Study SMART
The first thing to being classroom smart is to know your strengths and know your weaknesses. Everybody is good at some things, and everybody can improve at other things. The key is taking strengths and using them to improve weaknesses.

If you were asked to list things you are good at, what would you name? Would your list include basketball, dancing, playing an instrument, making friends, singing, sewing or maybe drawing? Knowing your strengths and weaknesses can make you a better student.

For example, if you understood your teacher’s lesson during class, but couldn’t figure out the homework later on, maybe your note-taking skills can be improved. Or if you were sure you knew all the answers the night before a big test, but then couldn’t seem to remember during the test, maybe you have test anxiety.

Whatever your weaknesses are, they can be overcome with practice, patience and some tips. But first, let’s learn how you learn.
In school and in life, people achieve success in many ways. And sometimes it’s not how smart you are, but HOW you are smart.

Have you ever heard anyone say someone is “people smart” or maybe even “picture smart”?

What they were probably referring to is a theory by a famous Harvard University professor, Dr. Howard Gardner. In 1983, Dr. Gardner developed the theory of Multiple Intelligences. This theory suggests that there are many ways people are smart. Tests for IQ (Intelligence Quotient) only measures what someone knows, not what they’re good at.

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These eight intelligences are: Artistic, Logical-Mathematical, Linguistic, Bodily-Kinesthetic, Interpersonal, Naturalist, Musical, and Spatial.

Here are some ways to use the strengths of Multiple Intelligences to improve your study skills.

• If you are People Smart, invite friends over to discuss lessons and materials. Or start an online study chat group.

• If you are Self Smart, keep a journal or Web blog highlighting things you want to remember from each lesson. When you have a test, you can review your journal or blog and have key ideas at your fingertips.

• If you are Numbers/Reasoning Smart, create a timeline of events you are studying, or make charts and graphs to organize material.

• If you are Body Smart, act out scenes from history or literature to remember them, build models or three-dimensional figures.

• If you are Word Smart, write songs or poems to sum up key facts even if the rhymes are silly.

• If you are Nature Smart, compare ideas you need to remember to the ways things work in natural habitats. Or think how animal behaviors can help you remember human behaviors or personalities.

Now think of the kind of intelligence you have. On a sheet of paper, write three ways you could use your intelligence to help you study, learn and remember things. Compare ideas with those of your classmates.
Students Who Learn Best by Seeing

You probably take great notes, but maybe remembering something that was said isn’t your greatest skill. Here are some tips about using your best skills in order to study well!

Not only should you take notes in class, but also take notes from your reading assignments. Writing down what you’ve learned will help you to remember it.

If your teacher gives you handouts, rewrite the information so you can better remember it. If your teacher gives you handouts, rewrite the information so you can better remember it.

You may feel as if you don’t need to take notes in class because you’re good at remembering what is being said. But when it comes time to study, you’ll wish you had detailed notes.

Here are some strategies for your learning style:

- Ask your teacher if it is okay to tape record the lesson. Draw a picture. Whether the lesson is about a political leader, an historic invention or math problems, ask your teacher or another student if you can watch him or her solve the problem. Then you solve the problem using the same steps.

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BECOMING A BETTER LISTENER

Good listening skills will help you all through life.

Good listening is not just sitting back and letting the words flow over you. To be a good listener, you need to be actively involved — reacting to what the speaker says, thinking of questions, comparing statements to what you know from your life, deciding if you agree with the opinions being stated. You also have to know what words for you and plan ahead so you get what you need.

You could try some of the techniques to be a good listener. If you checked fewer than five items, you might want to look over the list above? If you checked five or more items, you probably pick up on any information that is repeated or stated. You listen to class discussions, and/or you think of questions to ask. You make sure you're clear about what is being said while the speaker is talking. You make connections to your own experiences or life. You think of examples as the speaker talks. You keep your mind active and alert, by taking notes and putting stars next to important points. You make connections to your own experiences or life. You think of examples as the speaker talks. You keep your mind active and alert, by taking notes and putting stars next to important points. You make connections to your own experiences or life.

The first and last few minutes of any class are the most important. They are the same as the first and last paragraph of something you read. Any number of things can be said in these moments. The last moments tell you that the lesson is over. The first moments introduce what this class is about. The last moments wrap up the lesson. The last moments are also when homework assignments are usually given out!

