

Part 1

Getting Organized

Unit 1



Developing a Personal Study Plan

The Daily Homework Battle

It had been a difficult day. Joshua's teacher had gotten angry at him for not paying attention during the science lesson, and, as usual, he didn't do very well on the weekly spelling test or the math quiz. But now school was finally over, and he was free to do other things and have some fun.

As soon as he went through the front door, Joshua heaved his book bag into the corner and raced to the kitchen. On the way, he yelled hello to his mom, and petted his yellow lab whose tail was beating back and forth. Opening the refrigerator, Joshua grabbed the milk carton. He slammed the door shut, reached in the cabinet for a glass, and filled it with milk. He then picked up the two chocolate chip cookies his mother had left for him on a plate near the stove. Ten gulps later, he was ready to head outside. As he dashed out the back door, he grabbed his basketball. Positioning himself ten feet from the hoop his dad had mounted above the garage door, Joshua began taking jump shots. Two minutes later, his friend Zachary showed up, and the game began. Joshua and Zachary went one-on-one.

Joshua was shooting well, and many of his shots went through the basket without even hitting the rim. He could sense that he was on his way to victory. The frustration he saw in Zachary's face told him that his friend also realized that Joshua was going to win the first game.

In the back of his mind, Joshua was aware of what was going to happen in a few minutes. His mother would soon call him to come inside and start his homework even though he had only

been playing basketball for less than a half hour. It happened the same way every day. Their battle had become a daily ritual. He would get home from school, have milk and cookies, and then go outside to shoot baskets. Then his mother would ruin everything! She always insisted that he start his homework before dinner. They would get into a big argument. His mother would get angry and threaten to tell his father that he wouldn't do his homework. After a great deal of yelling, Joshua would finally go up to his room, open his book bag, and begin working. He had no choice but to give in, but he felt angry, frustrated, and picked on.

Joshua hated doing homework. Being required to do more work after spending seven painful hours in school seemed like a cruel punishment. Just getting his mind to focus on reading took his total effort and concentration. Sounding out the difficult words and making sense out of the information was exhausting. Joshua knew it would take him forever to write the answers to the assigned questions at the end of the history unit, and he knew doing the fifteen math problems would take at least a half hour. It didn't make any difference anyway. He was certain that his teacher would return his assignments with red marks all over them.

"Why do the work if it's going to be wrong anyway?" he asked himself with frustration.

Joshua felt the time before dinner belonged to him. He would tell his parents that he could finish his assignments after he ate. The problem was that he always wanted to watch television after dinner, and his mom and dad knew it. When he turned on the television, there would be another argument.

"Why are they always bugging me?" Joshua thought angrily.

Because he hardly ever wrote down his assignments, Joshua was never really sure what was due the next day. To get his parents "off his back," he would either tell them that the teacher hadn't assigned any homework or that he had his homework in school. This strategy seldom worked. His parents didn't believe him. They would remind him what his teacher had said during their last conference: "I always assign homework." Then Joshua's parents would bring out his last report card and show him the teacher's comments. She wrote that Joshua often didn't hand in his assignments and that the work he did hand in was usually incomplete. Whenever they brought this up, Joshua knew he had lost the argument. Frustrated and resentful, he would turn off the TV and go to his room and begin his homework. He would give in, but he still felt mad. It was all so unfair.

Predicting What Will Happen

Do you think that the daily struggle between Joshua and his parents about homework is very predictable? When events happen over and over and take place in a certain expected order, these events can be described as a ritual.

Ritual: something that occurs over and over in the same way.

Do you have any rituals in your own life? If so, list a few of your rituals below. (Hint: one might be drinking milk and eating a cookie every afternoon when you get home from school.)

My Rituals

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Go back into the story and underline one time each event that would happen after Joshua returned from school. (Hint: "Joshua heaved his book bag into the corner.") Then number each underlined event in the order in which it happened.

Now go back and circle each of Joshua's behaviors and attitudes that describe **how he feels about school and homework**. (Hint: "Joshua hated doing his homework.") Then number each attitude and behavior in the order in which it happened.

