

NO NONSENSE ADVICE

8

FOR STUDENTS

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PROLOGUE:

Being a Full-Time Student is a blessing - Make the most of it...

Some of the best years of our lives are spent 'in school.'

Nostalgia kicks in only after leaving school - though (I think) we all accept that 'being' in school isn't all 'sunshine and rainbows' as we make it out to be when we meet each other, 25 years after leaving its hallowed grounds. However, in hindsight (which is ALWAYS a great thing) I think, we could have all made a 'more' of our years in school.

See: when we were full-time students, we never quite looked at school as something we would necessarily 'miss' when we graduated. Neither did we look at it as anything more than something we 'had to go through' (grudgingly in most cases).

'School' was not just about 'school' - it was the foundation for the rest of our lives: and unconsciously, the lessons we learnt, the experiences we had, and the friendships we forged, have influenced us all through our lives. So, knowing it is a pivotal part of who we become, why not pay a little more attention to it?

The marks we get for exams become the 'all-encompassing' focus when in school: which is a shame. Simply because 'learning to study' and 'learning to structure our work' are skills that transcend curriculums. The discipline and focus we develop through our studies become a cornerstone for being able to focus on any task. The ability to face failures and overcoming the sadness and anger you will naturally feel when you study really hard and not get the marks you wanted, prepares you to face failures and trudge forward in life. Studying together and helping each other out as students help hone interpersonal skills: and also, teaches you that no one is actually an 'island.' Being able to calm your nerves before an exam, and 'shut out the noise' during an exam teaches you how to 'be in the moment' when it matters the most.

Schooling truly DOES teach you a hell of a lot more than what the curriculums teach: you just need to be open to it! This book is our little attempt to help you not only to do well in your studies - but also, to help you learn invaluable lessons through your schooling career so that you become a wholesome person through the experience.

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Chapter 1

Your Attitude

'HOW' you view your schooling career is important. You can either make it a complete drudgery, or you can make it an adventure: that choice is solely yours. Attitude is the biggest challenge: so, before anything else, please do get your attitude right! NOTHING you do will be enjoyable or truly productive without a proper attitude.



Do's



Know that you must go through this: whether you like it or not...

You might as well accept this: you WILL HAVE TO GO THROUGH SCHOOL - whether you like it or not. You may not necessarily LIKE it, but you don't have to DISLIKE or HATE it either... Given that it is INEVITABLE - why not understand that there must be (and clearly IS) a VALID REASON why you too should enter a school - and see it through.

Remember that going to school is not only about getting good grades and learning what you may consider irrelevant subjects - but a process by which you are inducted to life in general - and as a preparation for your future. So, don't hate it - and make it difficult for yourself. Take it in your stride...

School work can be fun if you allow it

Studying, doing homework, being taught, struggling through certain aspects can ALL be fun - if you allow it. The trick is this: don't get too 'serious' about it. This does NOT imply that you don't give it the due regard and respect: but, rather, not overburden yourself with expectations of others or even yourself. It is good to make your parents proud - it is far more important for you to not lose your head in the process...

ALLOW schooling to be fun - and make an adventure out of it.

Studying is not the point: KNOWING what the subject is...

Don't study to memorize. Study to actually UNDERSTAND. Knowing principles and concepts will help you immensely in the future as an adult - and being able to 'connect the dots' and apply what you learn makes a huge difference when you are an adult. So, look at studying from the perspective of UNDERSTANDING and being able to work it out in your own mind...

Discipline and Consistency Tops Talent

Don't EVER cram. Learn to study a little EVERYDAY. Consistency and discipline are key. The marks you get is far less important than learning to work at something on a regular basis with focus and attention. So, study EVERYDAY...



Don'ts



Don't think certain subjects are 'hard'

NO SUBJECT is HARD.

Don't let your mind to tell you otherwise. Emotionally, the moment you think something is hard, you make it an excuse not to do well at it.

NEVER allow yourself to make that excuse. If you don't understand something, make it your mission to ensure you DO know it... For sure, we are all WEAK in certain subjects - but don't get it into your head that they are HARD! There IS a difference in being weak in a subject and thinking it is HARD.

Don't allow marks to define you

Maybe, you may have known ALL the answers - but you may not have had enough time to complete the paper. Maybe, your nerves may have got the better of you. Maybe, you may misread the question... There can be a million reasons why your marks were not good. NEVER allow your marks to define you. EVER. Your marks being low does not mean you are a bad student - or that you are dumb. NEVER EVER allow yourself to be measured for your worth based on exam results...

Don't make studying a 'pain'

Don't turn studying into drudgery. Study because you WANT to LEARN.

