

STARTING SECONDARY SCHOOL

Some changes you may notice in Secondary School:

- You may have a number of different teachers for different subjects.
- You have to work out how different teachers run their class, what are their rules and boundaries, what are their expectations, and you have to learn how to adjust to different teaching styles.
- You could be going to a lot of different classes all over the school and you could sit in a different desk each time.
- There could be all different people at different levels - Year Coordinators, House Masters, Directors of Learning, Heads of Departments and you have to learn who to see for what.
- Your teachers expect you to ask for help if you don't understand something.
- You may be in classes with lots of different people.

Some more differences between Primary School and Secondary School:

- Your lessons will be a certain length and in a fixed order each day. Each day will be different and you may even have a 7 or 10 day timetable. Bell times may be different on different days of the week.
- You may have a locker and there might be rules about carrying around your books and when you can go to your locker.
- You will be give lots of loose papers that you need to manage by either sticking them in or taking them home and putting in a folder at home.
- You have to learn a whole new system, what the school rules are and how things work in this school, ie what you do if you are late or absent etc.
- You have your own timetable and you need to check where you have to go in the school and at what time.
- Each night you need to get your books ready for the next day and make sure you have everything you need.

Top Tips for organizing timetables and books:

- **TIMETABLE COPIES:** It is a good idea to make 3 copies of your timetable.
- **COLOUR-CODE:** Colour-code it so you highlight each subject in a different colour.
- **DISPLAY COPIES:** Put one in your diary, one in your locker (if you have one) and one on your desk or in front of your desk at home.
- **READ FRONT OF DIARY:** Spend some time reading through the front of the school diary as it will have lots of important info about school rules, what to do if you are late/sick etc.
- **LABEL EVERYTHING:** Make sure all books etc are labelled with your name and class.
- **STATIONERY:** Check you have ruler, pens, pencil, glue, small stapler, paper clips, eraser etc.
- **LOOSE SHEETS:** Get in the habit of pasting in loose sheets immediately and take home and file into a folder at home anything that cannot be pasted into your book.
- **FILING:** Set up somewhere at home (eg. a large folder or a filing cabinet or a series of folders) where you can file away the papers from school that cannot be pasted in your book (eg. past tests and assignments, large amounts of handouts) and also where you can keep exercise books for that subject when they are full. A magazine holder for each subject can be a good idea.

Some more differences between Primary School and Secondary School with homework and assignments:

- You have to record your homework into your diary yourself and keep track of what needs to be done.
- Every day the homework situation will be different. It depends on what classes you had that day, how much work you got done in class, what your teacher needs you to do - so every night you could have different amounts of work to do.
- Even if you have no homework, you should get in the habit of doing 30-60 minutes most nights. You may do some extra reading, prepare for an upcoming test, work on an assignment or just go back over things you found difficult.
- Every teacher may have different expectations and different consequences for not doing your homework.
- The homework may be more challenging, you will be expected to do much more at home.
- Your assignments will overlap, you may have a number to work on at one time and a number due all at once (so important to start straight away as if leave too late you think you will have heaps of time and later on you might get another assignment).

Top Tips for managing homework and assignments:

- **CALENDAR:** Have a calendar above your desk and mark on it when assignments are due.
- **DIARY:** Write the due date of assignments into your diary in a different colour pen or highlight them to make them stand out.
- **START NOW:** It is a good idea when you are given an assignment to go home and start straight away. Even if you do a little bit at least you will have started.
- **ASSIGNMENT FOLDER:** Have a place at home where you keep all the current assignments you are working on, an inbox, a folder, somewhere where you can easily keep all the assignment work together.
- **ASK IF UNSURE:** The first thing you should do with an assignment is to go through it really carefully, make sure you understand what you have to do and ask if you are unsure.
- **MAKE A PLAN:** Once you understand the assignment, work out what you will have to do for the assignment and break it down into smaller steps. Make a plan in your diary of when you will do each step so that you won't leave it till the last minute.
- **1 HOUR EVERY NIGHT:** Get in the habit of doing 1 hour of schoolwork most nights. Do homework first, then work on assignments or test preparation, if you still have time left then do other things that will help you understand your subjects better:
 - reading ahead in your textbook
 - reviewing work from earlier lessons
 - going back over things you found difficult
 - extra questions from your textbook
 - summarising your work
 - even just general reading is good!

Studying for tests and exams:

