

## Tips for A Successful School Year

by Dr. James J. Crist

Succeeding in school is more important than ever, but many students don't feel motivated to do their best. Here are some suggestions that can help you do well in school.

1. Start off strong. It will take more work to slack off at the beginning, only to have to work harder at the end of each quarter to bring your grades up. Remember, it takes about 11 grades of 100 to cancel out one 0.
2. Get organized! Unless your teachers tell you differently, use a colored folder with pockets to keep track of your homework assignments. Put your name and phone number on it in case you lose it. On the left pocket, put all homework assignments. When you complete them, put them in the right pocket. Bring this folder to every class. If you need separate notebooks for each class, use color coding to help you keep track of them. You can use a blue folder for the notebook and a blue book cover for the textbook. Another way, if you have block scheduling is to use one color for one day and a different color for the other day—e.g. red and blue days. This makes it easier when you pack your bag.
3. Be sure to pack your bag the night before. Don't wait until the last minute. Ask for help from your parents if needed—they can double check what you've packed.
4. Use your agenda to keep track of all assignments. Yes, everyone nags you about this but it's the best way to stay organized. Remember the effect that even one assignment not handed in (a 0) can have on your overall grade.
5. If you have a cell phone or other electronic device, program in reminders for things like medication, important tests, or projects, which are often worth 4 or 5 grades.
6. Start studying for tests a few days ahead of time. If you're not good at last-minute memorizing, this gives you a better chance for the information you're learning to stick.
7. Figure out if you study better with friends or alone, with music or with complete quiet. Some people work best if they start with homework in one subject, and when they get bored they switch to a different subject.
8. If you have no homework, spend just 10 minutes reviewing your notes for the day.
9. Set up your own reward schedule. For example, do 30 minutes of homework and then take a break and watch TV, go outside, play video games, or go online to take a break—no more than 15 minutes. Tell yourself you can have fun as soon as you finish your work. This is a good strategy for life, too.
10. Get enough sleep. If you don't get enough sleep, you'll be grouchier and have more trouble with paying attention. 8-10 hours is what most kids/teens need.
11. Get enough exercise. Exercise makes your brain healthier and work better, just as it helps your body. It also gives you more mental energy to get homework done.

### References:

*How to Do Homework Without Throwing Up* by Trevor Romain. Ages 8-13.

*Get Off My Brain! A Survival Guide for Lazy (Bored, Frustrated, and Otherwise Sick of School) Students* by Randall McCutcheon. For teenagers.

*Get Organized Without Losing It* by Janet S. Fox.