



Off to a Good Start in High School

Tips from Ruth Lee, MEd, ET/P, Senior Educational and Learning Specialist

- Be realistic about time.** If you're starting at a new school, do a run-through of your schedule so you will know the best route to classes and how much time you will need to get there.
- Buy an academic planner/calendar with large daily blocks in which to write your assignments and class schedule.** Get in the habit of writing assignments in them while you are still in class, as teachers are writing or handing them out, to cut the risk that you'll forget.
- In your planner, mark out blocks of time for each assignment.** Get in the habit of timing your assignments so you can realistically estimate how long it takes to, say, do math problems or write an essay or read 50 pages. In this way, you will soon be able to accurately mark out those blocks.
- Plan manageable chunks of time to work, not one long slog.** This will lower your resistance to settling down to work and you'll get positive reinforcement each time you finish a chunk.
- Use color-coding for each subject.** This will allow you to see at a glance which classes require the most attention on a given day, week, or month. The colors work as an "eye opener" to focus your attention on what needs to be done.
- Schedule personal time as well as work time in your planner.** It's important to put aside time for things you want to do, so that you know that school work isn't taking all the fun out of your life. If your activities have their "own space," you won't have to take time away from fun to do your work. There's time for both!
- Schedule weekends as well as weekdays.** If you set aside blocks of time for work during the weekend you'll see clearly that there's plenty of time left for other things you want to do.
- Use a timer.** If you're planning to read for a half hour, you won't waste a lot of time and energy looking at the clock all the time, and you can focus more on what you're reading.
- Be realistic about when you're going to get up.** Don't schedule a big block of study time for 8-11 Saturday morning if you're basically never awake at that time. If you do manage to get up, you'll resent not getting enough sleep; if you don't, you'll feel badly about oversleeping.
- Be strategic about work and play.** If you're going to dinner and a movie with friends on Saturday night, reserve 1-4pm for studying. You'll have an incentive to concentrate while you're working, and afterwards will be able to go out without worrying about work.
- Schedule breaks.** Give yourself a break every half hour when you're working, but don't do something you could get pulled into, like checking email or talking on the phone. Do something physical-shoot some hoops or make the bed or get a snack-or something over which you have control.
- Set up your environment to work for you.** Prepare a space in which to work with a full set of supplies; this will be a real time and energy saver and will help prevent procrastination.
- Consider your sound track.** Some people need white noise to concentrate effectively, others music, others complete silence. Know what works and let it work for you!
- Get a big wall calendar to post in your room.** This is for long-term assignments, because seeing things on paper, in color, can help you become a strategic planner and get your tasks done in a timely manner.