



Get and Stay Organized With These Study Skills

Start the New Year right by helping your child get organized with basic time-management and organizational skills. Encourage your student to take the time before school starts — or during the first few weeks — to adopt good organizational habits.

Time to Get Organized!

Organization is the key to academic success: good students manage their time well and are on top of their assignments, notes, projects and test preparation. Being organized makes learning more efficient and reduces stress and anxiety. Students who know they've put in the right amount of time and used it well are students who are confident when it's time to turn in a paper, take a test or give a presentation. The good news is your child can be taught these skills. Most students have been doing homework on their own since fourth grade, but occasionally they'll still be frustrated or confused by their assignments. Help by asking questions that will lead to their own solutions. For example:

- ⇒ What information do you need to do this assignment?
- ⇒ Where are you going to look for it?
- ⇒ Where do you think you should begin?
- ⇒ What do you need to do next?
- ⇒ Can you describe how you're going to solve this problem?
- ⇒ What did you try that didn't work?
- ⇒ What did you try that did work?



"Mom, have you seen my [fill in the blank]"? If your students can't keep track of his papers and of what's due when, help them develop a system. Purchase a binder and put a folder in the front for completed work to be turned in and a folder in the back for papers returned by the teacher. Or work with them to develop a system of their own to keep track of important papers. Once the system has been formalized, monitor them for a few weeks to make sure they're following through on all the steps.

"Yikes, it's due today!" Make sure your student has — and uses — a planner to keep track of assignments. Some schools provide these to students, and if not, you might want to work with your PTA or parent organization to provide planners at your school. Help your child get in the habit of writing down each daily assignment in each subject and checking it off when it's complete.

Other Skills That Improve School Performance ...

Time-management. Educators start teaching time-management skills in fifth grade, but your child will likely need reinforcement to make the process a habit.

First, make sure your students refer to their day planner/calendar on a regular basis. Teach them to divide up their work over the number of days allotted for the assignment. This will create small, manageable subtasks out of bigger, more daunting tasks. Large projects can create anxiety for students who are new to the process, and you will be helping your children by walking them through it the first few times and by enforcing the schedule you have devised together. A research project will be less likely to be left until the last minute if it's done in chunks, each with its own deadline.

Advice for Parents From Teachers

- ⇒ Understand what kind of learner you are dealing with. Do they need silence to concentrate? Then make sure the TV is not on when they are studying. Provide an appropriate learning environment at home.
- ⇒ Stay engaged with your children and their teachers. Be proactive. Don't wait until the first report card.
- ⇒ Make sure you know what is expected of your child and that he or she is meeting the teacher's expectations. If you wait for the report card, it may be too late. Absegami has an online grading system that you can access, make sure you log on frequently to see how your child is doing. (Parent Connect!)
- ⇒ Create a college-going culture at home. Emphasize that you expect your child will go to college.
- ⇒ Model good reading habits. If your child sees you reading, then he or she will be more likely to read, too.
- ⇒ Subscribe to a newspaper and encourage your children to read it. Newspapers provide more detail and background than the Web or sound bites on TV. Newspapers also help make connections between what appear to be disparate bits of information.
- ⇒ Talk to your kids about what they are learning; not about grades, but actual content.

Encourage them to estimate how long each regular homework assignment will take. They can then plan a realistic schedule, building in study breaks after subjects that are challenging. Helping your children keep track of time spent studying (rather than staring at a blank page) will help them think about how they're using their time. If they're spending too much time on a subject that might be a signal they need extra help or tutoring.

Note-taking. Teachers teach the basics of note taking in elementary school, but students never stop building their skills. Taking good notes requires students to evaluate, organize and summarize information. It's a key survival skill your child will need through high school and beyond. Some teachers actually assign HW that builds note-taking skills, such as outlining chapters, and they will check or grade a student's notes.

Taking notes in class: Writing at the speed of speech can be daunting even for an adult. These tips may help your student as he develops his own system:

- ⇒ Start a new page for each new class each day. Date it. Leave space between topics or ideas so you can scan the page more easily later.

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Questions???

Call your

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FIVE TIPS FOR CHARACTER EDUCATORS

Character educator- any adult human who is ever in the presence of children.

1. Choose the values in which you believe.

It's been said that decisions are easy to make when we are clear about principles in which we believe. It could also be said that when we live principle-based lives, we are more likely to make wise choices. Make a decision about what values you want to live by, and it will be easier to model those values.

2. Accept the fact that anytime you are in the presence of children, you assume the role of character educator.

There is no question about that. When we are in the presence of children, we are character educators. The only question is, what kind of character traits are we teaching?

