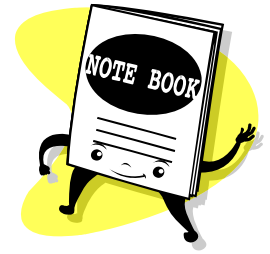




# How to Get Better Grades



In High School, grades count more than ever. Your high school GPA (Grade Point Average) begins with your first marking period in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and runs through the last marking period of your senior year. Colleges use your GPA (along with SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) scores, athletics, student involvement, and other factors) to determine admission. Not surprisingly, the colleges and universities that are ranked highest in the country have the toughest admissions policies.

It is possible, and not all that difficult, to improve your GPA. Any time is a good time to start; now is best. Here are some tips that have worked for others.

- 1) **Get off to a running start.** During the first weeks of school, make sure to complete every assignment, including any extra credit your teachers may offer. If you do everything that is expected of you during the first month of school, you may well find that the momentum can carry you through the whole marking period.
- 2) **Understand that homework is critical to success, and make it a part of your routine.** Can you imagine what would happen to a football or basketball team if they practiced at different times during the week, and skipped practice when they were on a winning streak? They would stop winning. The same policy applies to homework. Pick a time when you won't be tempted by the television or other distractions, and make that your homework session every afternoon or evening, Monday through Friday. A general rule for high school students is one to two hours per night, depending on how much work you have and how much effort you put into it. If you're watching TV, are on-line, listening to music, talking on the phone, and trying to solve algebra problems all at once, it's going to take a lot longer to get through the math.
- 3) **Pick your work/study spot carefully.** Have everything you're going to need ready in a place where you won't be disturbed. Don't waste time by getting up and down to get a calculator, find a ruler, a dictionary, or a sharp pencil, or visit the refrigerator. Turn your cell phone off. If your little brothers and sisters interrupt your study time, let your parents know that you need a quiet spot of your own.
- 4) **No homework tonight? Study anyway.** If you have lucked out and none of your teachers have assigned anything, then good for you! But, if you're wise, you'll still spend five to ten minutes reviewing each subject. You'll be done in less than an hour, still have time for yourself, and still be ahead of the GPA game.
- 5) **Don't borrow work, and don't lend it out.** Teachers usually place a greater value on tests over homework, and have a tradition of frowning upon cheating. Colleges and universities have an even more strict way of dealing with cheating and plagiarism: expulsion without refund of tuition.
- 6) **Tackle the hardest first.** Is English a breeze, but math a hurricane? Do the most difficult homework first. You may end up spending more time on the math, but doesn't that just make sense? It's far too tempting to skip the hard work at the end of a session. Get the tough jobs done first, and coast through the easy chores.

- 7) **Set your goal.** Not every student can pull an A+ in every subject every marking period. But there is probably a subject or two where you can earn that A. Look at each subject carefully, and set your goal for each one. No goal, however, should be lower than a C.
- 8) **Keep track of your progress.** When you get a test or an assignment back, keep a record of it. Show it to your parents or other teachers. They'll be pleased and proud, and that confidence can help keep yours going up. Don't throw away notes, tests, and assignments. These can become your best source of reference when you prepare for semester finals in December and May.
- 9) **Ask for help.** Every time a student asks a question in class, there are probably half a dozen other students with that same question. A teacher may well assume that a concept is clear, and move on, unless you are willing to raise your hand and ask for clarification. You'll be helping the teacher, your classmates, and most of all, yourself.
- 10) **Never give up.** So you thought you were ready for a test, but when you got it back it was a disaster. It happens to most everybody at one time or another. Use it to your advantage. If you get angry, crumple it into a ball and throw it out, you're missing an opportunity. If you look it over and ask how this could have happened, you'll be avoiding the same pitfalls the next test could bring. Ask your teacher to go over the test with you. You'll gain a better understanding of the material, and may even uncover a teacher's error that will raise the grade.
- 11) **Consider your reputation.** Some students seem to get a kick out of doing poorly in school. When they receive a failing grade, they laugh and boast to their friends, "Look! I got a 38!" as if it's the funniest thing in the world. That's not funny; it's sad. We've all heard the comment, "Man, that kid is really smart!" and we've never heard it said as a put-down. Nobody has ever heard a classmate say, "Boy, is that kid stupid! I wish I could be more that dumb!"
- 12) **Keep a balance and reward yourself.** One reason that athletic teams and student clubs maintain GPA requirements is to reward the students who take a positive attitude toward school. Nobody at Cape Coral High School expects you to rise before dawn, come to class and work from 7:00 until 2:00, go home and study until you go to sleep. Every teacher and administrator here wants you to have a balance between academics and social activities. If you're feeling over-stressed about grades, talk to your parents, contact a counselor, a trusted teacher, or an administrator and express your feelings. It may be that you're working harder than necessary. Your school offers something for everyone. Every faculty and staff member here wants you to succeed and be happy.

