

# *Homework Tips*

Studying and doing homework probably doesn't rank very high on the "Most loved things in the Valley" category. If you are not careful, it can become something you dread because of the vast amount of time it takes out of your day when you could be doing something else. The next few pages will help you make better use of your study and homework time so you can spend more time doing the things you enjoy. Try the following tips to get you started.

## ***Tip 1 - Devote 15***

Everybody has 15 minutes we can spare out of our daily routines. The challenge for you is to devote 15 minutes every day to improving your study habits. Fifteen minutes is not a lot and can help you make better use of your actual study time and give you more time for other things. These 15 minutes might include:

- Review your personal calendar for the week. Remind yourself of important assignment due dates or personal commitments you might have forgotten.
- During school, make a "to do" list for study time when you get home. Enter it into your phone, write it on sticky notes, and/or add it to your daily planner. The point is, if you don't write it down now you might forget it later!
- Re-read a section of this book. There is probably a section of this book that targets a weak area in your study habits. Use the wisdom in that chapter to make your life easier and less stressful.
- Clean-up your study area at home. Clutter can slow you down and make studying less attractive. And when it comes to studying, you don't need anything to make it less appealing.



## ***Tip 2 - Get comfortable***

When studying at home get into more comfortable clothing. The change in your clothes can help your mind separate the day at school into a new task to get work done at home. More comfortable clothes can make you relax and help your brain function better.

## ***Tip 3 - Remind yourself of your goals***

As part of this course you will learn the importance of goal setting and how to set meaningful goals. Reminding yourself of the goals you have set for yourself can motivate you on those days when you'd rather be doing something else. When those goals are posted in your study area they can really motivate.

## ***Tip 4 - Cut yourself some slack***

Bad things happen to good people. There will be times things don't work out as you had planned. When they don't, resist the temptation to "beat yourself up." Resist the negative reactions to the setback and choose a positive approach to making the situation better. While some of these negative responses are a bit "tongue in cheek," they do point to some very real emotions.

<b><i>SITUATION</i></b>	<b><i>NEGATIVE REACTION</i></b>	<b><i>POSITIVE REACTION</i></b>
You study hard but fail the first math test of the year.	You decide that this proves that math is evil, your teacher hates you, life stinks, and it's time to sign up in advance for summer school.	You ask the teacher to help you identify patterns in your wrong answers. You schedule after-school help time with your teacher and practice additional problems to better understand the concept.
You worked hard on an essay and submitted it on time. The teacher returns the graded essays to the class and yours looks like she dissected a cat on it. Red marks are everywhere.	Crumble the paper and toss it in the trash can on the way out the door. Resign yourself to the thought that this class will destroy every brain cell you have.	Meet with the teacher and get some tips on improving your writing. Devote 10 minutes of the morning break each day for a week to study effective writing skills.
You took the college admissions exams and standardized exams required and got back poor scores.	Forget college and consider the joys of flipping burgers well into your sixties. Perhaps they might name one after you.	Find and study test taking strategies. Sign-up for another test. Plan weeks out to get the study time, rest time, and prayer time and go in with confidence.
The research paper is due in three school days and you have not decided on a topic.	Search the internet for something that looks good. Convince yourself that "everybody" cheats and have at it.	Remind yourself that your character is more important to you than that. "Getting caught" or just knowing you cheated isn't worth it. Clear your calendar, create an aggressive schedule and get to work. The "C" earned honestly will lead to more satisfaction than words can express.
You studied for the major history exam for two weeks and got a "C." Your friend cruised in with little effort and aced it.	Kick your friend. Then convince yourself that studying is a waste of time.	Remind yourself of your long-term goals. One poor grade does not a failure make. Stick to what you know is right.

### ***Tip 5 - Have a daily plan***

Making the best use of the 24 hours you are given each day means making a daily plan on how you will use the time. Doing so will help you minimize wasted time and maximize time for other things. Even if you only have 10 minutes before basketball practice or want to make better use of the break time in the morning, having a plan on what you will do with that time can make a big difference in your day. Odds are that there is something on your daily “to do” list that you can accomplish in those precious few minutes. Crossing off those tasks give you a sense of accomplishment and adds time for things you’d rather be doing later.

