Use your time in school to your best advantage. Learning about new ways to solve problems, express yourself, and interact with the world will make your life infinitely better. The way you relate to yourself **(I),** communicate with others **(Us),** and contribute to a better world **(All)** improve with your ability to study better and learn more.

I • Us • All

REVIEW ONLY

We are each like a drop of water splashing into a pond. Our actions cause concentric ripples of actions. A helping hand or a smile from one person can ripple through their **relationships** to the **relationships** of others, and so on, until the **world** has changed. The actions of the individual may seem insignificant, but can alter the **world**.

School Datebooks

I: Every positive action begins with **Self (I),** when we discover our ability to effect change and take the initiative to act.

Us: Our impact grows through our **Relationships (Us),** where we find encouragement as well as challenges.

DO NOT SUBMIT FOR PRINT

All: The actions we take ultimately affect the **World (All)** around us, where we realize our greatest power and make a lasting difference.

Look for the **I, Us, and All** symbols in your planner and supplements. They mark sections and ideas to help make positive ripples in your **self, relationships, and world.**

v.1.1 © 2019, Susan (Woodcock) Kruger.
Permission is granted to SDI Innovations to reproduce as per terms of agreement.

REVIEW ONLY

School Datebooks

DO NOT SUBMIT FOR PRINT

Grades by Design: Essential Tips for Organizing & Studying Smarter

Introduction

With all of the time you spend in school, it may be a surprise to learn that most students do not actually know how to learn effectively. However, there are many tools and strategies you can use to study more efficiently, reduce your time spent in class, and improve your grades.

REVIEW ONLY

This section of your agenda provides many of those useful tools to help you reduce your homework and study time. Every strategy was selected in an effort to keep things as simple as possible, but you must try them in order for them to work.

Begin by trying one or two strategies at a time. Once you have mastered them, come back to this section and try a couple more. You will be amazed to see what a difference a few simple strategies can make! If you continue to try two new strategies every week, you can cover this entire section in one semester… Good luck!

School Datebooks

This section is organized in a timeline to help you identify how and when to use each strategy. The following icons, however, represent common study skills that are represented throughout this section:

DO NOT SUBMIT FOR PRINT

- Organization & Being Prepared
- Time Management
- Health & Wellness
- Long-Term Planning
- ACT/SAT Preparation
- Note Taking/Listening
- Test Prep & Test Taking
- Reading Textbooks
- Communication with Parents & Teachers

v.1.1 © 2019, Susan (Woodcock) Kruger.
Permission is granted to SDI Innovations to reproduce as per terms of agreement.

Before the School Year

Saddle up your supplies… but do not go overboard. You should have a durable book bag and folders, but be aware of the fancy school supplies on the market… they are often bulky and become more of a hassle than a help. The novelty of bulky organizers and fancy notebooks wears off as your bag quickly becomes overcrowded.

Condense your folders and notebooks into one binder. One of the most common complaints from parents, teachers, and students is lost assignments. Assignments become lost when you have 14 - 18 different folders and notebooks to manage. Purchase one 3-hole plastic pocket folder for each class and keep all of your folders in one binder. Instead of purchasing a separate notebook for each class, take notebook paper placed behind each pocket folder.

Create a place to store old papers. You should clean out your folders at least once a month, but you should never throw graded papers away until the end of the year. (Old assignments, quizzes, and tests are the best study guides you have for big unit tests and final exams.) Designate one box, drawer, or basket that is just for school papers.

Get a bookmark or binder clip for your agenda. You are most likely to use your agenda regularly if you keep your current pages marked and easy to find with one flip.

Beginning of Each Week

Invest ten minutes of your time at the beginning of your week to follow the two steps below. They are simple, but they can save you several hours of time and prevent a lot of stress. (They can even stop your parents from nagging you!)

Use your agenda to preview the week ahead. Record your goals, appointments, project due dates, test dates, work schedules, sports practices, favorite TV shows, and even social events.