Study because you WANT to get better at something. COMMIT to work.

Don't study because your parents want you to

Parents CAN be overbearing at times - but always remember most parents GENUINELY want the best for you - and understand having a sound academic track record early on in life helps with this. Be patient with parents who constantly 'nag' you to study - but NEVER study simply to pacify them

Chapter 2

Knowing Your Strengths, Weaknesses and Preferences

Knowing who you are is important. Don't fool yourself: nor flatter yourself: nor berate yourself.

Take a cold hard look at who you honestly are and be able to understand what you can do - and what you cannot do by yourself. As much as you know your strengths and weaknesses - know your preferences too - so that you are not going to 'force' yourself too much... Remember, YOU are the best judge of yourself - so, be true to yourself at all times...



Do's



Do a SWOT for your subjects

We all have subjects which we find are 'naturally easy' for us: and those we need to pay attention to and focus on. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats: a small tool used in Business Management. Do up a SWOT analysis for your subjects - so that you can pay special attention to 'threats' which can bring your overall scores down (if average marks are important in the school you go to - or passing one or two subjects like Sinhala and Math for O/Ls is essential to pass the overall exam and you are particularly weak in those particular subjects).

Understand your learning preference or style

Some of us learn by listening. Others by reading. Others by doing. Understand which method works best for you. If you learn best by listening - make sure you pay absolute attention in class - and with your tutors. If you learn best by reading, then, read through your lessons, and also read extra books on the subject. If you learn best by 'doing' then start making short notes of everything, and do extra papers and activities around your subjects.

Acknowledge the difference between 'liking' a subject and being 'good' at it

Don't ever mistake LIKING a subject to being GOOD at it. When you do the SWOT, clearly differentiate between the two. What you are GOOD at you may be able to slack on a bit- and yet get good marks. What you LIKE you may sometimes have to work much more on - simply because you LIKE it - but it may NOT be your core strength - so, no matter how hard you study for it, you may not EXCEL in it. So, prioritize on what subjects you are truly good at and get the maximum marks for them - especially if your average marks are a deciding factor on your 'position' in class

Understand what subjects you want help in

Make no illusions about the subjects you need help in. Don't ever feel too shy to ask for help - both, from your teachers in school and also, from your parents. Make 'tuition' a last resort - but, if you feel you need it - then, make sure you commit to it - and ask for the help you need. Remember, simply going for tuition will not make you any better - so, consider the 'private lessons' you are given a huge blessing - and make the most of them to INDIVIDUALLY learn the areas you find difficult to digest...



Don'ts



Don't dislike a subject purely based on the teacher

Teachers come and go. some are really awesome - some are sadly awful - that's just the way it is. Who you get is the luck of the draw - and there is nothing you can do about it. Try and discern the teaching style of each teacher - and try and adapt. This will help you immensely in life - as we all need to learn to deal with different people if we want to make a success out of our lives. What better way to learn how to 'handle different people' than trying your best to learn well from all your teachers - irrespective of their 'style'

Don't ever 'disregard' the 'hard parts'

NEVER disregard what you don't understand: or gloss over it. Take the EFFORT to know it: FULLY. This is NOT to simply get better marks - but to cultivate the habit of NOT GIVING UP and PERSEVERING until you 'get it' - an essential life skill...

So, if you are finding something 'hard' - then commit extra time to it - ask for help from friends, parents, tutors, teachers, elder siblings, research on it, do whatever it takes to ensure you understand it. Make the effort - it develops a good 'habit' to have!

Don't wait till you start failing to seek help

You KNOW when you are struggling. Don't wait till its too late to seek help. Seek help early. Having a lot to 'catch up on' is never fun - and is one of the reasons why lots of students become disdained with studying: because you are always trying to 'catch up.' So, if you know you are struggling, call it out early

Don't overdo 'tuition' - try and do certain subjects by yourself

Try, as much as possible, to be self-taught. This FORCES you to engage your intellect and intelligence to 'figure things out' rather than being 'spoon-fed' all the time. Being able to 'figure things out' is essential for your success as an adult - and there is no 'tutor' for life when you become an adult. So, try and figure things out on your own - and use tuition as a last resort. Having said that, remember, if you ARE really struggling - seek help.

Chapter 3

Study Scheduling

Now that you are all set, learn that scheduling your work and being able to take a structured approach to work, becomes important.

Remember: always, always have a plan. You may not stick to it all the time - but having a plan becomes a directional 'north point' to give indications of how well you are prepped for your exams. Scheduling will also help you 'manage' the other things that matter to you as a student - including your extracurricular activities and chores.



Do's



Identify the time of day you are at your BEST!