- **FIND OUT EVERYTHING YOU CAN:** Find out everything you can about the test. What topics are being tested, what types of questions there will be (multiple choice, short answer), how long the test will be, how marks are allocated.
- **ASK IF UNSURE:** If you are not sure what you need to study or how to study make sure you ask your teacher until you are clear. If the opportunity arises, then ask in class, otherwise ask your teacher if you can see them before or after class sometime. If you are still not clear, ask your parents to give your teacher a call to clarify things.
- **MAKE SOME STUDY NOTES/SUMMARIES:** As you begin to study for a test or exam in secondary school one of the first things you need to do is to make some study notes or summaries.
 - Get some paper, ruled or blank is ok.
 - Look through your exercise book, your textbook and any sheets.
 - For each heading or section, start making point form notes about the main things you will have to remember for the test.
 - Don't write great big long sentences.
 - Try and keep the points short and put things in your own words.
- **ASK FOR HELP:** If you came across things you did not understand or were not sure of when making your notes ask your teacher or parents for help. You may also like to show your teacher and parents the notes you have made to get some feedback from them about what you could do to improve.
- **LEARN THE NOTES:** The next stage is to start getting the information into your memory. Don't just read the notes. The biggest mistake students make is they think study is just reading things over and over until hopefully some of it sticks in your head. The right way to study involves extra steps after reading. What you do is read a section of your notes then **TEST YOURSELF** on what you have just read. You could do this by:
 - Seeing what you can write down without looking at the notes and then checking to see which bits you got wrong.
 - Seeing what you can say out loud without looking at the notes and then checking to see which bits you got wrong.
 - Getting someone to test you.
 - Making flashcards on things you need to learn in your notes and testing yourselves on these.
 - Writing a list of questions as you read your notes then seeing if you can answer them after you finish reading.
- **REPEAT STEP 5 OVER AND OVER AND OVER:** Repetition is the key to remembering things. So test yourself over and over and over on your notes until you find that you are starting to remember the information easily. This is why it is a good idea to start early and spread your study out over all the time before the test.
- **DO LOTS OF PRACTICE:** This means you need to do as many different questions as possible to see if you can apply what you have learnt to different types of questions. Ways you can do this:
 - Your teacher may give you a revision sheet or a past examination paper to do.
 - You could go back in your textbook and pick out questions to re-do, particularly ones you found hard.
 - Your school library may have another textbook in a different brand or a study guide for that subject and you can do the questions in that book.
 - You can re-do any exercises or activities you did during the topic.
 - Some schools will put extra revision activities up on the school website for you to download.
 - Some textbooks come with a CD with extra questions or a supporting website with extra questions.

- If you feel you have nothing to practice from ie no questions to do to see if you understand the work ask your teacher or even ask your parent to buy you a book you could use to do questions from - most of the big bookshops will have an educational section.

- **ASK FOR HELP:** Throughout this whole process, anytime there is something you don't understand you must ask for help. Don't ignore any problems, or let them build up, see your teacher and ask about them as quickly as possible.

Seven steps to doing well in Secondary School:

1. **ASK FOR HELP:** Ask for help whenever you are unsure about anything.
2. **ASK FOR HELP:** Ask for help whenever you are unsure about anything. (It is in twice because it is so important!!)
3. **POSITIVE ATTITUDE:** Look for ways to enjoy things about school and be positive in your attitude. It makes a big difference.
4. **USE CLASSTIME:** Really make the most of every lesson, staying focused and on-task and completing all the work your teacher gives you. Start to really listen and think in every lesson.
5. **HOMEWORK DIARY:** Get in the habit of always writing in your homework immediately and checking it every afternoon when you get home. Stay up-to-date in your homework and complete all work.
6. **START EARLY:** Start assignment and test preparation early. You may be given other work later on so it is a good idea to start your assignments straight away and even try and have them finished a bit before the due date.
7. **ALWAYS DO YOUR BEST:** Don't worry about comparing yourself to other people, just always aim to do your best in everything you do for school and you will feel happy and your teachers and parents will be pleased with your effort.

Tips for students in selective schools:

- Enjoy the exciting and stimulating environment of your new school!
- Don't worry about what marks other people get, just focus on improving your own marks.
- Always ask for help if you are having trouble or don't understand something.
- If you are feeling stressed or pressured, talk to your parents or a teacher as soon as possible.

Tips for students in boarding schools about organizing workspace:

- **CLEAR DESK:** Keep the desk space clear, have places to put everything away.
- **SHELF FOR BOOKS:** Line up your textbooks and exercise books on a shelf.
- **NAME ON EVERYTHING:** Make sure all your belongings are labelled with your name and class.
- **SECTION FOR PERSONAL:** Have only a small section up out of the way for putting up personal info, photos etc.
- **CLEAR EACH NIGHT:** Make sure every night you clear your workspace and put everything away.
- **TIMETABLE VISIBLE:** Have your timetable showing clearly.
- **CALENDAR:** Also a calendar or term planner where you can mark due dates for work.
- **KEEP UNCLUTTERED:** Don't let the space get too cluttered (see some of the spaces below)!

Tips for students in boarding schools about using allocated study times:

- **USE ALL STUDY PERIOD TIMES:** The school has determined how much time you should spend on schoolwork - so make sure you use all of that time!
- **PLAN YOUR WORK FOR STUDY PERIODS:** Decide in advance of study periods what work you will do and ensure you have everything you will need.
- **EXTRA WORK IF FINISH HOMEWORK:** If you finish all your work and there is still time left, use the time to work through things you find difficult or else do some reading.
- **PLAN ACCESS TO LIBRARY/COMPUTERS:** Make sure you know when you will be allowed to have access to the library or computer labs and plan around this.
- **ESTABLISH GOOD HABITS:** Get into good habits right from the start. If you are in a space where other people are not working then talk to your teacher to see if there are other options.



*So enjoy the exciting first year
of secondary school!*



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