

Computer Fun:

Learning Resources

That's what the brainiacs do.

Even if you are way too cool to consider yourself a brainiac, you can steal a page or two from their playbook to help make learning a little easier, and maybe even a little more fun.

Skim, read, note, review.

This is a good way to tackle ANY project, not just a reading assignment. Skimming the project first helps you understand the size, or scope, of the project and it helps you to immediately know whether the material is new or whether it is somewhat familiar. For example, if you skim this article, you will immediately see that you've probably seen most of these tips before. You also see, by the length and the content, that you don't need to reserve an hour to read it. When you go back to read the article, you'll find details you might not have seen before. You might also find ways to "chunk" the information. Make notes. You can highlight, underline, or flag with a sticky note the information that is new, different from what you expected, or important to the overall concept. Maybe you will find a new word that you have to look up. Write the definition in the margin. When you review, you may decide to read just your notes to reinforce the material.

Organize.

Organization can be physical or mental. Hmmm. Really? Good physical organization means keeping your notes for each class filed in your notebook and keeping a good log of your assignments and due dates in your planner. It can also mean keeping your study space neat and free from distractions, with enough pencils, highlighters, sticky notes, and paper close by so that you have everything you need to do your homework. If you have to make room to study or if you have to go in search of pencils every time you sit down, then homework becomes more work than it has to be. Organization can help you make homework and study time a lot easier.

Mental organization is just as important. This means eliminating things that can take your attention away from your homework. Don't try to do the hard stuff when you are busy with something else, like watching television. You might listen to music while you work through your math problems, but if you choose to answer your cell phone or text your friends, you will lose your focus on your homework. Don't make your homework any more difficult than it needs to be. Turn off your phone, turn off your email, and give your homework your best shot, then move on. Chances are good that you will be doing your friends a favor by letting them finish their own homework, too.

Plan ahead.

Think about when and where you can do your best work and make a decision to do it. Set aside a block of time each day that you devote to homework. Put it in your planner or on your calendar at the beginning of each week so you don't have to make the decisions later in the week when you don't want to do your homework. Use this time wisely to do your best each day. If you don't need the whole block of time on some days, let that be your reward and use the time to read a book or play an extra video game.

It's never too early to think about what you are going to do next. Many adults never really learn that the choices you make today can seriously affect the choices that you get to make tomorrow...or next month, or next year. You know that if you don't get your homework done tonight, you may get a failing grade tomorrow when it's time to turn it in. Planning ahead means that you also understand that getting a failing grade may mean that you fail the class, and if you fail the class, you may not have the GPA that you need to get into the college that you want to attend next year. Planning ahead means understanding that homework doesn't get easier, and if you don't actually learn what you are supposed to learn in tonight's

assignment, then you won't have the background knowledge to learn what you need to learn in next year's class or the class after that.

Choose to learn.

One of the most important choices you get to make is to *choose* to learn. In fact, you really aren't a student if you do not choose to learn. That's heavy stuff. Making the conscious choice to learn changes your attitude and that can totally change your whole experience with school into a positive journey instead of just one big detention.

"Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty." ~Henry Ford

"I am always ready to learn although I do not always like being taught." ~Winston Churchill.

If you don't know why it is so cool that these quotes came from these men, then you still have a lot left to learn.

Take notes.

Taking notes isn't just for school. Pay attention. What you notice, the things you learn to look for, to watch for, are really important. It's just like making notes in your homework. You can make a mental note or you can actually write it down in a notebook or journal. The important thing is to notice and recognize the importance of new information.

New information appears to the life-long learner in many, many ways. Sometimes, you see something on TV or online that changes your opinions or your perception of the world.

Ask questions

"Everybody is ignorant, only on different subjects." ~Will Rogers

There really are some dumb questions. You have heard them, usually from the guy in the back who wasn't *paying attention*. Now, you will *note* (hopefully) that this is where this whole article ties together. When you *choose to learn*, you often *pay attention* to the things that are really important. You might *take notes* for future reference, and if these things don't make sense, you *ask questions*, because you have *chosen to learn*.

The only dumb questions are the ones you already know the answers to. When you ask those questions, you prove that you haven't been paying attention.

For absolutely anything else, if you do not understand something, ASK! Do not EVER be shy when it comes to questions. Your teachers really want to help you understand the material. In most cases, your parents probably would rather know that you don't understand and that you aren't just ignoring them as usual.

If you aren't comfortable raising your hand in class, make an appointment to talk with your teacher before school or send them an email. Remember to be respectful of their time and their opinions, but you will usually find that your teachers, in turn, will respect your honest desire to learn. Even if you aren't good in a subject, when you demonstrate interest and effort, it helps your teachers to better understand how to teach the material.

Now, for the review.

There's really no secret to being a good student. Everyone has different interests and different abilities that determine how they do their work. That even includes your teachers. However, there are several key things you can do to improve your chances of being the best student you can be. Which ones will you *choose* to use to make the grade?