Some of us are morning people. Others work best at night. Figure out when your brain cells work the best. There is precious little point of forcing yourself to get up at 5 am and being unproductive because your grey matter is not firing up that early! You can revise when you are not at your peak: but **STUDY** when you are absolutely alive - and at your best. Remember – it is never about how **LONG** you study - but how **WELL** things get **RETAINED** that matters...

Understand 'ultradian sprints'

Distractions are always costly. So, when you study:

1. Have a **CLEAR OBJECTIVE** - for example, I will understand 'Sets' completely before I wrap up
2. Assign a timeline - generally no more than 1 to 2 hours at most - ideally 1 hour. Make sure your objective **CAN** be achieved during this time. If not, break the objective into smaller objectives and assign one for the first hour, and then put the second objective for the second hour.
3. **KILL** distractions. Keep your phone switched off, your laptop or computer closed, and maybe have some music you enjoy in the background (if that does **NOT** become a distraction to you under normal circumstances)
4. Don't **GET UP UNTIL THE OBJECTIVE** is met...

Once done, take a **PROPER** break (not beyond 10-15 minutes though) and then get back to it. So, the focus is **SHORT SPRINTS** with a **CLEAR OBJECTIVE**. Working in small, measured, and focused 'sprints' of work is much much better than studying extended hours continuously.

Make a study plan - not just a timetable

Make a composite study plan - not a timetable for the week. Take each subject - break it into chapters and put timelines against:

- I. When you will study each chapter
- II. When you will revise the chapter
- III. When you will do mock questions and answers on that chapter
- IV. When you will prep for the exam etc

Make the plan for the entire year, taking into consideration ALL subjects and ALL terms.

PLAN to be at least one chapter ahead of your class at all times - so that the class actually becomes a REVISION for you...

Don't forget to allocate time for extracurricular activities like sports - and understand how it will impact the time you have for your studies

When making your plan, please make sure you allocate time against ALL your extracurricular activities and also the little household chores you need to do as a responsible young child. Having all this listed out helps you understand how much of time you have left to spare - and whether you are overloaded or not...

Always build 'slack time' into the plan

Remember - even a machine needs a break - and YOU are a biological machine... So, make sure you build in enough 'slack time' for yourself - rather than having each day crammed to the brim. This will only lead to exhaustion. What each of us can manage is subjective to who we are - and how much of energy we have. So, don't make the horrible mistake of looking at others and trying to decide what you should cram into your day...



Don'ts



Don't make unrealistic plans

Don't become over-ambitious. Plan sensibly. Also, learn to build on your management of time and energy, one step at a time. Something that always helps is to take the first few months relatively slow and gradually build on it - and take on more in smaller chunks rather than piling it on all at the same time.

Don't plan right up to the exam - leave a few weeks to do exam-prep and 'chill'

NEVER plan to cram. NEVER plan to study on the last two or three days before an exam. You should have covered your syllabus before this. Keep the last few days before exams as light as possible - and revise if you must but NEVER STUDY. Procrastinating and then working crazy hours at the last minute becomes a habit that becomes tough to break - and it is generally something that spells disaster as an adult. So, learn early on in life to NEVER wait until the last minute.

Try not to schedule all 7 days

Keep at least a day for yourself to chill.

To let your mind wander. To explore a small part of the city you never visited. To watch a movie. To sleep...

Don't be tempted to be 'optimistic' - plan for the worst-case

NEVER be 'optimistic' when planning. ALWAYS plan for the worst-case scenario - and ensure you are adequately cushioned for eventualities life throws at you. You can get sick, an unexpected visitor may come by, your parents might take you on an 'unplanned' tour because they got some cheap airline tickets... Life is full of the unexpected. So, plan with eventualities factored - NEVER on the best case...

Chapter 4

Studying Tips and Techniques

Studying is cumbersome, monotonous and tiring, simply put - it is BORING. Yet somethings' must be done whether we like it or not and studying is one of those things. Despite all it's negatives, studying can be made interesting and bearable.

With these tips, tricks and techniques you can make studying a fun and interesting activity, as opposed to a simple dull daily ritual. I hope you find these tips and techniques useful.



Do's



Bite-Size the Syllabus

Studying things in larger chunks can be difficult and rather tiring, so why not bite-size the syllabus?

Take all the chapters that you must cover for the term exam and allocate the number of days as you see fit, to cover each lesson. You could maybe take 3 days to cover one chapter. How many days you take doesn't really matter as long as you stick to your schedule and make sure that you have adequate time to revise and cover the entire syllabus. The idea is to break the syllabus into small chunks so that you needn't stress nor cram.