### ***Tip 6 - Minimize surprises***

Surprises, when it comes to studying, are usually not good things! Surprises mean that you have overlooked an important assignment or have waited until the last minute to cram for a test. Both can mean a poor grade and added stress - and who needs that? Keeping an accurate and updated planner and calendar can make life much easier and avoid the surprises. Most importantly, because you know what is coming up, you will not have to worry about forgetting an exam or deadline. Being more relaxed leads to less stress with parents and life in general.



### ***Tip 7 - Take Breaks***

Studying is hard work. Your brain needs time to process new learning. Giving yourself a five minute break every 20 minutes to stretch and hydrate your brain can improve what you accomplish while studying. The trick is remembering to do so. We often get completely immersed in our work and find ourselves falling asleep. Under those conditions, the things we have read or studied are less likely to be stored in our long term memory where we can retrieve them for use later. That means wasted time. *Give yourself a break!*

**WARNING** - Be careful to limit your break time. Checking for messages from friends can become a 30 minute activity before you know it. Don’t tempt yourself. Stand and stretch, get some cold water, splash cold water on your face, pet your dog, or get a small snack.

### ***Tip 8 - Plan with the end in mind***

Big assignments require ample preparation and planning. Waiting until Monday to start a term paper due on Wednesday will most certainly lead to unwanted stress and a poor grade. Use the due date for big assignments and plan backward to plan your work and coordinate due dates. “Planning backwards” will help you make gradual progress toward big projects. It will also help you make use of a lull in activity to get more done. Face it, some weeks you have lots of stuff going on after-school and each evening. Those weeks make it almost impossible to work on the big projects. Identifying when those weeks will occur and planning around them will help you reach your goals!

### ***Tip 9 - Control your study area***

Your study area will have a lot to do with how much you get accomplished. Remember the goal:



make the very best use of your study time. That means working in an environment where you can concentrate. That means turning-off the cell phone. Putting it on vibrate won't do you any good. As soon as you hear the buzz from your phone your mind goes to wondering who it is and what they want...NOT a good strategy when it comes to concentrating.

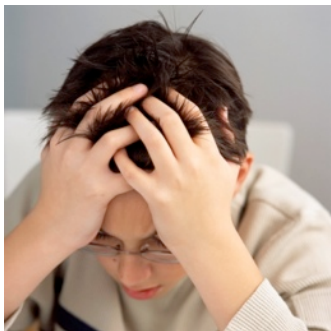
Some students think listening to music helps them study. For most, listening to music is enjoyable but is actually more of a distraction than you realize. One thing is for sure, watching television while studying is a no-no. There is ample research that proves the combination of image and sound is far more distracting than sound alone. Turn the TV off and get more done. Then you can chill later in front of your favorite program.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Research reveals that listening to Baroque music can actually help you concentrate? Baroque music is a style of classical music that is written in the same mathematical pattern as your resting heart rate. While this is not a magical solution to straight A's, it does help your mind and body work in sync, which leads to an overall calming effect on your body. One final advantage of listening to Baroque music is that it may drown out background noise that can be distracting while you are working on homework.



### ***Tip 10 - Pay attention to sequence***

When attacking a truckload of homework, use this proven principle: easy-hard-easy. In other words, begin with an assignment you can knockout quickly and easily, then begin work on your most challenging task, and finish with a relatively easy task. This way you are getting off to a satisfying and successful start. You know how good it feels to complete a required task. While you are still fresh, you follow that with your toughest assignment. Then, when your stamina is depleted, you end with an easy assignment.



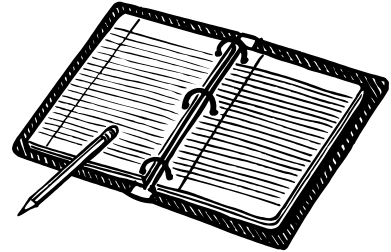
### ***Tip 11 - Pay attention to quality***

It's getting late and you still have an essay to write for your least favorite teacher. You begin to convince yourself of several things. "It's not like he'll give me a good grade on it. I hate this class. Let me get this over with." And thus you begin the awe inspiring essay. It's also time to remind yourself of one very important thing: you are doing homework for YOU - not the teacher. The homework you complete now may help lead to better grades on a major paper in his class later in the semester. Most importantly, you are concerned now not with the consequences of a single evening's work, but with habits that can last a lifetime. *Settling for less*

*that your best now can make it easier to do again and again. Do your best and don't settle for less.*

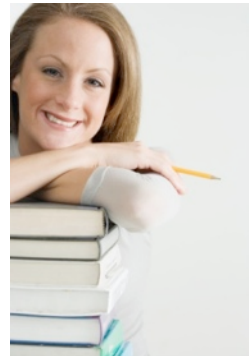
### **Tip 12 - Leave yourself margins**

Have you ever wondered why there are margins on your paper? They are there in case you “make a mistake” and over-extend a sentence into the margined area. The concept of a margin is one we all need to consider in our personal lives. We seem to plan our day to the exact minute and often over-extend ourselves. This living with no margins can have an enormous impact on our success in school.



