

## Please note:

1. The picture borders in this document have been removed and replaced with plain borders to aid in the compression of the size of this PDF file (otherwise it is too large to download).
2. The resource is printed in black and white only.

# 1. SET UP YOUR HOME STUDY ENVIRONMENT

Something you can do **RIGHT NOW** to prepare for High School is to take a good **LOOK**



at **WHERE** you do your homework **AT HOME** and see if you can **IMPROVE** this area to make it more **EFFECTIVE**.

- Do you generally work in your bedroom or in another space in the house?
- Think about where your main working area should be for high school.
- Read through each of the sections below.
- **HIGHLIGHT** the main points in the first paragraph for each section.
- Complete the activities outlined to develop the perfect conditions for working at home.

## 1. LIGHTING

It is important to have adequate lighting when you are doing school work at home. Poor lighting can cause headaches and make your eyes feel tired and sore. Too much lighting (or badly positioned lighting) produces glare which also strains your eyes. Wherever possible, natural lighting is best (but make sure sunlight is not shining directly onto you or your work). This is not always available (because it gets dark!) so we need to look at the type of lighting you have in your room. For example, it is a good idea to have the room light on (75-100 watts) as well as a desk lamp (40-60 watts) that shines onto your work (but not into your eyes).

YES/NO

✚ Can you use natural lighting in the afternoon rather than turning on a light?

✚ When you do turn on the room light, it is a strong bright light?

✚ Do you have a desk lamp that shines directly onto your work (not your eyes)?

✚ Do you leave the room light on as well as your desk lamp when working?

Draw a picture of a student studying with the room light on and a desk lamp showing the light shining directly onto their papers. What position would you put the lamp so it does not make shadows or create glare?

☺ **TO DO:**

Have a talk with your parents about the lighting in the space you use to complete your homework. Maybe you need to look at a stronger light bulb or a new desk lamp or maybe just opening the curtains or blinds while you work in the afternoon!



## 2. VENTILATION

Ventilation refers to how well fresh air circulates or flows through your room. A room with the door and windows closed becomes stuffy and full of stale air. The lack of oxygen makes it difficult for you to think clearly and concentrate. Before you know it, you start to feel sleepy and even a bit sick and begin to nod off or develop a headache! Having a heater running can make it even worse.

YES/NO

 Are you able to open your window and have fresh air in your study space?

 If you can't open your window, do you go outside for some fresh air regularly?

 Do you take nice deep breaths when you are working and fill your lungs up?

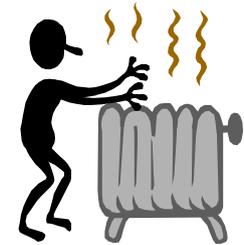
 When it is cold, do you put on more clothes rather than turn on a heater?

Draw a picture of a student with the window open (just a bit is OK) while they breathe in the fresh air. Show their lungs expanding with all the oxygen they are breathing in.

 **TO DO:**

Depending on where you live, you may have trouble getting fresh air into your study space. See if it is possible to create a cross flow of ventilation. For example if you open your window and door and then another window in a room across the hall, you get a nice breeze flowing through.

No! We want fresh air!



## 3. WORKING SPACE

The area where you work sets the tone for how you approach your homework. A cluttered and messy workspace is much harder to work in than one that is organised and in control. Your workspace consists of the hard and flat desk or surface you use to study on and the chair you sit on. It is not a good idea to try and work lying on your bed as your brain has strong associations between your bed and sleeping and will try to encourage you to feel sleepy if you lie down.

YES/NO

 Do you have a large and clear working or desk space to use for homework?

 Do you have a chair that is comfortable but supports your back?

 Is the chair adjustable so you can reduce strain on your neck and shoulders?

 If you place your hands on the table, are your arms parallel to the floor?

Draw a stick figure picture of a student sitting at their desk with the following correct posture:

- feet resting flat on the floor and thighs completely on the chair seat
- back supported by the back of the chair
- when the student places their hands flat on the desk, their arms are parallel to the floor

 **TO DO:**

Consider your working space at home. What could you do to improve it? Maybe you need to sit on a cushion or prop the desk up so it is higher or find something you can rest your feet on. Maybe it is time for a new chair or a bigger desk? Be creative and look around your house to see what you could use. Maybe one of your dining table chairs could double as your desk chair.