Make short notes of everything

Short notes, in short, is a summary of a larger lesson. There is no hard and fast rule about 'how to' make short notes. You can make them using cue cards, or you could make them in the form of a mind map. Either which way make your short notes creative and interesting. The idea is that you create something fun and interesting, something that you feel like reading as opposed to your textbooks. You can make short notes for every subject. Even for a subject like math - you could make short notes of all the theorems. Making these short notes will prove useful as you will have all the important points in summary form, for easy reference at your fingertips!

Build-in small 'tests' - and revisions through the study period - don't leave it to the end

In the process of studying we often forget to pay adequate attention to revising. Revision too is important, just as much as studying.

Procrastinating revision and leaving it till the end is not a good idea. So, build in little tests and revision session into your study schedule. After completing each lesson, you could create a test for yourself and do it and get it corrected by your teacher. You could also try using the 'Akura' - Master Guide textbooks which have 40 MCQs and long answer questions for every lesson. You could also block out one day of the week to simply revise all the work you have done for the week. Revision needn't be only where you answer questions, you can find your own individual method of revision based on what type of learner you are.

For instance, if you're an auditory learner you could record yourself reading out your short notes and then keep listening to that recording constantly.

Try Peer Learning

Peer learning is fun and can make learning fun! The number of peers you choose to study with is purely your choice. You could work only with your best friend or you could work with 10 friends. One thing to keep in mind when studying with peers is to decide what lessons/ subjects you will be covering for that day earlier on. This way you won't be wasting time deciding what to study when you meet up, you can cut to the chase right away. So, make a plan of what you will be studying and who will be covering what lessons. Take breaks in between and finally before you call it a day take a long break and do something fun with your friends.

Go on 'study retreats'

Studying in one place can be boring so, in order to break the monotony, go on a retreat. Pick a destination any place apart from your home front should do.

You could go to a coffee shop, a public library, or any other place that you would like to study. Make a plan of what you will be studying and allocate a time limit for it and make sure you stick to the time. This is a study retreat so don't spend an entire day studying instead just allocate a number of hours as you see fit. You can make this a chilled-out day where you study for 'X' number of hours and then visit a place that you've been dying to see or better yet! You could treat yourself and go shopping. Study retreats can be refreshing and exciting! Make them as interesting and fun as possible the idea is to break away from the everyday study routine you follow.



Don'ts



Don't gloss over the basics

Initially, they don't seem important, but basics are like the foundation of a house. You have to lay the foundation properly in order to ensure that the house stands tall and strong. The same is true for basics in order to solve complex things and understand complex theories you must have understood your basics to perfection. So, don't gloss over the basics understand that these basics will add up to something big and pay attention to the basics.

If you haven't understood something, don't skip it - revisit it!

Some things can be understood easily, others might take you some time, that's ok - it's just the way it is. The idea though is not to skip or memorize those sections - but to revisit it. Firstly, read and try to understand it - if within the course of the day you just don't seem to get it, sleep on it and get back to it first thing in the morning!

Even then if you can't seem to understand it seek help. Following tutorials on YouTube may prove useful. So, don't skip something if you don't understand it instead re-visit it.

Don't leave room for distractions (like your phone etc.)

When you are studying don't leave your phone, laptop or any other device you consider distracting in your study area. Put your phone on silent or airplane mode.

If even, then you seem to be getting distracted ask your parents to hold on to your phone till you finish studying. Either way remove all distracting devices from your study area.

Don't take short cuts - be thorough

Taking short cuts such as memorizing is truly ineffective. Memorizing is not studying. Studying is to be able to understand something clearly and thoroughly. So, don't take short cuts if you don't understand it take the time to understand and learn it. Be absolutely thorough with whatever you learn.

Chapter 5

Exam Preparation

You were born to win. But to be a winner you must PLAN to win. PREPARE to win and expect to win. I don't think the importance of planning and preparing can be emphasized enough. It is simply essential if one is to Ace their exams. Here are a few tips and techniques to help you prepare for your exams.



Do's



Do past papers: and get them corrected: and do the corrections

When preparing for the exam doing past papers will prove to be very useful. As much as doing them is important, you must also get them corrected. Some papers you can correct on your own as the answer script is provided, if not you could ask your teacher to correct it for you.

Make sure to do those corrections as well. As much as getting the paper corrected - doing the corrections are crucial. Otherwise, you are bound to repeat the same mistake. After all, a mistake repeats until the lesson is learnt!

