

GLS10 Unit 1: Learning Skills

Activity 1: How to Be a Successful Student

Overview

In this activity, you will think about what it takes to be a successful student. Certain skills are very important, such as an ability to organize your school work and study habits. Knowing how to manage your time effectively is important too. By exploring some strategies to help you become a better student, and applying them to your daily activities at school, you can become a very successful learner.

Lesson



What does the word **successful** mean to you? Different people have different definitions of what 'success' really is. Being a successful student doesn't just happen by chance. To become a successful student there are two key areas to consider.

The first is **time management**. Time management is the ability to judge how much work you have to do, how much time it might take to do it and deciding when you are going to do it. By using agendas, calendars, schedules, timers and

watches you can ensure that assignments get done on time.

Remember that there are always 24 hours in a day, although sometimes it might not seem like it. By analyzing how you spend your time now, you might see some ways of improving how you use your time.



You can monitor your own study skills using a planning calendar to keep track of homework assignments. Let's face it – it's too hard to remember all this stuff in your head!

Here's how you can develop your own weekly homework planner. Each page in the calendar is labeled with the days of the week and reflects one week's worth of homework. In the first column are your school subjects. Bring this with you to every class and fill in the homework assignments as they are given to you. This way you can see if you have any conflicts or days with multiple assignments or tests. Put in a section for after-school activities as well, to make sure they don't clash with school work. Make sure the weekend is included, as you can use it to plan study time, but you will want to have a balance between school work and leisure time, of course.

You are expected to take your homework planner home each day and return with it the next day too. This tool will help you visualize what you have to do in a week.

Here is a sample of a homework planner page:

Subject:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
English							
Math							
Science							
History							
French							
After School							

As each week passes, you can fold back the page and clip it with a binder clip, giving you a fresh start on the next week's schedule. This will save you time when you're trying to find out what is coming up in the current week.

When you are creating a schedule, consider the following:

- Social life and special events (birthdays, parties, trips);
- Travel time (how long will it take to get to the library?);
- Research (how long will it take to find the information I need?);
- Putting together the final assignment (editing, adding graphics, printing);
- Expecting the unexpected (delays e.g. illness).



Assignments usually take longer than expected, so leave yourself some 'breathing room' and don't wait until the last minute! Here's a rule of thumb: Subtract two days for every week assigned to a project and make that your deadline. If it is assigned on a Monday, and is due in two weeks, then aim for four days earlier and have it done on the Thursday before it's due! You'll be glad you did when the weekend arrives.

Using a monthly calendar to track long-term assignments is important too. Keep a regular calendar with your weekly planner to write in projects that might be due in a few weeks or longer. This will allow you to visualize longer periods of time and plan ahead for them.

You can also graph your homework return and completion rates. This is another strategy will probably improve your performance on classroom tests! Ask a parent or teacher to help build in a reward system for returning homework and your planner. On a self-monitoring chart in the planner, you can record each time you completed and returned your homework assignment by:

- Colouring the square for the day green if homework was completed and returned;
- Colouring the square for the day red if homework was not done;
- Colouring the square yellow if homework was late.

If you meet the success criterion, for example 4 out of 5 days of completed homework, you will receive a reward at the end of the week. This needs to be arranged with your teacher ahead of time. This will help motivate you to keep on studying.

The second important area for success at school is organization. By using a few strategies that will help you organize your school workload, you can be sure to keep things manageable.

You will need to have an understanding of basic study skills. Here is a list of organizational strategies basic to homework:

- Identify a location for doing homework that is free of distractions. It should be relatively quiet (no TV) with good lighting and a large enough work surface to be comfortable;
- Have all materials available and organized before you start, such as pencils, an eraser, pens, ruler, calculator, extra paper, laptop etc;
- Allocate enough time to complete activities and keep on schedule. You can use a timer or watch to help you keep track of the time;
- Take good notes in class and/or borrow good notes from someone else;
- Break your bigger assignments into 'chunks' or parts to make them more manageable;
- Check assignments for accuracy and completion before turning them in by proof-reading yourself or asking someone else to read them over;
- Know how to get help when it is needed and don't be afraid to ask!
- Turn in completed homework on time;
- Use an agenda or homework calendar every day. Look ahead to the next week or two to see what big assignments or tests are coming up.

By following these homework and study tips, you will notice an improvement in your school performance.

Assignment

1. *Read the statements below to help you decide what success means to you personally.*

What is Success?

- Getting along with friends?
- Getting along with teachers and parents?
- Graduating from Secondary School?
- Being a good athlete?
- Being in a leadership role?
- Graduating from College or University?
- Getting married and having a family?
- Making lots of money?
- Pursuing creative interests?
- Being popular or 'famous'?

Now that you have read the above, who do you consider to be a successful person? Why do you think he/she is so successful?

2. It will be helpful if you analyze your current methods of managing your time and study habits. Take the time management quiz by following this link: <http://www.ucc.vt.edu/lynch/TMQuiz.htm>

Once you have completed the quiz, print your results. Now write a brief summary (3-4 sentences) on how you might better manage your time based on your results.

3. It is also helpful to understand where your time is being used during a typical week and whether this is preventing you from finding the necessary time to study or not. Take this survey of how your time is spent: <http://www.ucc.vt.edu/lynch/TMAssessment.htm>

Once you are done the survey, print your results. Now write a brief summary (3-4 sentences) on how your time is currently being spent and how you might change your time habits in the future. Do you have enough time to study and complete homework with your current schedule?