How to leave yourself margins:

- Pack your book bag at night - making sure to include your homework and everything you need for class. Don't wait until the next morning when you are already pushed for time.
- Take advantage of down time at school. The 10 minutes you have after finishing a test early or starting practice can be used to start an assignment or review notes. Both can leave room for other things later.
- Try to over-estimate the amount of time it takes to complete a task. Do not build your schedule around best case scenarios. Surprises always happen.
- Take advantage of time “gained.” If you complete a task ahead of time resist the urge to kick back and watch a mind numbing television program. Use the 20-30 minutes gained to get ahead on another project. You may need those extra 20-30 minutes later when an unforeseen situation occurs.
- “I arrive to Springwood at 8:00 on the dot every morning. What about the morning traffic is backed up due to a wreck?” Not worth the tardy. Get here at 7:55 and use the 5 minutes to relax and review notes prior to class.



Now that you have organized yourself for success it's time to reflect on what you have learned. Read the following scenario of a Wildcat named Megan. Apply what you have learned to her situation and think about the advice you would give her.

*Megan got home from the gym at 5:30. After gulping down a cola, she headed to her room. She had 30 minutes before dinner and wanted to get a head start on her homework. She sat down at her desk and pulled her homework from her book bag. Taking out her planner, she reviewed all of her assignments for the night to determine how much homework she had that night. She had planned 2 hours to complete it.*



*Her math was one of the easier assignments so she got right to work on math and finished it sooner than expected - just in time for dinner. When she returned from dinner she tackled her more challenging assignment. Writing a paper on the imagery of a T.S. Elliot poem would be time consuming. She*

*made notes in the margins of the poem handed to her by her teacher and began the work of outlining her essay. She planned to complete a rough draft of her essay before stopping for the night. Revising and writing the final draft was planned for the next evening. After completing the rough draft she placed it in her notebook.*

*Megan had been working for almost 50 minutes and decided to take a 10 minute break. She got*



*some cold water and a granola bar and listened to her I-Pod to relax. Once she returned to her room she took out her assignment sheet to begin her Spanish homework. She took out a box of felt tipped markers and made flash cards to study the verb conjugations. She studied each card, closing her eyes to see the card and color in her “mind’s eye.” She finished her Spanish in 20 minutes.*

*Looking back at her assignment sheet she was delighted to remember that her history teacher had not assigned homework. That didn’t happen often! She took out her notebook and began to study the lecture notes from class that day. She read through them in 20 minutes and made a graphic organizer to illustrate one concept that the teacher said would be on the test.*

*Before she knew it, she had completed all of her assignments. She put her work in her book bag and made sure she had all of her belongings ready to walk out the door in the morning. She pulled out her cell phone and began to return texts and calls. It was time to relax and talk about what Mr. P had done at lunch that day. He must be nuts!*

The description of Megan’s study habits gives you clues about what kind of student she is. Go back and underline the important things that Megan did that will help her achieve academic success at Springwood. Then take a few minutes to evaluate her organization system.

*List the things that Megan did right to help her be organized to do her homework:*



*List the things Megan did that will likely help her get good grades in class:*



*How would you evaluate Megan's overall approach to studying and completing homework?*

**Predicting Megan's success in school**

*Predict her parent's attitude toward her schoolwork:*

*Predict her teacher's attitude toward Megan as a student:*



*Predict her success for gaining admission to the college of her choice:*

***The following web sites offer additional homework tips:***

<http://life.familyeducation.com/teen/parenting/48435.html?detoured=1>

<http://life.familyeducation.com/teen/reading/48436.html?detoured=1>

<http://homeworktips.about.com/od/homeworkhelp/a/homeworktime.htm>

<http://www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/learning/studytips.shtml>

<http://www.publicschoolreview.com/articles/68>