Write down each of the underlined and numbered **behaviors and attitudes** (Don't write down Joshua's feelings). See if you can find at least six. Once you write down the behaviors and attitudes, evaluate them in terms of how smart they are.

1: _____

How would you evaluate this behavior or attitude?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not Smart Fairly Smart Very Smart

Briefly tell why you evaluated the behavior or attitude in this way: _____

2: _____

How would you evaluate this behavior or attitude?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not Smart Fairly Smart Very Smart

Briefly tell why you evaluated the behavior or attitude in this way: _____

3: _____

How would you evaluate this behavior or attitude?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not Smart Fairly Smart Very Smart

Briefly tell why you evaluated the behavior or attitude in this way: _____

4: _____

How would you evaluate this behavior or attitude?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not Smart Fairly Smart Very Smart

Briefly tell why you evaluated the behavior or attitude in this way: _____

5: _____

How would you evaluate this behavior or attitude?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not Smart Fairly Smart Very Smart

Briefly tell why you evaluated the behavior or attitude in this way: _____

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6: _____

How would you evaluate this behavior or attitude?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not Smart Fairly Smart Very Smart

Briefly tell why you evaluated the behavior or attitude in this way: _____

Make three predictions about the consequences of Joshua's behaviors and attitudes. The consequences could happen in school or at home. (Example "He would get poor grades on his homework assignments.") Write the consequences below and circle whether you believe your predictions are **possible** (could occur) or **probable** (very likely to occur).

- 1. _____

Possible Probable
- 2. _____

Possible Probable
- 3. _____

Possible Probable

Let's pretend that Joshua decides that he really wants to do better in school. What changes in his attitude and behavior might help him to be more successful in school?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

Evaluate Joshua's overall plan for doing his homework.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Ineffective Fairly Effective Very Effective

Thinking and Planning Ahead

Let's say that Joshua is your friend, and he wants to do better in school. He asks if you have any ideas that could help him. You suggest that he create a study schedule that would also leave enough time for him to do fun things.

Joshua's first step in developing a study schedule would be to list all of his subjects and estimate how much time he needs to spend every day doing his homework in each subject. You may be thinking, "How can I make an estimate if I don't know what Joshua's homework assignments are and if I don't know how long it takes him to complete his reading assignment or do his math problems?" This is true. You cannot tell the exact amount of time that he needs to spend doing homework without knowing his assignments and without knowing how good his skills are. However, based upon how much homework you do, you can probably estimate how much time Joshua generally needs to spend each evening. You would have to assume that he has similar academic skills and that it would take him approximately the same time to complete an assignment as it would take you.

Joshua's teacher, of course, may assign more homework, or less homework than your teacher. Your estimate, however, is likely to be fairly accurate.

Write your estimates below. Use minutes instead of hours (for example: Math -- 15 minutes.) You can change the actual subjects if you are taking different courses,

Joshua's Subjects

Approximate Amount of Daily Study Time Required

English	_____
Math	_____
Social Studies	_____
Science	_____
Government	_____

As you know, some evenings you need to spend less time doing homework in a particular subject, and some evenings you need to spend more. For example, if you have a math test on Friday, you would need to spend more time studying Thursday evening.

By using your own study requirements as a guide, you could make your estimates even more realistic. You could figure out the *average time* he should study every evening in each of

his subjects. This means taking the total time he needs to study every week in each subject and dividing this total by four (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday).

Don't concern yourself now with how much homework and studying Joshua should do over the weekend. Some teachers assign homework over the weekend, and some do not. If you do have weekend homework assigned, you can make up a weekend schedule for Friday through Sunday.

Let's look at English. Let's say that you for Joshua to do well on the English vocabulary quiz that is given every Friday, you believe that he needs to study his assigned vocabulary words for a total of 60 minutes each week. You also think that he needs to spend extra time reviewing on Wednesday and Thursday evening so that he's prepared for the test. Let's see how you could figure out his *average daily study time*.