- You keep your mind on what is being said.
- You catch yourself when your mind begins to wander.
- You keep your mind active and alert, by taking notes and putting stars next to important points.
- You make connections to your own experiences or life.
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How many checkmarks did you make in the list above? If you checked fewer than five items, you might want to look over the list above.

How SQ3R Works

SURVEY means to look quickly over what you have to read before you start. First thing in your survey, you should read the first paragraph, and the last. The first paragraph introduces the subject, and the last paragraph gives the author’s conclusion. Then read the headlines, titles and subtitles. Notice words or phrases that are printed in bold or italic print (this indicates they are important). Look at all illustrations, graphs, and read the captions under them.

Next step is to QUESTION. Ask yourself what you already know about the subject. Turn main headlines and bold or italic type into questions. Then you’re ready to READ. You want to answer the questions you have made from headlines, and any you asked yourself. You want to look for details or examples in the text.

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As you learned on Page 8, being classroom smart begins with being an active listener.
In any class, it's important to hear and understand what the teacher is saying. To better remember what the teacher says, you need to take good notes and ask questions.

You will not need to write everything down. Notes should be the highlights of what the teacher says — the important points, the subjects on which you will be tested later.

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Experts, in fact, say you should spend about 80 percent of the time listening, and only about 20 percent writing.

Teachers usually are pretty good about letting you know what's important. They may say right out: "You need to remember this." or "You'll need to know this later." When your teachers do this, take advantage of the tip. It's a gift.
Write the information down. Put a star next to it!

Here are some quick tips to improve your note-taking skills:

**Abbreviate**

Blogging, e-mail, Instant Messenger and text messaging have all shown people easy ways to abbreviate common words and expressions. And abbreviating is an important skill in taking notes.

You probably use abbreviations more than you realize. Or you may use acronyms — abbreviations that are formed by using the first letter of each word in a phrase. The word blog itself is an abbreviation for the phrase "Web log." Here are some other abbreviations, acronyms or symbols you may use often when you are taking notes:

- fyi ... for your information
- bc or b/c ... because
- w/o ... without
- w/ ... with
- lb ... pound
- qty ... quantity
- U.S. ... United States
- @ ... at
- 4 ... for
- 2 ... to
- iow ... in other words
- tba ... to be announced
- tba ... to be announced
- in other words
- ok ... I don't know

**Ask Questions**

You know how people say there are no stupid questions. Well, it's true. If you don't understand something in class, chances are pretty good that others are thinking the same thing. So go ahead and ask your teacher to explain something in greater detail.

When taking notes, put question marks next to anything that doesn't make complete sense to you. If there is no time to ask right then, be sure to ask your teacher to go over everything you didn't quite understand at the end of class.

**Rewrite Your Notes**

After class, rewrite or edit your notes. Change the abbreviations to whole words and get rid of the symbols and acronyms and replace with the appropriate words or phrases. This will not only refresh the lesson taught, but it will also help later when you review for a test.

It's important to review your notes quickly. It will help you remember things you weren't able to write down at the time and give you an opportunity to "fill in the gaps" in any of your notes.

As you rewrite or edit your notes, find all of the question marks and make sure you understand the points involved. If you haven't had a chance to ask your teacher, you may look up the information in your textbook. Or you may get it by comparing your notes with a friend. Sometimes a classmate can help you understand the lesson. And maybe you can help the classmate, too.

**Review Your Notes**

Before class starts the next day, review your notes. It will help you to better understand the next lesson and will remind you to ask about anything that is still unclear to you.

And don't forget to come prepared for class by completing all work and reading assignments before school begins.

**Study the Newspaper**

Pair up with a classmate in order to practice your note-taking skills. Ask your partner to choose an article from the newspaper and to pretend he or she is a television news anchor. Your partner should read the newspaper story to you, just as an anchor would. While your partner is reading, take notes. Remember to abbreviate and use symbols and acronyms. Rewrite your notes and read them back to your partner. Did you include all of the important information? Did you understand what was read and what you wrote? Now, choose another story from the newspaper and change roles.
Test SMART tips to reduce Test anxiety

In every class you’re going to be tested. Test time is what you prepare for through note-taking, asking questions, studying and organizing yourself.

You know yourself. You know how you learn. You know how you are smart. But now what?

