

## How to succeed in high school

*Tips from Valedictorians*

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### *History classes*

Take notes on each chapter on the topics which you don't think you will remember. Don't waste too much time writing down facts which you know and probably will know for months to come. Make sure that you always take notes on the main idea of certain historical subjects/topics (i.e. what defined the Gilded Age) rather than taking tedious notes on extraneous or overly specific facts that clearly aren't very important. Use, but do not abuse, textbook summary websites [apnotes.net](http://apnotes.net) and [course-notes.org](http://course-notes.org) to get a quick refresher over certain chapters. Too much reliance on such websites, and you will quickly succumb to indolence, letting course notes become your one and only textbook. While such websites are useful tools, they neglect a wide range of much needed facts for in-class tests and AP exams. However tempting course notes and AP notes may be, the textbook is your one true friend.

### *Math classes*

Depending on how good your math teacher is (and on how much you pay attention in class), you may or may not have to rely heavily on your textbook. Nevertheless, unless you're some sort of savant, doing at least a few practice problems over each topic is the only way to prepare yourself for the class and the associated tests. If you pay attention in class and do the work, you can save yourself a lot of time at home. Personally, my night before a math test would only require ten or so minutes of studying. I'll take my textbook, and go to the beginning of each section which I would be tested over. In the first few pages of each section, you'll find some handy-dandy example problems provided by the book. More often than not, these are the only types of problems you will find on your test, so memorize how to do them! If you still have trouble, try some more practice of the same type, or resort to the internet. I've found PatrickJMT's channel on YouTube particularly helpful.

### *English classes*

Reading and writing are your friends. However, one unfortunate thing about English is that there is a wide variability among teachers of this oh-so-important subject. Some teachers may think everyone in the class is Hemingway in bloom, others may not feel the need to give anyone more than a B or C. So be prepared for this. And don't stress out too much if you get one of the latter types of teachers (it happens to everyone at some point). Also, there is a high probability that you will spend a large amount of time analyzing poems or fiction for symbols and metaphors that may or may not exist. Just warning ya.

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## General Tips

- Learning to speed read is quite useful, for obvious reasons. Check out the links at the end of this article for more on that.
- Don't work for more than 90 minutes continuously.
- When you take a break, do something fun or mentally relaxing (i.e. a few push-ups, reading the news, talking to friends, checking out your favorite blog).
- Don't stay up too late, especially before a test. I personally go to bed at 9 or 10PM on school days (you'll feel better when you wake up). Also, you need sleep to enter your test relaxed, and ready to take on the exam.
- Don't pull all-nighters. There should NEVER be a need to pull an all-nighter in high school, college, or any other time, so long as you make a good effort to study consistently. Furthermore, there are many subjects (e.g. organic chemistry) that simply CANNOT be learned the night before and require you to have a thorough grasp of the material at hand, as opposed to a superficial understanding which allows one to mindlessly regurgitate words, formulas, and equations. We can almost guarantee that no matter how good a student you are, you will certainly forget everything you studied after the test.
- Manage your time so that you CAN go to bed early. Make a schedule on paper or online (Google Calendar) if you have to.
- Try to avoid multitasking. While it may help manage your time, it takes a toll on your mental abilities, and instead of doing one thing well, you'll find yourself doing several things poorly.
- Anki flashcards is a program/app on multiple platforms (Windows/Android/iOS) that is worth a try (it's free!), even if you think you're not a flashcard person (as I once did). It uses the concept of spaced memorization to make learning high volumes of material relatively stress-free.
- Make to-do lists. Use your phone, computer, or just a plain old sheet of paper. As bright as you are, you do forget things.
- Don't shy away from the pen and paper (the pen is mightier than the computer in some cases!). We often find that writing things down aids in retention better than typing or simply reading.
- Talking to yourself is another technique you might want to try. Be sure to do this when you're alone though, unless you want other people to think you're crazy.
- Find what works best for you. This is just a guide, not the Ten Commandments, so nothing is set in stone.

## Some awesome resources/research on studying

<http://lifehacker.com/5867995/the-secret-to-accomplishing-more-by-doing-less-take-breaks>  
<http://calnewport.com/blog/>  
<http://artofmanliness.com/2009/10/18/how-to-speed-read-like-theodore-roosevelt/>  
<http://lifehacker.com/5890129/five-best-productivity-methods>  
<http://www.lifehack.org/articles/lifestyle/the-productivity-tricks-and-daily-habits-of-famous-people.html>  
<http://www.cse.buffalo.edu/~rapaport/howtostudy.html>  
<http://www.supermemo.com/english/contents.htm#Articles>  
<http://mylifescoop.com/featured-stories/2012/01/tools-gear-resources-to-help-you-study-smarter.html>  
<http://lifehacker.com/5922453/what-multitasking-does-to-our-brains>  
Pomodoro Method timer - <http://www.focusboosterapp.com/>

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