Focus on handwriting speed (and legibility)

Handwriting and speed for the exam are important as time is limited. While speed is important, legibility of your handwriting must be taken into consideration. The objective is to ensure that you write fast and that your handwriting is CLEAR. Timing yourself while answering a past paper will prove useful. With time and practice, both your speed and handwriting will improve. Sometimes this may not work, your handwriting could still look horrendous in this case take baby steps.

Start copywriting. I know it's terribly childish but - It works!

Understand that each exam is a build-up to the next

Exams, although we treat it as one entity, is in fact just built on one another. Each term exam is merely leading up to the final exam. Only the final exam has in-depth questions. Understanding this you will be able to identify the pattern in which the papers are set. After all,

“Everything has a pattern” (The Bletchley Circle)

Focus on your strengths

Some things you just might be brilliant at! Focus on those areas and give your full attention. This doesn't mean you neglect the other areas focus on them but give priority to your strengths. Focusing on your strengths will prove useful when your selecting subjects for your O/L exam. Your strength might be writing or else it could be math in which case literature or business studies might be the subjects for you.

All in all, give priority to your strengths and focus on them.



Don'ts



Don't cram - even if you can

You might have mastered the art of cramming so to say, but don't cram even if you can. Cramming is ineffective you put yourself under an unnecessary amount of stress and deny yourself of adequate time to revise. So, don't cram instead create a study plan and stick to it.

Don't study the day before the exam: watch a movie instead!

Use this day to chill! The day before an exam is when your nerves begin to unravel and no matter how much you've studied your subconscious is telling you that you simply must study. This is the very reason you should not study! Take a break and have faith in what you have done and simply chill watch a movie or dance do anything except study. You can skim through your short notes but only 'skim through' them DON'T study.

Don't fret

This is easier said than done - Agreed! Fretting though truly is pointless apart from making you more nervous, it doesn't do any good. To make sure that you don't fret it is key to prepare and prepare well and thoroughly. Do as much preparation as you can and do all that you must this way you will be confident, as you have done everything you should have. Fretting happens only when you feel you haven't done enough so, do everything you can and leave the rest be. If you start fretting meditate or listen to some calming music and just take deep breaths.

Don't ONLY study certain areas

True we all have areas we are good at in a subject and it may seem a wise choice to just focus on them. Yet the exam paper is not going to question you ONLY on the areas you are good at. Which is why it is crucial to be thorough with everything you've learnt. Make sure you understand all the lessons.

Chapter 6

Facing Exams with Confidence

While preparation is one part of ensuring you get the marks you desire - being confident is important too. Hard work and preparation - both will be of no use if you are not confident. It is hard to keep one's nerves intact especially during an exam. Yet with time and the use of certain tips and tricks as always, things will only get better!



Do's



Have a checklist of all you need to take - and tick it off each day

In the heat of the moment, you just might not be thinking straight. So, make a checklist prior to the exam of all you need to take along. When packing your bag tick-off all the items you packed.

Always carry extra pens, pencils etc.

Have two of everything. You could lose your pen or worst of all your pen could stop writing in the middle of the exam. In such instances having extra will be absolutely helpful, essential even. By having extra even if you lose something you needn't worry because you have extra.

Take the time to read the exam paper first

When you get the exam paper your first thought might be to start writing - immediately. Don't do this - instead, take the time to read the paper. Read all sides of the paper. Leave no page unturned. This way you will be able to get a rough idea of the structure of the paper.

Pick the ones you know FOR SURE and do them first

There will always be things we know and things we don't know. Whatever you know - do them first! This way:

- A) You don't let it slip your mind
- B) Since you know them you will be able to do them quickly thereby enabling you to devote more time to the questions that you find difficult
- C) Starting out with what you know will make you feel confident as you will be able to answer those questions without second-guessing yourself as you know them for sure

If you get stuck - move on

Getting stuck is the worst feeling ever! But don't stop moving.

Pondering over what you are stuck on is highly ineffective and inefficient. Move on to the next question revisit the area that you got stuck on, but only after you have answered the other questions. If you don't move on you will be cutting into the time you have allocated to answer the other questions. So, circle the question and continue - and circle back to it later!

Make some short notes of things that you think you might forget on a loose sheet of paper and have it on hand

When the foolscap paper gets passed around, jot down all the points you feel you may forget. Make note of the theorems and formulas as well. This way even if you forget certain things you need not worry because you have made a short note of all those points. Prior to the exam having a set of short notes at hand will also be useful. Just before the exam take the time to go through the short notes you have made.

Short notes are truly nothing but lifesavers!

Keep time

Timing is key when it comes to an exam. For this wear a watch or carry a table clock and place it on your desk. You might think that since the clock in the examination hall is there you needn't take a watch, but I think it's always best to have your own device to measure the time. I mean you never know the clock in the examination hall could stop working or else you could be seated in an area where you can't see the clock. Before answering the paper think about how much of time you will take to answer each question and ensure to leave 30 minutes to double-check your answers.



