

How to increase your marks

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Getting better marks has a lot to do with how you approach studying. The twelve most powerful ways to increase your marks don't involve you working harder but they do involve you working smarter.

1. Study in silence.

This is the single most powerful way to increase your marks. Spend at least 20 minutes of your study time in silence. No texting, music or computer screens. Outcomes improve when you practice in the same conditions you want to perform in. In the exam room there won't be music, mobile phones or computer screens.

2. Organise & transform the information you want to learn.

Just reading your notes over and over again doesn't really work. Your memory stores information best when you organise or transform it. This means organising your notes so that the main idea is highlighted on each page. Then take your notes and turn them into a flow chart or a mind map or see if you can fit them to a song you know well or make it into a sound recording. The more times you can transform and re-organise the information the more firmly it is remembered.

3. Put off pleasurable activities until work is done.

This is a painful one but if you play computer games before you get down to studying, the levels of dopamine in your brain lessen and you will lose the drive and motivation you need to study effectively. Work first, play later.

4. Talk yourself through the steps involved.

One of the things that highly successful students do is to explain out loud to themselves the steps involved in completing a task. This applies to every subject area. By saying out loud, "First I have to do.... Then I have to do...." and so on, any part that you are uncertain about becomes clear and you can then use this to guide where you need to do more.

5. Ask for help.

Teachers want their students to be interested and to do well. You will be amazed if you ask a question how many other people don't understand it either. If you are really scared about asking questions in class, have a private talk to your teacher about this.

6. Take notes. Just writing down the ideas that you have makes a powerful contribution to your marks. Don't just write down what the teacher writes. Make notes of any

ideas you have as well. Never rely only on the worksheets given out by teachers or your own capacity to remember information later.

7. Write & re-write key points.

Writing the main points of the area you are learning helps you to remember them. If you can add in re-organising and transforming them into different formats (drawings, flow chats, podcasts etc.) that makes it even more powerful.

8. Make lists & set priorities.

Make a "to-do" list each week. Write down in your diary the most important things to be done in each subject each week.

High scoring students do a little bit on each subject, a lot rather than doing a lot of work on one subject every so often.

If you are doing subjects that involve presenting a folio or preparing a presentation, it is still important to do work on the other subject areas.

9. Prepare for class. Become knowledgeable about the area you are learning about by doing your own research. If you can learn about the area before you start not only will you have an advantage, it will also make more sense to you as you begin classes on it. Take notes on your own research.

If you can, read over your notes before class to re-fresh your memory.

10. Keep a record of how much study you have done.

It increases motivation when we can tick things off lists and when we can see how much we have done.

11. Use memory aides.

These are tools that help you to remember information. For example, "Every Good Boy Deserves Fruit" help people remember that EGBDF are the lines of the music staff. The rhyme, "thirty days have September, April, June and November" helps us to remember the calendar.

School requires more memory skills than any job you can think of. The best way to remember something is to transform it. If it's visual put it into words, if it's verbal, create a picture or graph of it, use lists, acronyms, tables, graphics, and link new information to things you already know.

Long-term filing works best if you go right to sleep - the minutes before bedtime are crucial,

12. Set study times

The last method is to decide when you are most alert and to set aside some time at that time of day to study. If you wait until you are in the right mood before beginning to study, you may wait forever.