Next, ask your parents about their plans for the week: doctor appointments they have scheduled for you, evenings they will be working late, family events (i.e. Grandma's birthday lunch on Saturday), or any other plans that might affect you.

Be prepared to tell them about your week, too. Coordinate after-school rides, use of the car, and other important issues that often create chaos when discovered at the last minute.

Weekly planning is an excellent strategy for students who live in two homes.

BONUS: When you are proactive and tell your parents about your schedule and plans, they will be much less likely to nag you with dozens of questions about what is happening in your life.

Now that you know your plans for the week, think about your goals. Write them down at the top of your agenda page and record when you will take action to achieve those goals.

In the Evening

Most students and families find mornings chaotic as they rush to get showered, dressed, fed, and out the door in time for school and work. This frantic morning activity causes students to forget important things like lunch, gym shoes, and of course, homework! You can, however, be better prepared in the morning…

Before you go to bed each night, double check your agenda. Make sure you took care of everything that needed your attention.

Put all school work and supplies in your bag. Double check your bag for essential things like homework, textbooks, folders, and [illegible] so you do not have to scramble (and forget things) in the morning.

Gather your clothes, shoes, jacket, and any other items you will need the next morning. Put everything by the door you will exit in the morning. If you feel prepared when you leave for school, you will have a much more successful day.

Go to bed at a reasonable time. It can be hard to stay awake and focused even after a good night's sleep, but it miserable to sit through a full day of school if you are short on sleep. Do yourself the favor of getting enough rest.

REVIEW ONLY
School Datebooks
DO NOT SUBMIT
FOR PRINT

In the Morning

Eat a healthy, well-balanced breakfast and drink at least 8-16 ounces of water. Your body and brain need good fuel and hydration in order to function. The better your body and brain function, the more quickly you can learn new information and complete your homework. Start your day with some refreshing water to keep you hydrated and make sure your breakfast represents at least two different food groups.

Post a list… and check it twice. Post a checklist near your door and do a mental check each morning to make sure you have necessary books, assignments, and supplies for the day. (You can download and customize a helpful chart at www.soarstudyskills.com/morefreestuff.htm).

In School

One of the best ways to increase your grades in less time is to learn in class. This may seem obvious, but many students zone out in class and are then forced to learn information on their own… typically several hours the night before a test. Turn the cycle around by shifting your brain into a higher gear when you are in class. Surprisingly, it is not as difficult as it may seem…

Always look for connections. Your brain can only understand new information if it can make a connection with something you already know. While your teacher is lecturing or you are doing a class activity, think about how the topic connects to other things you know or have learned in the class.

During lectures, open your book to the related section. This is a great way to help you make connections. Look at pictures, graphs, and other visuals as your teacher lectures and see if you can make connections between the lecture and the visuals in the book. (Since your brain remembers visuals better than words, this strategy will increase your recall on tests.)

Take advantage of down time. Some studies speculate that only 50-60% of a student's school day is actually focused on learning. The rest of the time is spent taking attendance, waiting for other students, changing classes, school announcements, etc. Take advantage of the down time to reread your notes from previous classes, finish up your math assignment, or read the next section of your science book. You may be surprised at how much homework you can finish before you even get home!

Take notes on the right 2/3rds of each page, leaving the left 1/3rd blank until after class. Later, play Jeopardy® with your notes by creating potential test questions with them. Create approximately 3-5 questions per page and write them on the right-hand column of your notes. The process of creating questions helps you learn the information in a fraction of the time than if you attempted to memorize your notes.

Keep track of your grades. It is important to know how every point affects your grades. The process of tracking your grades encourages you to be more proactive about turning homework in on time and working for a few extra points on a test.

Be polite to your teachers. Most teachers see 100-150 different students every single day! Help them help you by standing out from the crowd. Ask questions or participate in class, stay after class to get clarification on an assignment, and be polite. When you make a positive impression, teachers are more likely to be lenient as they grade your work, may be willing to bend the rules for you on occasion, and may even boost your score at the end of a term… but only if you have been respectful and let them know that you are making an effort.

