

The skills you use to succeed at school can often be applied at the workplace and in your personal life as well. It is up to you to become an active learner and to improve areas in your school life that are less than satisfactory. How you see yourself plays an important role in achieving these goals. If you see yourself in a positive way, you can face challenges with more confidence. Evaluating yourself and identifying your problem areas are good starting points. In this chapter, you will evaluate your study habits, your time management, and how you deal with peer pressure. You will also be given suggestions for what to do if you are having difficulty in any of these areas.

Success in School

By the time you graduate from high school, you will have spent approximately ten thousand hours in the classroom. During these hours, your identity, self-esteem, values, career direction, and academic abilities are shaped. As you progress through the grades, you gradually take more **responsibility** for what happens to you at school. You currently play a number of roles: son or daughter, friend, sister or brother, basketball player, reading mentor. Your role as a student will have a major impact on your future.

Activity 1

Reflecting on Yourself as a Learner

What is your picture of yourself as a learner in the classroom? Reflect on this question by completing the following chart.

On a sheet of paper, write the numbers from one to ten. Beside each number, write the number from the scale from one to five that best represents how you see yourself.

How I Feel About Myself as a Learner

1. successful	1	2	3	4	5	unsuccessful
2. satisfied	1	2	3	4	5	unsatisfied
3. confident	1	2	3	4	5	hesitant
4. better than others	1	2	3	4	5	worse than others
5. stimulated	1	2	3	4	5	bored
6. do my best	1	2	3	4	5	do not do my best
7. good study skills	1	2	3	4	5	poor study skills
8. strong test-taker	1	2	3	4	5	weak test-taker
9. use time well	1	2	3	4	5	waste time
10. good relationships	1	2	3	4	5	weak relationships

When you have finished, pair up. Discuss the following questions.

- How do you see yourself as a learner?
- How do you think you got this picture of yourself?
- How would you like to change? (optional)
- How much does the approval of others (parents/guardians, friends, teachers) affect you?



Reflecting on Your Sharing

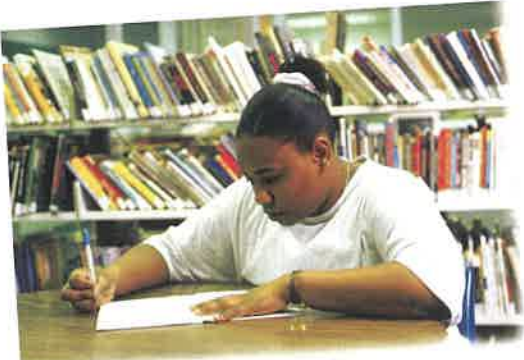
In your journal, record the observations made about you during the discussion with your partner. Then write about how you felt when you shared your questionnaire. Were there any surprising differences between your questionnaires? Complete the following sentence starters in your journal.

When I shared the information with my partner, I felt . . .
It surprised me that my partner's questionnaire . . .
The one major difference in results that my partner and I noticed was . . .

Skill Areas for Classroom Success

If you are going to take responsibility for your learning in the classroom, there are important things you can do to ensure that you are making the best use of your time there.

1. Go to every class and get there on time.
2. Take a notebook, textbooks, planner or organizer, and other required materials to class and be sure to copy down important notes and assignments. Record any homework assignments before you leave the classroom.
3. Take careful notes. Details matter. You might not remember later. Underline or highlight important points.
4. Listen carefully. Respond to questions. Sit near the front if you are easily distracted.
5. Ask questions if you need information or clarification on an issue. Ask for extra help after school if you need it.
6. Participate actively in class. Share your views. Be positive.
7. Find someone (a study buddy) in each class who will agree to share information with you and pass on homework assignments if you are absent. Get your study buddy's phone number.
8. Complete your homework each day.



Note-Taking Strategies

The notes that you record in class will enhance your learning and recall. The following strategies will help you to look at the structure and format of your notes as well as the practices of note taking.

Summarize and use key words: The essential element in taking effective notes is to jot down only the main points. Listen for and highlight the main points. If there is information to be read in preparation for the class, make sure that you read it and are familiar with the language, ideas, and content of the subject. Select key words that link concepts and focus on key words that highlight the main ideas, facts, theories, and comparisons.