Don'ts



Don't panic

With the stress and pressure of the exam, you may begin to panic. The instant you feel like you are panicking take a few minutes to close your eyes and breath. Inhale and exhale deeply. Also, understand that panicking is pointless and futile knowing this; change your mindset and don't panic.

Don't get cocky either - and take it 'easy'

Don't get cocky. It's one thing to be confident it's another to be "over" confident. By being overconfident or overly nervous one can make horrendous mistakes. Don't be at two extremes instead be in the middle. Be calm and collected and simply aware of the fact that you are answering the paper. Have absolute clarity.

Don't look around at what others are doing

It is tempting to see if others are panicking too or if it just you, but no matter how tempting it is don't look around. Firstly, because it's not your business. Whatever, others do is irrelevant. It is your paper! Don't look at others. Secondly, looking at others can make you feel anxious. Focus on your paper. What others do is inconsequential to you. What matters is that you answer that paper to the best of your abilities.

Don't be tempted to overwrite the areas you know well (understand the marking scheme and therefore what is expected of you)

When you know a particular area like the back of your hand and the exam paper questions you on that very area the temptation to overwrite is almost irresistible. Yet, no matter how tempted you might be don't overwrite. It cuts into valuable time and sometimes the amount you write is just not worth the marks. For a question that requires an answer of about a page, just because you write 2 pages doesn't mean you will get extra points. So, don't waste time overwriting. Write in accordance with the points allocated for a particular question.

Don't forget your prayers!

Take a few minutes before the paper to say your prayers. Recite a small verse from your religious books and give thanks. Don't forget to say your prayers it works wonders!

Don't EVER EVER CHEAT

Cheating is tempting. Especially when you're dying to get 90+ and no matter how hard you try you just don't seem to get it. No matter how badly you want good grades don't cheat. What is the point? Because even if you did get 90+ after cheating are you really going to be proud of yourself? Don't be afraid to fail but as they say; be afraid to cheat than to fail with honor.

Chapter 7

Creating your own 'space' that helps you study

Creating a study space is a whole load of fun. We are going to be stuck studying for quite some time so why not make it fun and interesting! A study space is simply a creative corner that will help you maximize your concentration and get you excited to study.

Here are a few tips on how to create a study space.



Do's



Give prominence to your books, table and 'study area'

Your desk and your books are quite literally your best friends. Give it its due respect and prominence. Have a neat and clean desk. Make sure to keep your books stacked neatly on a bookshelf and make sure that your study area is swept, mopped and dusted. This way you will be working in a clean space as opposed to a dirty one. Give your books, table and study area prominence by keeping it neat and tidy at all times.

Put out some motivational quotes

Quotes often serve as reminders and can help fix a bad day so hang up a few quotes.

Pick a few of your favourite quotes and hang them in your study area. Make your quotes creative and let it simply radiate positivity.

Have a 'do not disturb' policy (and a sign)

You could either choose to have a policy where you request to be undisturbed till you finish your work or you could use a sign saying "Please do not disturb" whichever ever you prefer is totally fine, as long as you don't get disturbed and you are given the necessary time and space to study.

Make a corner to 'chill' as well

We all need time to unwind especially after studying so why not create a corner just to chill as well? This corner should radiate and give chilled out vibes. Make it as comfy and cosy as you can. Pick a corner in your house or your room and make it creative and authentic.



Don'ts



Don't be messy: aesthetics help create an environment that is conducive to studying

When studying for an exam its quite easy for a room to get super messy. Yet, try to keep your room neat. Being messy is terrible you can't find things, your room is unpleasant to look at, worst of all you'll start feeling messy too. Take time off after studying to simply straighten things up and put your room in order. Even your cosy corner shouldn't be messy. That too should be neat and tidy.

Don't be limited to your 'room' as a study space

There are plenty of spaces and corners that can be utilised as a study space, so don't be limited just to your room. Look for interesting spaces and corners - it could even be in the garden as long as you feel comfortable and the space is conducive to uninterrupted study.

Don't shy away from asking for help in creating the 'space' you need (and avoid distractions like a loud TV, Stereo etc)

Sometimes no matter how hard you try the exact image that you have in your head for a study space cannot be replicated in such instance don't feel shy to ask for help. Ask friends and family and get their ideas and opinions on how best you can create your very own study space. So don't feel shy just ask for help whenever you need it! Or else you could use YouTube and Pinterest and search for creative ideas for your study corner. Help is available everywhere all you have to do is ask for it.