BONUS: When it is time to prepare for a test, the notes from your questions become an instant study guide.

REVIEW ONLY
School Datebooks
DO NOT SUBMIT FOR PRINT

v.1.1 © 2019, Susan (Woodcock) Kruger.
Permission is granted to SDI Innovations to reproduce as per terms of agreement.

Before You Leave School

Check your supplies. Towards the end of the day, use a few seconds of your down time to write a list in your agenda of books and supplies you need to take home.

Use another minute of your down time to make an after-school schedule. Determine what time you will start your homework when you get home and how long it should take to complete each assignment. Write these notes in your agenda. (When possible, start homework within one hour of arriving home from school so you can get it done before you get too tired and can have free time later in the evening.)

Be prepared to be flexible! Your schedule will often work out differently than you planned. That is normal. However, the process of making a plan before you get home will automatically help you use your time more efficiently, even if you do not follow your exact schedule.

Homework Time

As you begin your homework, each evening, Take Ten: Two minutes to put all loose papers into their proper folders and the next eight minutes to review your notes and create summary questions, as described in the previous section. (Reviewing new information within 24 hours helps your brain file it in your long-term memory, saving valuable study time.)

Put your homework away in the correct folder as soon as you finish each assignment. This will prevent your papers from being lost in the wrong folder, falling off the table and sliding under the refrigerator, sticking to your younger brother's workbook, or simply being forgotten.

Stay unplugged. It is not always fun to keep the TV, computer, or MP3 player off when you do your homework, but it is not possible for your brain to learn if it is processing more than one thing at a time. You will get your homework done much more quickly if you unplug distractions.

As you do your homework, always ask yourself, "What am I supposed to be learning from this?" Some assignments may not be much more than busy work, but most are designed to help you learn and apply new information. When you are aware of the purpose for each assignment, you will be more focused, will get the assignment done more quickly, and will reduce study time for tests.

Read your textbooks… or at least read the visuals. This little strategy is one of the most powerful things you can do to study more efficiently because you can learn 30-80% of the information in a textbook simply by reading the visuals.

The single best time-saving study tip... is to read the visuals in your textbook before the information is covered in class.

Begin by looking at each picture, symbol, or graph and reading the captions. When each visual, ask yourself, "Why is this picture here? How does it relate to the topic of the chapter?" For more information, go to www.soarstudyskills.com/morefreestuff.htm

Set a timer. If you have a hard time staying focused on homework, set a timer for the amount of time you think each assignment should take, then challenge yourself to beat the timer!

Preparing for Tests

If you do all of the tips already outlined – polishing your homework on time, reviewing your notes everyday, and reading sections of your textbook (or at least reading the visuals) - then you will have already done most of your studying. However, this section includes additional pointers that may be helpful, especially if you begin studying during crunch time.

Know the test format. Ask your teacher or call a friend so you know if you should prepare for multiple-choice, true-or-false, or essay questions.

REVIEW ONLY
School Datebooks
DO NOT SUBMIT FOR PRINT

Open your textbook to the tested sections and read the pictures, graphs, and diagrams. Look at each visual, read the caption, and ask yourself, "What is this picture? Why is it here? What did I learn about this in class?" These connection questions refresh your memory and help your brain attach new information from your notes and handouts.

Take a short, two-minute study break every 30-45 minutes. Get a drink, do a few jumping jacks, or grab a short snack to refresh your brain.

Collect all homework, worksheets, handouts (You kept all of these, didn't you?), and notes covering the tested material. Create two groups of papers by separating quizzes and graded assignments.

Review your packet of quizzes and graded assignments. These are gold! Pay close attention to all questions you originally had wrong. Figure out the correct answers and make sure you understand your errors. Read all other questions, notes, and diagrams on these papers. As you read each problem or paragraph, stop and think of a connection to one of the visuals from your textbook.