Relax. Anxiety before a test is normal. It can even improve your concentration and alertness. But don’t get too anxious and don’t worry. Remember, you’re prepared. Show that confidence.

Here are some ways to relax.

Breathe. Take a long, deep breath and hold it. Slowly, release your breath. Stretch. Reach your arms up high. Stretch your legs out. Move your head and neck slowly. And flex your fingers and wrists.

Visualize. Close your eyes for a few seconds and think about something happy. Remembering the ways you are smart will help you to focus. If you’re Music Smart, get the tune of your favorite song in your head while thinking about the lessons you studied. If you’re Picture Smart, try to imagine yourself doing the test. If you’re Word Smart, come up with adjectives to describe how confident you are about the material.

Now that you’ve relaxed, make sure you have everything your teacher requires before getting to class. Are you supposed to have a pencil, paper, calculator?

Next, it’s on to the test. Here are some things to remember as you begin so you can do your very best:

Read through the entire test. It’ll help you come up with a plan and take away some of the anxiety of not knowing what to expect.

If you come to a question you’re not sure of, make a mark next to it and come back to it. It’s best to first answer the questions you are more comfortable with, leaving time for the questions you need to think a little more about.

If it’s a multiple-choice test, eliminate the choices you know are not right. This will increase your odds of answering the questions correctly.

If it’s a true/false test, pay close attention to key words such as “always,” “never” and “every.” General words like those and “all of the above” or “none of the above” can throw you off track. But you know the right answer.

For essay questions, read each one carefully and then begin with the easiest. But before you begin writing, think it over. Be sure to write in legible, clear, complete sentences. It’s always good to have a beginning, middle and end. Start with stating the question and then present your answers. Don’t forget to include why or how you came up with your conclusions. And end the answer by restating your main points.

For math tests, take your time. If you’re stuck, maybe drawing a diagram will help. And don’t forget to show all your work.

Is it an open book test? If so, make sure you are familiar with the book so you can locate material quickly. If your teacher allows you to highlight material in the book, do so while studying. It’ll help you find the information quickly.

Before you turn in your test, check all of your answers. Then smile. You were prepared and you’ve done well.
Tests are one way teachers find out how much you have learned. So are long-term projects like term papers. The key to being classroom smart on long-term projects is managing your time.

The secret to good time management is lists, lists, and more lists. In school, it is important to keep an assignment book in which you write down everything you have to do, and when. And you need to make sure your assignment book lists all your classes together, so you don’t forget something in one of them.

Each night, when you get home, write any big long-term assignments (or tests) on a calendar.

When you get a research project or paper to do over a long period of time, it is important to write out a plan for doing the project. When you do this, think small. Plan to do one thing at a time. Finish one step and move on to the next.

If you break a big assignment into small, doable pieces, you can finish these pieces a little at a time and not feel overwhelmed by a huge assignment.

Think of it as building a house. You don’t construct everything at once. One day you pour the foundation, one day you put up the frame. One day you enclose it. One day you paint it.

On your project, make out a timeline. Work backwards from the final due date. And be sure to mark any dates for early parts to be turned in.

Then break up the chunks of time that are left. Estimate how much time it will take to do the reading, and set deadlines for yourself. Set a date for doing a rough draft and a final draft. Set a date to complete any illustrations or graphs or artwork.

Time plays a part in almost every job you will do. Newspaper reporters have deadlines. Restaurant owners have hours for service. Look through the paper and list 10 jobs from stories, photos and ads. For each write how time is a factor.

You know about strategies on the football field, chess board and video games, but did you know there are strategies for learning and doing well in school?

Dictionary.com defines “strategy” as “a plan, method, or series of maneuvers or stratagems for obtaining a specific goal or result.”

So, let’s finish learning how to be classroom smart by designing a learning strategy that specifically fits your learning style.

You know what kind of student you are and how you are smart. Now come up with a plan to do your best in the classroom.

Pretend you are writing an Internet blog all about you — an experienced, confident and successful student. You want to share with readers all about your learning style and the strategies you have come up with that have helped you become the best student possible.

In the space below, tell your readers about the kind of student you are. Describe your type of “intelligence.” And take readers step by step through the ways you take notes, study and do your absolute best to understand and even master a lesson. Finish by comparing blogs with friends and sharing strategies.
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