

Success Takes More Than Just Being Smart

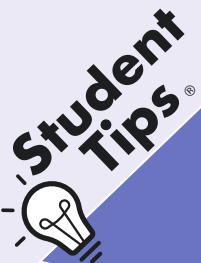


The teacher handed back your math tests. As usual, Avery got an A. As usual, you didn't.

After class, you stay a minute to complain. "It's not fair," you say to your teacher. "I wish I were smart in math like Avery is."

Your teacher's answer surprises you. "Avery is smart," the teacher says. "Smart enough to listen in class. Smart enough to do homework every day. Smart enough to review for tests. And smart enough to ask for help when necessary. There's no reason on earth why you couldn't be that smart, too."

Your teacher is right. The most successful students are those who do smart things. You can learn the secrets those "smart" kids already know—so you can be a smart student, too.



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Boost your 'AQ'

Ask most kids what it takes to be successful in school and they'll answer, "A high IQ." There's some truth in that—intelligence is one of the factors that lead to school success.

But today, we know that there are other qualities that promote achievement. Some teachers call these qualities "AQ"—*attitude quotient*. Things that go into a high AQ include a willingness to work hard, an ability to work well with others and persistence.

Luckily, there are *lots* of strategies for increasing your AQ.



Improve your listening ability

Students in school spend more time listening than doing anything else. In most schools, about half of all class time is spent on things like directions and explanations. As you move up in school, you spend more and more time listening. But if you're like many students, you've never had any real help in how to be a better listener.

Here are four ways you can improve your listening skills:

Focus	Direct your attention to what the teacher is saying.
Ask	Ask questions about what the teacher says.
Connect	Connect the main ideas to things you already know.
Picture	Make mental pictures of important ideas.

Here are some other tips to improve your listening skills:

- **Listen for key words.** Verbs like *read, work, study, tell, remember* and *fill in* signal that your teacher expects you to do something.
- **Listen for numbers.** Are you supposed to read chapter 11 or chapters 11 and 12?
- **Listen for repeated words.** A teacher who repeats something thinks it's important.

Study and review every day

Ever wonder what professional athletes do when they're not playing a game? Practice. The best basketball players shoot 100 or more free throws every single day. The best baseball players field fly ball after fly ball. They know the saying "Practice makes perfect" is true.

It's the same for school. The most successful students are the ones who work at it every day. They have a regular time each day that they spend on schoolwork.

One strategy that seems to make the biggest difference for successful students is *reviewing*. Research shows that students who spend a few minutes every day reviewing the main points the teacher covers in class are more likely to remember that information when test time comes.

Stick to a regular study time. If you're an early-morning person, try studying before school. If you're more alert in the evening, then that's when you should study. When you sit down, make a list of your study goals for the day. Post the list. Check off each item as you complete it.



Keep at it

Have you ever watched a baby learning to walk? It takes a lot of unsuccessful attempts before those first unsteady steps. But the baby just keeps at it—and everyone around keeps offering encouragement. "Come on," they say, "You can do it. Try again."

That's what you need to tell yourself when you are faced with a challenging subject. Most students find some subjects more difficult to learn than others. But if you keep working, you *will* be successful.



Put these ideas into practice and watch your grades improve. Then don't be surprised when a friend tells you, "You get such good grades. I wish I were smart like you!"

Learn to work with others

Today, many school assignments involve working with others. Here are some tips to make you a more effective group member:

- **Listen to what everyone has to say.** Suppose one person in your group wants to put on a play about the sinking of the *Titanic*. The group may decide against that idea (figuring your teacher will never let you fill the classroom with water). But it could get group members to think about making a video instead.
- **Make sure everyone agrees.** This can sometimes be tough. It may require everyone to compromise a little to come up with a project everyone likes. Once you reach an agreement, write down what you're doing, who's responsible for each task and when each part of the project needs to be completed in order to finish it on time.
- **Be willing to do your share.** In a group project, everyone has to come through or the whole group earns a lower grade.

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