Create a cheat sheet. No, it is not a real cheat sheet, but imagine that you could have a ½ page of notes to reference while you take your test. What important information would you want to have while taking your test? The process of creating this cheat sheet will help you identify important information and learn it more quickly.

Review your remaining handouts and notes. First, look at the visuals on these pages. Then read the heading and subheadings on each handout and turn them into questions. Finally, read the text to help you answer your questions. This strategy helps you identify key points and think in question mode, which is what you will have to do on the test.

Make connections to things you already know...

class activities, pictures from the text book, or even silly things.

Read your cheat sheet. Now that you have reviewed all of your study resources, you must memorize important items, such as definitions, formulas, and important dates. Create potential test questions from the information on your cheat sheet and answer them. Make connections to things you already know… class activities, pictures from the textbook, or even silly things (such as "Never Eat Shredded Wheat" to remember the clockwise order of north, east, south, and west).

Get a good night's sleep. Eat a good breakfast. Drink water to keep your brain hydrated.

Read your cheat sheet first thing in the morning. Read it again on the bus and just before your test. Then, PUT IT AWAY (it's not a real cheat sheet) and relax… You'll do great!

REVIEW ONLY
School Datebooks
DO NOT SUBMIT
FOR PRINT

v.1.1 © 2019, Susan (Woodcock) Kruger.
Permission is granted to SDI Innovations to reproduce as per terms of agreement.

Taking Tests

There is a strategy to taking tests effectively, regardless of how well you know the material. The following tips will help you make the most of your test time, whether you are taking a chapter test, final exam, or a standardized test.

Know your time limit. Determine how much time you should spend on each problem/section of the test so you can properly pace yourself.

Read the directions. Twice. MANY points are lost by students who neglect to read (and follow) directions.

Scan the entire test once. Before answering any questions, quickly scan through the problems. Just as athletes warm up before a game, scanning a test gives your brain a chance to warm up to the information it will need to access, which will dramatically improve your performance.

Begin answering questions.

Stuck? Skip it. When you are stuck, you can waste a lot of valuable time fretting over ONE question. As you fret, you loose time, get nervous and lose confidence. Before you know it, you are rushing through the last 30 problems because you were stuck on problem #5. Instead, skip that problem, moved on to the next one, and come back to #5 after you have completed the remaining questions. You will be more relaxed as you complete the rest of the test and may even discover the answer to #5 while reading question #29.

Breathe. If you begin to feel panic because you came across five questions in a row that you could not answer, take slow and deep breaths. Deep breathing controls your reaction to anxiety and keeps your brain in rational mode. You will need rational mode to make good guesses on those problems!

When in doubt, go with your first hunch. For most tests (except the SAT), you are not penalized for guessing. So, after you have completed the rest of the test and still do not have a clue about the correct answer to a question, choose the option that you first thought was correct. Your unconscious mind may be trying to tell you something.

Do not turn your test in early! Every point earned on a test puts you one point closer to a better score. Take advantage of extra time to make sure you read each question correctly, filled in the correct bubbles on the answer sheet, followed the directions properly, etc. You will find an error about 50% of the time.

Specific Test Tips

Multiple Choice: Read all of the options first, then cross out the obvious wrong answers, narrow down your choices.

Essay: If possible, do essay questions last to give your brain more exposure to the information before creating your own answers. Before you write long paragraphs, create a short outline in the margin using key words to help you write a more focused answer. If you run out of time, your teacher may give you partial credit based on your outline.

True/False: These are probably the most misleading and misused test questions, so approach them with caution. Take your time to read each statement twice and look for trick words (like "not") that can change the entire meaning of the statement.

Fill in the Blank: First, fill in only the blanks you know. Cross out used words in the word bank, then complete the rest of the problems. Reread all answers to ensure the filled-in words make sense in each statement and that all verb tenses, singular and plural nouns, etc. fit the rest of the sentence.