Chapter 8

Avoiding Exhaustion and Fatigue

It is VERY COMMON to be completely exhausted - and this is ALWAYS counterproductive. Being exhausted means you are not working in your optimum capacity - and left unchecked you burn out. IF you burnout, it becomes very difficult to build yourself to peak performance again. So, watch out for the early warning signs of fatigue (not just physical but emotional and mental fatigue as well) and ensure you take remedial action.



Do's



Take a weekend off once a month or so

Take a proper weekend off every month or so. Go someplace nice. Hang out with friends and have a laugh. Do nothing 'serious' - not even a single class... A proper 'disengagement' is essential to recharge your batteries properly.

Exercise

Exercise is one of the best ways to beat the blues - and ensure you have the levels of energy required to sustain yourself at your best throughout the day. We are NOT talking of SPORTS: we are talking of regular EXERCISE itself - which you need to incorporate into your day irrespective of whether you take on a sport or not.

Brisk Walking and Swimming are two great exercises to commit to. Remember: you need to commit to 30 minutes of proper exercise DAILY. Please get guidance from a professional BEFORE you start doing exercises!

Here are some simple exercises to do - without ever hitting gym... If you are interested in Yoga - here are some basic Yoga exercises to help you.

Meditate

Meditation helps improve focus. There is CLEAR scientific evidence to back this claim as well. (Here is a link if you want to know the 'science' behind meditation)

The meditation you need to commit to if you want simply to improve your productivity and the meditation you need to commit to if you want to attain Nirvana are two different things: so, don't make the mistake of thinking of meditation as a purely ascetic exercise.

Eat right

Eat a wholesome meal. Also, eat sensibly. NEVER binge. NEVER be tempted to eat less so that you can be 'thin' either. You are growing - and your body AND mind need the nutrition to perform at their peak. So, eat but eat right...

Here is a quick read on some helpful tips on how you can have a sensible diet - and ensure you are fully charged through the day



Don'ts



Don't 'over study'

Don't get tempted to over study. If you know it - you know it - let it be. Remember the age-old saying - too much of anything is good for nothing - studying is certainly no exception.

Don't go down the guilt route

Not studied as much as you wanted? As much as you should have? Well...it's done now, isn't it? There really is no point going down the guilt trip road with what you SHOULD have done - just move forward. Remember - there is NOTHING you can do now - apart from brushing up what you already know and moving forward. Remember - being emotionally stable and upbeat about life, in general, is as important (if not more important) as getting good grades. So, ensure you are not overtly critical of yourself...

Don't bite off more than you can chew

NEVER get tempted to pile things on yourself so much that you are just going to drown in it. Short periods of time where you truly stretch yourself is fine - and in fact, a way of life as a student. But, remember to take a solid break afterwards. NEVER have continuous overload: because it is only a matter of time before you really crash!

Chapter 9

Bouncing Back from Failures

You are BOUND to fail - at some point as a student. By failure, we don't necessarily mean failing a subject or exam (only) - but not quite getting what YOU wanted as a mark for an exam (also). So, don't make failure a big deal - and learn to fail forward ([click here](#) for a motivational video by Denzel Washington on 'failing forward')



Do's



Understand WHY you failed

Once the initial frustration, anger and sadness have subsided, think rationally, and ask yourself WHY you failed...

- Didn't study enough to really understand things? - then, build in more study time
- Didn't understand particular areas well enough? - get help to enable you to understand it
- Misread the question? - start by building more Q&A time into your schedule
- Got scared - and froze at the exam? Try and think of ways to build your confidence...

There is ALWAYS something we can do to improve after a failure. So, commit to bettering yourself!

Make a plan on how to rectify the mistakes

No point KNOWING why you failed without doing something about it. So, go back to the drawing board and incorporate the key activities and rituals you need to perform to ensure you rectify your mistakes. Remember - you need to COMMIT to CHANGE your plans when required.

Do what you need to do to 'let it all out'

Each of us has our own way of letting out frustrations: find a safe way to do this. Don't resort to self-destructive methods. Also, do seek permission from parents or guardians to 'shut yourself away' until you are feeling better about yourself - rather than being in company when you don't really want to be. 'Alone time' really helps put things into perspective and have conversations with yourself - which at times, really helps...

- I. Try writing in a diary - and letting your feelings out through written words
- II. Try talking to a friend
- III. Try watching a motivational movie
- IV. Try going for a run
- V. Try taking a small holiday

Motivate yourself

Don't wait for others to motivate you - do it for yourself! Being able to motivate yourself is one of the most important traits of successful people - so, learn at an early age to be able to pick yourself up - dust yourself off - and keep moving.

