

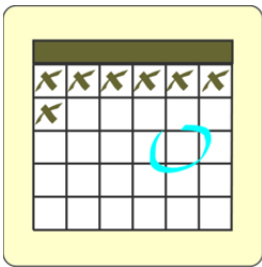
Three Steps to Better Grades

Cal Newport, author of *How to Be a High School Superstar* (Three Rivers Press) and founder of the popular advice blog Study Hacks, offers these tips for kids:

1. **Disconnect.** Seriously, disconnect. Unplug the cable that connects your computer to your modem, wrap it around your cell phone, and give this bundle to your mom, telling her how long you will be studying and when she can hand it back to you. Students hate his advice, but **it absolutely works**. Once you get used to working without distractions, two wonderful things happen: Your work gets much better and takes about half the time.



2. **Follow the fortnight rule.** Put a calendar in a public place in your house and write on it all your deadlines, tests and due dates. Every morning, check what's on for the current day. Then—and this is the important part—look two weeks ahead. If anything is scheduled, **make a day-by-day plan** for it and mark the steps on the calendar. This is a smart way to spread out your workload and tackle it more efficiently.



3. **Don't just highlight.** The most efficient students all study the same way: They try to **explain concepts** out loud in complete sentences—without looking at notes—as if lecturing a class. If you can do this, you're done reviewing. This is much harder than what most kids do, which is highlight textbooks and reread their notes silently again and again, but it leads to **better comprehension and requires much less time**.