Preparing for the SAT & ACT

Preparation is the cure for test anxiety and a less than your best performance on standardized tests like the ACT/SAT. Imagine that you are an athlete training for a major competition. Athletes do not train in just a few hours; they condition themselves a little every day and gradually

REVIEW ONLY
School Datebooks
DO NOT SUBMIT
FOR PRINT

develop their strength and endurance. The same is true for the SAT and ACT... you will maximize your performance if you prepare for short amounts of time over the course of several weeks.

The SAT is designed to measure reasoning skills. It consists of ten different sections: three math, three critical reading, two grammar, and one writing section. The final section is unscored and is used to test the validity of new questions. This section will not affect your score. It is important to note that the SAT has a guessing penalty, so students are not encouraged to randomly guess answers. (Source: www.collegeboard.com.)

The ACT is a measure of content knowledge in five different domains: math, reading comprehe[illegible] English grammar, and [illegible] there is no guessing penalty on the ACT. Students also have a "Score Choice" option on the ACT that allows them to take the test multiple times and select the best score of each sub-test to report to the college(s) of their choice. (Source: www.act.org.)

REVIEW ONLY
School Datebooks

SAT/ACT Action Plan

Practice test-taking strategies. Use the strategies featured in this supplement for tests and quizzes in school. Not only will your performance on those tests improve, but they will be excellent training for the ACT/SAT.

Learn about the test. Carefully read [illegible] prepa[illegible] booklet included with your registration confirmation or visit the official websites to get updated information about the content, number [illegible] ti[illegible] limits, rules, etc. for the test. For the ACT, visit: www.actstudent.org. For the SAT, visit: www.collegeboard.com.

DO NOT SUBMIT FOR PRINT

Take practice tests. There are countless internet sites that provide FREE practice tests for the SAT and ACT. Spend 20-35 minutes, 3-4 days a week taking a variety of practice tests. This process will help your brain become more comfortable answering standardized questions and will help you improve the critical thinking skills that are essential for taking these tests.

Talk to your school counselor. Your counselor will know about resources that are available to you as well as consider your aptitudes and goals to customize your test-prep plan.

Relax. Last minute preparation the night before the ACT or SAT is virtually useless. Your time will be better spent eating a good dinner, watching your favorite movie, and going to bed at a reasonable time. In the morning, allow enough time to eat a hearty breakfast and arrive at the test site without a rush. Be sure to read the directions and bring the appropriate supplies and identification needed.

Managing Long-Term Projects

Long projects can be overwhelming because we often don't know where to begin. With a few minutes of planning, you can break the project down into smaller tasks and make it much more manageable.

Break the task down into smaller parts. You can only climb a mountain with one step at a time. The same is true for a large project. Make a list of all of the small tasks you must do to get the project done.

Go through your list and number each task in the order in which it needs to be done.

Create a timeline. Plan to do one or two tasks each week. If you have four weeks to write a paper, then your timeline might look like this:

- **Week 1 = Select a topic and begin research.**
- **Week 2 = Continue research and create an outline.**
- **Week 3 = Complete first draft. (Write 2-3 pages each day.)**
- **Week 4 = Revise and edit draft. Prepare and print final draft.**

v.1.1 © 2019, Susan (Woodcock) Kruger.
Permission is granted to SDI Innovations to reproduce as per terms of agreement.

For more homework information,
including a FREE Homework Rx® Toolkit with
25 Ways to Make Homework Easier… Tonight!,
go to **www.soarstudyskills.com**

For more helpful resources,
go to www.soarstudyskills.com/morefreestuff.htm

REVIEW ONLY

School Datebooks

Teachers and administrators: Would you like to incorporate a consistent set of study skills into your curriculum and increase student performance? Reinforce the concepts addressed in this agenda and increase student performance with our SOAR® Study Skills curriculum, one of our educator in-services, or our dynamic SOAR® workshops for students.
Contact us at:
www.soarstudyskills.com.

DO NOT SUBMIT
FOR PRINT