3. Be aware of what you are modeling.

Be especially aware of your conduct in the presence of children. Know that they are "ever-attentive witnesses" and are easily influenced by the words and actions of adults, for better or for worse. And remember, children have finely tuned "hypocrisy radar."

4. Pay attention to teachable moments.

You may be surprised how many teachable moments present themselves when you are in the presence of children. This doesn't mean jumping on every opportunity to lecture, preach at, and generally berate them. It simply means taking advantage of moments when they may be struggling to make a decision or dealing with the consequences of a bad choice. These are moments when they may be open to a little wisdom respectfully shared, or perhaps a wordless demonstration of caring and appropriate behavior.

5. Embrace the notion that you can have a positive impact on a child's life in one meaningful moment.

This article was provided by Project Wisdom, The Character Education Program purchased for Absegami by our Peer Mediation Program.

OVERCOMING A LOW SAT/ACT SCORE

1. **Take it again.** Some colleges will accept the higher score. Some will combine your scores for the best possible number. If you didn't do as well as you could have on the SAT or ACT, call your prospective college for advice: Should you retake it? If the college rep says you may be eligible for more scholarships or a better chance of admission with a higher score, then retake it immediately. But you may find that the college you're considering doesn't like the exams much, either, and ranks it low on the list of admissions criteria. Go with the school's recommendation.

2. **Get a great letter of recommendation.** The folks who review your college application try to see if your test scores match your GPA and your letters of recommendation. If you achieved a perfect SAT or ACT score and have a C- average in school, it's clear you're not applying yourself. If you score low on the exams but are a straight-A student, it could mean that you study hard but were sick on test day. Ask your school counselor or favorite teacher to write a letter on your behalf, testifying to the effort you put forth every day.

3. **Use this year to boost your GPA.** Can't hurt.

4. **Write an essay.** Consider an application's "optional" essay mandatory. Don't use it to make excuses for why you didn't do so well on the exam. But do explain your commitment to your education, highlight some examples and tell why you think you'd be a great match for the school.

5. **Cast your net wider.** It may turn out that a low SAT or ACT score means rejection from your first-choice college. But that doesn't mean college is out of reach. Instead, apply to one or two additional schools where your test scores would fit right in. Then, put your best effort forward throughout the rest of your application. Good luck! *Article from [Next Step Magazine](#).*

Getting Organized... (from page 1)

Information like this available at www.GreatSchools.net

⇒ Take down key words and concepts, not sentences. Develop your own system of abbreviations or symbols (such as w/ for with or math symbols such as > or =) to take down key points. Go to English-Zone.com Web site for more.

⇒ Listen for word clues from the teacher. Teachers often signal what's important to note, using phrases such as "The three incidents that led to the War of 1812 were..."

⇒ Review notes after class to make sure they're accurate and complete. Doing this just before starting homework in a particular subject can help a student focus on the topic at hand.

Taking notes from reading: As a student moves through school, he'll need to develop the ability to take good notes from reading assignments and research materials. And parents can help, says author and California high school teacher Jim Burke. "Sometimes you have to sit down and say, here's this whole chapter. How do you decide what's important? What are you going to use these notes for? To take a test? To write a paper?" said Burke, whose *The Reader's Handbook* explains reading strategies and tools for high school students. "Students who don't take notes well, don't use them," he says. "They lose faith in the process." Many experts advise students to pre-read a textbook chapter to get an idea what it is about, rather than simply wading in. Students can grasp the main themes by first reading the introduction text, subheads, graphics, photo captions, summary paragraphs and study questions at the end. **Getting an overview** will help your child focus on what's important as she starts to take notes, rather than getting mired in the details. Burke prefers to use the term "note-making" — making meaning from information — to the more passive "note-taking." **Note-making**, he says, is "manipulating information to make it sticky." Some students can make information "stick" by making outlines. For other more visual learners, colors might work better. Burke gives the example of one student who went back over her science notes using red highlighter to indicate blood and blue for oxygen. **Finally**, if your child is struggling, he or she may be having trouble reading. Ask to explain a chapter recently read. If you can see that comprehension is a problem, make an appointment to talk to a teacher or school counselor so you can get the help your child may need.

Studying. Studying for tests is a skill. For struggling students, it's a mystery. "Unsuccessful test takers don't know where the questions come from," says Burke. "The kids who don't succeed tend to think the others are lucky." Here are some tips that will help your child learn to study effectively:

⇒ Encourage your student to practice *active* learning when studying — such as, highlighting his notes, using Post-it's to mark key textbook passages, making study cards, solving practice problems and mapping and diagramming concepts.