Yes! A big desk space!



#### 4. STORAGE AND ORGANISATION

In order to keep your work space clear and uncluttered, you need to have places to file away papers, stationery and equipment when you are not using them. It is a good idea to have your most used stationery in an easily accessible place so you don't waste time looking for things - maybe in a container on your desk. Stationery that is not used as regularly should be put away into a drawer. You also need somewhere to file away all the extra bits of paper, past tests or old workbooks from school. Some students use folders and stack these on shelves, others have filing cabinets or plastic storage boxes. It depends on what sort of space you have available in your study area. Many students also find it useful to have somewhere to unpack and stack their textbooks and exercise books when they come home from school. They can then leave them there when they are not being used. Lastly, you might want to consider assigning space to where you can keep assignments that you need to work on over a period of time and where you will put the homework you need to complete.

YES/NO

 Is your stationery organized with the most used items near to hand?

 Do you have somewhere you can keep sheets, past tests, old workbooks etc?

 Have you got a clear desk space & a place to file things you are working on?

 Do you have a noticeboard near or above your desk for important info?

Draw a picture of your study space showing what storage or organisational space you have available and what you use these spaces for.

Yes! Organised work space!



 **TO DO:**

Talk with your parents about the storage you have available in your study space. How could you make the best use of the space you have and do you need to buy any storage containers or folders or bookcases etc in order to organise your study space more effectively?

*Try this game with a friend or with your parents*



#### STUDY ENVIRONMENT GAME

1. Decide who will go first.
2. The first person says a feature of a GOOD study environment (for example: lots of natural light).
3. Now the second person says a different feature of a GOOD study environment.
4. Keep continuing until one person cannot think of another good feature.
5. The other person is now the winner!

(You can also try this game by listing the features that make a BAD study environment).

## 5. NOISE AND DISTRACTIONS

If you work in a space where there is lots of noise (eg TV) or activity taking place, your work takes much longer to complete as the sights and sounds compete for your attention. Who wants to spend MORE time on homework? It makes sense to try and create (as much as possible) a distraction free environment. For some students this can be difficult especially if they have lots of distractions in their room.

YES/NO

✚ Can you keep your working space fairly quiet?

✚ Is your working space free from too many distractions?

✚ If you have lots of distractions (TV, Computer games etc) can you remove them (put your mobile elsewhere) or unplug them (like your TV) or disable them (like turn off MSN Chat) during the times when you will be doing schoolwork?

Draw a picture showing all the possible distractions you have in your room and write down next to each one how you can remove or manage this distraction during study and homework times.

No! Not during homework time!



☺ **TO DO:**

On a post-it note, write down the how you can minimize your distractions each time you sit down to do work. For example:  
 1. Turn off the TV in my room  
 2. Get mum to hold my computer games till I finish etc etc  
 Place this on your desk or above your noticeboard.

### Summary:

- Use natural lighting whenever possible.
- Have a desk lamp shining on your work and a room light.
- Ensure there is a flow of fresh air in your study space.
- If you can't have fresh air, go outside regularly for breaks.
- Make sure you have a large flat surface to work on.
- Have a chair at a height that allows you to rest your arms on your desk parallel to the floor with your feet flat on the floor.
- Keep the most commonly used stationery in easy reach.
- Have places to store and file papers and equipment.
- Put a noticeboard above or near your desk.
- Eliminate or manage distractions in your study area.

## 2. USE CLASS TIME EFFECTIVELY

You might already be making very good use of your **CLASS TIME** at school,  
**OR**  
You might benefit from making some **CHANGES** to the way you use your time in class.

Try this checklist to see which category you are currently in.  
Put a tick in either the YES, SOMETIMES or NO column.

	Yes	Some times	No
You arrive on time to class and return promptly after recess and lunch.			
You bring the correct books and equipment with you to school.			
You take out your work and get yourself organised as soon as possible.			
You listen carefully to the instructions your teacher gives the class.			
You keep quiet when the teacher is talking or explaining things.			
As soon as you know what to do, you start work straight away .			
You are always working on the task you are supposed to be working on.			
You stay focused and don't get distracted by other people.			
You keep all your books and papers tidy and in the right place.			
You participate in all activities in the classroom.			
You share your ideas but also listen to other people's thoughts too.			
You are always polite and friendly to the other students in your class.			
You ask for permission if you want to do anything different.			
If you are not sure about something, you put up your hand and ask.			
You contribute to class discussions and activities.			
If you use something, you then put it back when you are finished.			
You work well with other people when you are asked to do group work.			
You always try to work to the best of your ability at all times.			

