How to Study and Succeed as a Student with ADHD

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Study Tips for Students with ADHD

Hey parents and fellow ADHDers! By the time you're done reading this article, you'll know how to study and succeed as a student with ADHD. (Or help your student succeed, if you're a parent.)

Please note that all the study tips for students with ADHD in this article are based on my experience succeeding as a student with ADHD. I obtained a bachelor's degree with a 3.5+ GPA in four years.

The Hard Truth You Have to Accept if You're a Student with ADHD

The truth is this: with ADHD, you may have to feel as though you're working harder than other students to succeed. This is especially true if you want to be top of your class — pointing at you people who want scholarships or are already on one.

Balancing Your Time and Energy

This depends on whether you only want to pass or make straight A's. The more time you invest in studying (and thus yourself), the higher your grades will be.

But time isn't the only thing you have to consider. With ADHD, you can get easily fatigued. Maybe you've already noticed that? You will if you go to college.

You have a limited amount of energy to put to use each day doing high functioning tasks. Taking a test, working at a job and studying are all high-functioning tasks.

So, sometimes, when school life gets really busy, you may have to make some sacrifices regarding your social activities and personal time. Now, it's important to remember that overall, you should still be striving for a balance. Look to your current and expected grades, and this can help you answer the question of whether you are on the right track and if you can afford more down time.

Memorize the 4 Triggers of Dopamine

- Challenge
- Urgency
- Interest
- Curiosity

If you're bored, getting distracted a lot, or not getting things done, it's because the triggers listed above are missing from your daily life.

You need to encounter or feel one of the four triggers to release dopamine. Dopamine is a chemical in your brain that rewards and urges you to continue doing something.

Because you have ADHD, your brain may be low on dopamine compared to everybody else. You have to keep re-supplying dopamine levels in your brain, or you could suffer terrible fatigue and "brain fog".

It's easy for you, and everybody else, to do things you're interested in. But for the ADHD brain, interest is a necessity if you want to get things done fast. Try to choose courses and find research for assignments that genuinely sparks your interest (as much as you can).

However, you can also use urgency, which you usually feel when an assignment is due at midnight…and it's 7pm.

You can also create goals or challenges for yourself, like getting an A on your next assignment or maintaining your high GPA. T

Then you have curiosity; this comes into play when you're learning something new.

Set Aside at Least 1 hour a day for Studying and Assignments

Not only should you set aside one hour a day, but you should also track your time spent studying. You can do this using a pen and a notebook or an app on your phone.

Study for 30 minutes at a time and jot it down at the end of the 30-minute session. Tracking your time will keep you focused and disciplined; you will be holding yourself accountable.

You don't have enough time to study for all your classes unless you dedicate your life to studying. That's going to be one of the hardest thing you've ever done if you plan on having a social life or a job.

Some weeks will be easier than others, so you won't need to study as much as usual. But if you study for one hour a day, you'll be doing more than half your peers. I promise you that.

Studying Alone Is Likely the Best Choice

Everybody has different study methods that work best for them. For me, and most other people with ADHD, studying alone is the best option.

Handling the distractions that come with studying in groups is almost impossible. Studying requires concentration, and it's rare to see a study group that is totally focused and quiet.

At the end of the day, talking to your classmates is going to be a lot more interesting than doing your course work. Believe me, I've been there, done that. So, I would recommend you try to study alone as much as possible.

Turn Off Any Source of Noise While Studying

For the average person with ADHD, small noises are too distracting. If that isn't you, feel free to skip this. The rest of us aren't so lucky.

If you're at home with your parents (high schoolers), you should be able to get them to turn the TV down. For college students, forget about studying in your dorm.

And as for studying in the library, try to find an area or section that is quiet (your library may even have designated "quiet areas"). Contrary to popular belief, some areas of school libraries can be very noisy and distracting. Or, if you can book study rooms, try that.

Socialize with Your Classmates

Get in Facebook groups, GroupMe's, Slack or whatever the students at your school use.

GroupMe (and other apps) make collaboration easy. Your classmates will often be willing to share ideas and insight or point you in the right direction. Also, talking to your classmates can be a great way to find emotional support, as you are all on this journey together! And, if you are able to connect with other students that have ADHD, you can even share your study tips for students with ADHD.