[Click here](#) for some tips on how to motivate yourself. Remember - take the PRINCIPLE of the tip being offered - and then, work around how you can personalize it for yourself!



Don'ts



Don't wallow in self-pity

Learn to let things go...

NEVER allow yourself to wallow in self-pity.

NOTHING is THAT BAD - and NOTHING lasts forever - so, don't go there... An exam is never the be-all and end-all of life... Find the courage to look forward THROUGH your failure - and be hopeful and forge plans to never repeat the failure. Move on...

Don't envy others who were successful

Envy is normal. True. But, learn to be happy for other's success - and learn from them. WHAT did they do DIFFERENTLY that enabled them to ace that exam? NEVER EVER allow yourself to be jealous - be genuinely happy about others' success.

Remember - compete with YOURSELF rather than with others. Get better marks than you did last time - don't compare yourself to the others in class.

Don't 'feel' like a failure

Sure - you failed - so what? Failing is one thing - feeling like a FAILURE is another. Think of even the tiniest successes you have had and draw inspiration from them. You can and WILL get better. NEVER revisit the past - always, always look forward...

Don't hate the subject because of the failure

No matter what - never hate a subject because you got low marks or because you failed it. NEVER give up on learning. NEVER give up on the subject either. Commit to being better at it - one step at a time!

Chapter 10

Don't forget that you are a student of 'life' too

Don't make the horrible mistake of thinking that school is about the subjects you are taught. Always remember that school is a lot more than that. School also offers you the opportunity to dabble in countless other things - things that you may well find to be areas you can truly shine in.

so, make the most of being a full-time student and try and dabble in as many things as you can - and explore your abilities through them...



Do's



Pick up a hobby

Hobbies are great stress relievers - and some turn out to be hobbies for life. Stamp collecting, collecting coins, drawing, singing, cooking: all of these can be hobbies and also, super things to break the monotony even when you are all grown up...

Take up a sport

Sports help you build essential life skills - like dealing with defeat positively - as well as learning the all-important skill of being a team player. You may not necessarily be GOOD at a sport - but do one nonetheless: it will genuinely help you in the years to come - and who knows - maybe you will become good at it with practice too!

Read avidly

Read as much as you can. Take a book everywhere you go... Reading books help you improve your language, build a solid vocabulary and also, your imagination! Read on every topic under the sun - it will help you later on in life...

Learn life skills

Little things like how to cook a basic meal, to mend a button for yourself, how to fix a bulb, do some wiring in the house, a little bit of plumbing, how to travel by bus, how to defend yourself - are all good skills to have from a young age. So, take some classes that will help you build life skills as well as... They are bound to come in handy when you are an adult (or even as a kid!)

Help out in the house

Remember you are a part of your family. So, help out in the house. Do your chores. Wash your clothes. Make your bed. Keep things tidy. Maybe, over weekends, give your parents a break and do some of the cooking and the cleaning... Be a responsible child - as much as an accomplished one!



Don'ts



Don't make extracurricular activities about 'winning' only

Don't make everything about winning and losing.

Sure - be ambitious and try and excel at something - but don't make this the be-all and end-all of life in general. Take part - irrespective of the outcome - and commit to doing your very very best - let the rest be...

Don't get carried away about anything - so as to lose your focus on your primary goal

Irrespective of what else you do - remember you are a STUDENT first. So, make sure that your extracurricular activities are not at the COST OF YOUR STUDIES. NEVER get sidetracked from the main purpose...

Don't allow yourself to be one dimensional

School - is to enable you to be a wholesome and confident young adult.

So, NEVER be one dimensional. There is precious little point in being an excellent academic and hopeless at anything else: equally, it is meaningless to be a brilliant athlete and fail all your exams.

NEVER be one dimensional - be whole- be well rounded!

EPILOGUE:

Studying isn't the be-all and end-all of being a student!

Studying is important without a doubt. Yet is it the only thing in life? I believe not.

We often compromise on a lot of things that we wish and would like to do simply because we think studying is important. It is, but it isn't the be-all and end-all of life. Which is what we fail to see. We often think of studying to be the defining factor in life and that nothing else in life really matters apart from getting outstanding results.

It is not so, while we are students in our schools, institutes and universities we are also students of life.

There is so much to learn apart from what is being taught, so much to explore and do. Take the time to polish your skills and maybe to find new hidden skills and talents, take the time to do things you enjoy doing. Don't compromise on any of this, devote time to both studying and other extracurricular activities the idea is to find a balance. Being a student truly is a blessing and a privilege so enjoy the process of studying and revel in being a student.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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