Organize your notes: Organize and structure your note taking in a way that suits your learning style. Perhaps you want to record all the main points and reorganize them in sequence later. You might be a person who prefers underlined headings with points listed underneath or you might prefer a key word with points written around it. Some people use different coloured pens or highlighters. File folders work best for some, while binders are preferred by others. Should you carry around all your notes for the subject or only the ones for that day? Whatever you do, the structure you use should be one that works for you.

Visualize: Form a mental picture of what the instructor is saying. This visual style of learning will enhance the primarily auditory and verbal style of most lessons.

Use symbols: Devise symbols to speed up and simplify your note taking. Since it is time consuming to spell out every word, abbreviations and symbols can be effective shortcuts. Some examples are shown at right.

Check the chalkboard: Write down everything that is on the chalkboard or is shown on overhead transparencies. Copy down all graphs, diagrams, formulas, and dates that the teacher writes on the board. If definitions, sentences, phrases, or key words are repeated, indicate in your notes that they are important.

Date items and note cross references: Date any handouts or additional materials that are handed out. Do this as soon as you receive them. If the written work in your notes has additional material in a text or is based on textbook information, write the cross reference in the margin of your notes for the day.

Review and revise: Set aside a few minutes at the end of each day to organize your notes. Read them over quickly and highlight information that will be important to study. Copy over or clarify sections that were done in a hurry and might be difficult to understand in the future.

Read and link: Read over your notes and think about how they tie in with the information previously gained in the class. Ask yourself, How does all this new information relate to what I already know? When you link new knowledge to

SYMBOL	EXPLANATION
Q	question
w/o	without
+	more
bf	boyfriend
^	higher
@	at
>	greater than
*	important idea

what you already know, especially within 24 hours of receiving it, you create a lasting impression that is better for recall and higher retention.

Make these guidelines into habits for your note taking to improve your success at school.

Activity 2

Using a Self-Evaluation Checklist

Now that you know how to use class time more effectively, complete the following **self-evaluation** checklist at the end of the week. Try to make it a Friday habit. Do it every week and act on the results.

- 1 = did very well
- 2 = did well
- 3 = did OK
- 4 = some improvement needed
- 5 = a great deal of improvement needed

Classroom Success Checklist

These are the elements that are important for doing well in class, and a rating scale for your self-evaluation. Read each sentence in the check-list. On a sheet of paper, write down the number from the rating scale that is most like you for each sentence.

1. I have gone to every class on time.
2. I have taken a notebook to every class.
3. I have taken complete notes.
4. I have listened carefully.
5. I have asked questions as needed.
6. I have participated actively.
7. I have a study buddy in each class.
8. I have done my homework.

Evaluating Your Checklist

Study the results of your checklist. Complete the following sentence starters on a sheet of paper.

When I respond to the questions I feel . . .

After three weeks, my score on the checklist is improving because . . .

The one thing that I still need to work on is . . .

I am most proud of the fact that I now . . .




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Ideas for Study Success at Home

Another key to success at school is creating a **personal work area** at home. It might be a desk, a table, a comfortable chair, or your bed. Whatever and wherever it is, it should be the type of environment that works best for you. If possible, and with permission, make the space your own by having a calendar or your planner (for due dates and to check things off when completed), dictionary, calculator, paper, pens, and pencils. Go to your work area on a regular basis to do your homework. Then follow the guidelines in the Homework Game to develop good study habits.

The Homework Game

START	SCHOOL	I write down homework in my planner as soon as it is assigned.	I make sure I understand the homework before I leave school.
I reflect on my work. How could I do better? How will I use this learning?			I ask my teacher for help when I do not understand.
I hand in my assignments on time.			I have a study buddy I can phone if I am away from school or if I do not fully understand an assignment.
My homework is packed by the door, ready for me to take to school.	HOME		
I keep my notebooks, folders, and portfolios well organized.			
I look after myself and take breaks when I need them.	I do my homework early in the evening before I am too tired.	I avoid distractions like phone calls, television, or the stereo.	I have a quiet place to work.

Developed by the Toronto District School Board.



Planning Your Private Space

Draw a plan for the ideal personal work area and any special features you want it to have. Include the perfect conditions that should exist for you to do your homework. Be as creative as you like. Money, space, and time are no object!

Study Stretches

Have you been studying so long that you are falling asleep in your chair? Do you feel glued to your chair? How can your brain work when it is starved for oxygen? It is time to stretch! Try the Shoulder Shrug.

