'll know what direction to go!

Why do I have to write down my goals?

You increase your chances of reaching your goals if you write them down. In one study, 46% of the people who had written down the previous year's goals achieved them. Only 4% of those who hadn't written down their goals achieved them. Writing down goals helps you decide what you want and create a plan to achieve it.

How do I do it?

Ask yourself these questions:

- What is important to me?
- What do I find interesting?
- What makes me feel happy and fulfilled?
- What am I good at?
- What do I want to improve?

Answers to these questions will help you decide on areas where you want to set new goals.

S.M.A.R.T. Goal Chart

What It Stands For	Notes and Examples
S _ _ _ _ _	
M _ _ _ _ _	
A _ _ _ _ _	
R _ _ _ _ _	
T _ _ _ _	

S.M.A.R.T. Goals Planning Sheet

School Goal #1	
Specific	My goal is...
Measurable	I will measure it by...
Attainable	I know this is attainable because...
Relevant	This matters to me because...
Timely	I will finish this goal by...

School Goal #2	
Specific	My goal is...
Measurable	I will measure it by...
Attainable	I know this is attainable because...
Relevant	This matters to me because...
Timely	I will finish this goal by...

Other (Out of School) Goal	
Specific	My goal is...
Measurable	I will measure it by...
Attainable	I know this is attainable because...
Relevant	This matters to me because...
Timely	I will finish this goal by...