⇒ Some students focus better in the morning, others at night. Help your child find the times that her efforts will achieve the best results.

Sometimes we just have to memorize. You may have used a mnemonic like Roy G. Biv to remember the colors of the rainbow (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet). Inventing your own silly mnemonic together works just as well and can lighten up a study session.

Quick Tips for Filing Your FAFSA Filling out the FAFSA can be tricky. Keep these tips in mind and you shouldn't have any problems.

Identify Yourself

- Use your legal name as it appears on your Social Security card. Nicknames or aliases will cause a processing delay.
 - Read the questions carefully. The words "you" and "your" on the FAFSA always refer to the student, not the parents.
 - To be considered a veteran, you must have served on active duty and been discharged under other than dishonorable conditions. If your service was only for training purposes (e.g. National Guard or Reserves, or ROTC), you are not considered a veteran for your federal financial aid application.
- Remember to count yourself, the student, as one of the people in your household who will be a college student during the award year.

Your Parents and the FAFSA

- If your parents are divorced or separated, the parent with whom you lived the most during the past 12 months is the parent responsible for filling out the FAFSA. This is not necessarily the parent who has legal custody.
- If the parent responsible for completing the FAFSA has remarried, the new spouse must report their income & assets on the FAFSA. Prenuptial agreements have no bearing on this requirement.

Your Dependents

- A legal dependent is a person for whom you provide and will continue to provide more than half of their support. Support includes money, gifts, loans, housing, food, clothing, automobile, medical and dental care, and payment of college costs. If you have a child who is supported by your parents or someone else, you should answer "no" to the question that asks about legal dependents other than a spouse. If you have an unborn child who will be born before or during the award year (July 1 through June 30) and will be your legal dependent, that child should be counted as a member of the household.

Given the Option

- In the question that asks about your interest in different types of aid (e.g. work-study and student loans), answer "yes" to each question.

Answering "yes" does not obligate you to accept a loan or work-study position, nor does it guarantee you'll be offered either. Answering "no" to these questions will not get you more grant aid.

- Even if you qualify for the simplified needs test, you should still complete the asset information section of the FAFSA. Some states and schools use this information for computing their own financial aid awards.
- By submitting the FAFSA, you give permission to release your information to the state aid agency. You cannot apply for financial aid without releasing this information.

What Counts as Income?

- The Earned Income Credit is considered "untaxed income" on the FAFSA. Other types of untaxed income include retirement plan contributions made during the year and military food and housing allowances.
 - Taxable earnings from work-study jobs as well as any grant or scholarship monies that were reported on your income tax return are counted.
 - Prepaid tuition plans should be reported as assets on the FAFSA.
- Before You Submit Your FAFSA** Whether [filing online](#) or off, sign the form (you'll use your PIN online) and get all the other required signatures. If you don't sign the form, you will get an SAR, but you will not receive aid.

- Do not include anything with the form when you mail it; any enclosures will be destroyed. Likewise, do not write comments or notes in the margins of the form. If there are unusual family financial circumstances, you should contact the school's financial aid administrator to ask for a professional judgment review.
 - Make a copy of the form before mailing it. You can print out your online FAFSA before you submit the application. Submit the form on time.
- ⇒ If you don't understand a question or are having trouble filling out the form, call the Federal Student Aid Information Center at **1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243)**.

Absegami Academic Help

Activity Period Tutorial Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays during the activity period from 2:40 to 3:30pm. These teacher tutors are broken down by department— see your teacher for locations and/or check online at www.absegami.net for monthly schedules— simply click on the word "students" across the top margin and a drop down will appear with subjects and months, click for dates and locations.

Late Study @ *Gami Math Teacher tutors are available every Tuesday and Wednesday from 4:30 to 6:30pm in the Library! The Science Late Study is Thursdays from 4 to 7pm. You can stay the entire time or just as long as you need! See your teacher for more details.

Late Study @ Rittenberg in EHC Math, Science, and English Absegami Teacher tutors are available on Monday through Friday evenings from 5

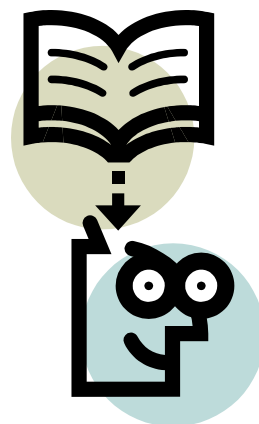
to 8pm at the Rittenberg School for EHC residents as part of a special 21st Century Grant.