- Push your chair away from your work area.
- Put your arms by your sides and rotate your shoulders one at a time, then together.
- Try to move your right shoulder up to your ear and then drop it as low as you can. Do the same with your left shoulder.

Now, back to work. Taking a study stretch will help you to study better and longer. Try a stretch every 15 minutes to keep mentally fit.

Activity 3

Writing Exercise Instructions

Write instructions for these study stretches.

- Push-Ups for Toes!
- Awakening All Arms!
- Lift Those Legs!

Developing Skills for Work

Since your future career is probably not yet decided, it is a good idea to take the major subjects at school so that you can change your mind later if you wish. The following chart demonstrates the skills you learn at school in courses and activities and how the same skills can be used in the workplace.

Building Your Work Skills in School

SCHOOL SKILLS	COURSES AND ACTIVITIES THAT BUILD THESE SKILLS	HOW THESE SKILLS WILL HELP YOU IN THE WORKPLACE
Communication Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Giving class presentations• Reading articles and books• Writing essays, short stories, and poetry	Language Arts Languages Social Studies Art Student Council School Newspaper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepare presentations• Write clear and concise memos, letters, and reports• Speak well on issues• Explain your ideas effectively• Ask for help when required

Teamwork Skills

- Getting along with your classmates
- Working with others on projects



Social Studies
Science
Physical Education
Trades and Technology
Music
Student Council Clubs
Sports Teams
School Band/Orchestra

- Be a productive team worker
- Accept supervision
- View co-workers as equals
- Know how to be co-operative and share knowledge

Time Management Skills

- Doing homework
- Meeting project deadlines
- Scheduling your day
- Getting to class on time



All courses and activities

- Get work done efficiently
- Be prepared for meetings
- Meet deadlines
- Plan schedules and set goals

Problem-Solving Skills

- Analyzing information
- Understanding the problem
- Defining the problem
- Solving the problem
- Applying the results



Science
Math
Business
Social Studies
Trades and Technology
Student Council

- Think analytically and clearly about issues
- Pinpoint problems
- Evaluate situations
- Identify risks
- Make informed decisions
- Find productive solutions

Organizational Skills

- Taking notes
- Following written and oral instructions
- Keeping binders of information
- Following a schedule
- Setting priorities and goals



All courses and activities

- Keep a neat workplace
- Take care of equipment and tools
- Keep track of important details
- Handle interruptions well
- Organize activities to meet deadlines

Learning Skills

- Asking questions
- Reading information
- Using the library
- Researching information
- Joining activities and clubs
- Trying new things
- Meeting new people



All courses and activities

- Think critically and act logically
- Learn from on-the-job training
- Upgrade skills as necessary
- Learn from mistakes
- Increase knowledge and productivity

Computer Skills

- Learning storyboard
- Learning word processing
- Learning database programs



Math
Science
Business
Trades and Technology
Computer Studies

- Be computer literate
- Use technology in the workplace
- Adapt to new technologies

Listening Skills

- Attending classes
- Going to lectures
- Taking notes
- Visualizing what you hear
- Comprehending information

All courses and activities

"I get it!"

- Understand what managers and co-workers tell you
- Help others with their concerns
- Participate effectively in meetings

Creativity Skills

- Learning how others have been creative
- Using your imagination
- Trying new ways to do things
- Looking at issues from a different point of view

Language Arts

Art
Music
Science
Drama Club
School Band/Orchestra

- Be an idea person
- Think of new ways to get the job done
- Create a positive work environment
- Increase motivation

**Leadership Skills**

- Leading projects
- Being on sports teams
- Volunteering as a peer helper

Science

History
Music
Physical Education
School Activities

- Lead projects
- Manage projects
- Coach others
- Help others reach their goals

Activity 4**Applying School Subjects to the Workplace**

This activity focusses on the subjects you are taught at school and how they are used by specific workers. Create a chart like the following sample, and give examples for Mathematics, Language Arts, Science, Health/Physical Education, Technology, and History/Geography.

SUBJECT	SAMPLE JOBS	HOW SUBJECT IS USED
Mathematics	Plumber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computes measurements. • Reads plans. • Understands scaled drawings.
	Travel Agent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computes discounts, taxes. • Compares prices.
	Language Arts Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computes students' marks.
Language Arts	Carpenter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reads trade journals to follow new product development.