- Count how many ticks you had in the YES column: (a) \_\_\_\_\_
- Count how many ticks you had in the SOMETIMES column: (b) \_\_\_\_\_
- Count how many ticks you had in the NO column: (c) \_\_\_\_\_

To calculate your score work out this calculation:

Multiply the number at (a) by 2, then add the number at (b). Your score is:

What does your score indicate? Well this is just a guide, but the information below should give you some idea:

- 0-10 You can make a huge difference by developing the habits listed above.
- 11-20 You are showing some good characteristics of effective learners but there is lots you can do to improve!
- 21-28 You have some great habits already in place. There are areas to work on but you have certainly got the basics under control.
- 29-36 Wow! Excellent skills in place. You have already worked out what you need to do to make good use of class time. Just keep it up when you go to high school!

☺ **TO DO:**

Look back at your list on the first page and write down the top 3 things you need to start doing to improve your use of class time. For example: 'I need to not talk when the teacher is explaining what to do'.

- 1.....  
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- 2.....  
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- 3.....  
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USING CLASSTIME GAME

1. Each of you draws a picture of a student sitting in their classroom doing all the right things.
2. Label all the things they are doing correctly.
3. Whoever comes up with the most labels of effective classroom behaviours is the winner!

*Try this game with a friend or with your parents*



# WHAT WOULD YOU DO IN THESE SITUATIONS???

For each of the following, come up with 2 suggestions of how you might deal with this situation if it arose for you in high school. When you have finished, compare your ideas with the suggestions on the next page. But have a go yourself first! You can also discuss your ideas with a friend or your parents if you like.



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1. You've met a new friend in high school and you start sitting next to them in some of your classes (not all of your friends will be with you in every class) . At first everything is going OK, but after awhile your new friend starts playing up in class, talking all the time and getting you into trouble with the teacher as well. You don't want this situation to continue, but you aren't sure what to do. What approaches could you take to do something about this situation?

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2. You are having a bit of trouble understanding one of your subjects. Sometimes you aren't sure how to do the homework and you don't always understand what your teacher is talking about. What should you do?

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3. You find that you keep forgetting to bring the correct equipment for your lesson and you end up having to borrow things from other people all the time. Sometimes you forget your homework as well! What can you do about this?

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Compare your answers to these suggestions for if you .....

**1. HAVE A TALKATIVE FRIEND**

- During recess or lunch have a chat with your friend and try to explain to them how you are feeling and that you really want to try and do well in high school.
- When your friend starts being talkative in class, just quietly remind them that you want to try and listen.
- If they still keep talking, you might want to explain to them that you find it really hard to work with them and you might need to change seats and sit with someone else.
- If you feel a bit shy about talking to your friend, you could always see your teacher at recess and ask them to make the decision to separate you and your friend in that lesson.

**2. HAVE TROUBLE UNDERSTANDING A SUBJECT**

- Firstly, start putting up your hand and asking questions in class whenever you are not sure about something. It is much better to ask as you go and you'll be surprised at how many people were also thinking the same question!
- Talk with your friends at recess or lunch and see if they can help you at all as well – sometimes friends (or even parents) can be really good teachers!
- If you have trouble with your homework, find out where your teacher's staff room is and knock on the door and ask to see them when you get to school. Explain that you had trouble with the homework and they will either help you then or thank you for letting them know and will go through it in class with you.
- You can also ask to make an appointment to see the teacher of a subject at recess or lunch to get some help with that subject.

**3. KEEP FORGETTING EQUIPMENT/BOOKS/HOMEWORK**

- You will be given a school timetable that tells you which lessons you have on which day. Most students paste this timetable into the front of their diary and many students also put a copy on their desk or noticeboard at home and in their school locker.
- Develop the habit of checking your timetable at a certain time each night (for example, after dinner) and packing your bag with every thing you will need for the next day. If you do it at a particular time each day, it will become an automatic habit.

☺ **TO DO:**  
In the space below, write your OWN summary of the main points from these 4 pages. What are some positive classroom behaviours? Try and explain these in your own words.

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