You can use the tutorial or late study opportunities to do your homework, understand new concepts, review previous work or make-up tests and/or quizzes as per your regular teacher. The key is your communication with your classroom teachers— they can make arrangements with the late study staff to help you get things done!

National Honor Society Peer Tutors are available every period of every day down in the guidance office. Simply submit a request form— available in guidance in front of the career lab— and start getting the help you need! Don't let a tough class get you down. Get the help you need and be as successful as you can be!

Academic Help 5 Point Student Self-Help Checklist

- ___1. Look in the mirror... Are you doing what is required— homework, notes, study time???
- ___2. Talk to your teacher— ask this simple question- "What can I do to help my understanding and my grade?"
- ___3. Use the Tutorial period. Investing time now will help you later!
- ___4. Use the late study. Again, make an investment and take ownership of your situation.
- ___5. Get an NHS Tutor— they want to help— together you can make things better.



The Absegami Parent's Guidance Newsletter

Absegami High School
Guidance Department
201 South Wrangleboro Road
Galloway NJ 08205

NON-profit Organization
Bulk Rate
US Postage Paid
Absecon NJ
Permit #74

THE GUIDEPOST
is available
on-line @
www.absegami.com

Upcoming SAT/ACT Dates & Deadlines

SAT www.collegeboard.com

March 24– Feb 10/Feb 24

May 2– March 31/April 9

June 6– May 5/May 15

Oct 10– deadlines TBA

Nov 7– deadlines TBA

Dec 5– deadlines TBA

ACT www.actstudent.org

April 4– Feb 27/March 13

June 13– May 8/May 22

Sept 12– deadlines TBA

Oct 24– deadlines TBA

Dec 12– deadlines TBA

Win-Win – The All You Can Eat Buffet

An excerpt from "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens" by Sean Covey

Win-Win is a belief that everyone can win, it's both nice and tough all at once. I won't step on you, but I won't be your doormat either. You care about other people and you want them to succeed. But you also care about yourself, and you want to succeed as well. Win-Win is abundant. It is the belief that there's plenty of success to go around. It's not either you or me. It's both of us. It's not a matter of who gets the biggest piece of pie. There's more than enough food for everyone. It's an all you can eat buffet. I've learned never to underestimate what can happen when someone thinks **Win-Win**. This was Andy's experience.

At first I could see no point to Win-Win. But I started applying it in my afterschool jobs, and I was blown away. I have used it now for two years and it's honestly scary how powerful this habit is-I wish I had known about it much sooner in my life. It's taught me to exercise leadership ability and to approach my job with an attitude of "let's make this job more fun. Let's make it a win for both me and my employer." I now sit down with my manager monthly and tell her all the little things I can see in the company that aren't getting

*done that I am willing to do. The last time we met she said to me, "I have always wondered how we could get all these little loose ends done. I am so impressed with how you look for opportunities and are so willing to perform." And then she gave me a dollar an hour raise. Believe me, this **Win-Win** stuff is contagious. If you're bighearted, committed to helping others succeed, and willing to share recognition, you'll be a magnet for friends. Think about it. Don't you just love people who are interesting in your success and want you to win? It makes you want to help them in return, doesn't it? The win-win spirit can be applied to just about any situation, from working out major conflicts with your parents to deciding who walks the dog, as Jon shared below.*

My sister and I are always arguing about who has to walk the dogs and do the dishes. We both would choose the dogs over the dishes any day. But someone has to do one or the other. So we decided that I would wash the dishes, she would dry them, and then we'd walk the dogs together. I'm glad it worked out like that, because now we get what needs to be done finished but also add a little fun to it by doing it together. Sometimes, no matter how hard you try, you won't be able to find a Win-Win solution. Or the other party may be so bent on Win-Lose that

you don't even want to approach him or her. That happens. In these situations, don't get ugly yourself or get stepped on. Instead, go for a win-win or no deal. In other words, if you can't find a solution that works for both of you, decide not to play. No deal, for example, if you and your friend can't decide what to do one night, instead of doing an activity that one of you might resent, split up that night and get together another night. Or if you and your girlfriend or boyfriend can't develop a Win-Win relationship, it might be best to go for No Deal and part ways. It sure beats going for Win-Lose, Lose-Win, or worse of all, Lose-Lose.

Please Listen

When I ask you to listen to me
And you start giving me advice,
You have not done what I asked.
When I ask you to listen to me
And you begin to tell me why
I shouldn't feel that way,
You are trampling on my feelings.
When I ask you to listen to me
And you feel you have to do something
To solve my problem,
You have failed me,
Strange as that may seem.
Listen! All I ask is that you listen.
Don't talk or do - just hear me.