Your Estimate of Weekly Time Required to Study Vocabulary Words

Monday	10 minutes
Tuesday	10 minutes
Wednesday	15 minutes
Thursday	25 minutes for final review
Total Weekly Study Time	60 minutes
Average Time Each Night	<u>15 minutes</u> (60 minutes divided by 4 nights)

You would now plug 15 minutes after the subject English written on the above chart. Of course, there are other English assignments he would need to do such as book reports. You would have to factor extra time into Joshua's estimated time for these additional assignments. You might decide that on-average he would have to spend an additional fifteen minutes each evening. Some evening he might only have to study vocabulary and do some grammar exercises. Other evenings he would have to spend extra time writing an essay, reading his textbook and answering questions, or reading a book for a book report. You might estimate that Joshua should spend a total of 30 minutes each evening on English. You would follow the same time averaging procedure for estimating Joshua's required study time in the other subjects listed on the chart.

Let's assume that Joshua agrees with your estimate and agrees to spend thirty minutes on average doing his English homework. Let's also assume that he works hard and concentrates when he studies. Predict the possible consequences.

Do you think Joshua's overall performance in English will improve? **Yes No Not Sure**

Do you think Joshua's performance of the weekly quiz will improve? **Yes No Not Sure**

How will Joshua feel if he begins to do well on the vocabulary quizzes?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
No Different Somewhat Better Much Better

How will Joshua's parents feel if he begins to do well on the vocabulary quizzes?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
No Different Somewhat Better Much Better

How will Joshua's teacher feel if he begins to do well on the vocabulary quizzes?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
No Different Somewhat Better Much Better

How will Joshua's resource specialist feel if he begins to do well on the vocabulary quizzes?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
No Different Somewhat Better Much Better

How motivated will Joshua be to continue using his schedule if he begins to do well on the quizzes?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not Motivated Somewhat Motivated Very Motivated

Evaluate the overall effectiveness of the of the new study schedule:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not Effective Fairly Effective Very Effective

Of course, you also realize that the *quality* of Joshua's studying will affect the outcome. If he develops an effective system for learning the words, concentrates, and works diligently (hard), this will certainly improve his performance on the weekly spelling quiz.

Making Your Own Study Schedule

It's now time for you to make your own study schedule. Before you begin, look at the sample schedule on the next page. Let's assume that this is the schedule Joshua created after estimating his average study time for each subject. You can see that the schedule indicates the time between when Joshua gets home from school each day until bedtime. The hours have been divided into 1/2 hour blocks of time. At the bottom of the schedule you will find a code. As this book is not printed in color, picture patterns are used to indicate the ways Joshua has decided to use his time after school. For example, one geometric pattern represents the time he spends eating. Another represents free time. And another represents study time.

Note that this schedule allows Joshua to spend time with his friends for an hour before he begins his homework. Obviously, this arrangement will have to be worked out with his mom. It's likely, however, that she would agree to allowing Joshua free time for an hour before starting his homework if she was convinced that:

1. Joshua would keep to his agreements and maintain the schedule
2. Joshua would study for an hour before dinner
3. Joshua would study for an hour after dinner
4. Joshua would have enough time to complete his assignments

Also note that Joshua's study schedule is based on spending a total of two hours doing homework every school night. Some students will require more study time, and some will require less. Of course, even if two hours is usually sufficient for Joshua to complete his homework, there may be situations in which additional homework will be required on a particular night.

For example, he may have a book report due on Friday, and he may have to spend extra time proofreading his report and checking for spelling and grammar errors. The same thing would be true if he has a big exam on Wednesday. He may need extra time to review and study his notes.

There is also another possibility. His teacher may actually assign less homework on a particular night. Joshua's parents' may allow him to do less homework that night, or they may want him to use the two hours to organize his binder or get a head start on the next day's assignments.

Joshua might also decide to use the study time he scheduled to read a book for his next book report. This would certainly reduce the pressure to him to complete the book and his book report on time.

Joshua's Weekly Schedule

TIME:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
3:15 - 3:30	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	
3:30 - 4:00	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	
4:00 - 4:30	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	
4:30 - 5:00	*****	*****	*****	*****	
5:00 - 5:30	*****	*****	*****	*****	
5:30 - 6:00	*****	*****	*****	*****	
6:00 - 6:30	^^^^^^^^^^	^^^^^^^^^^	^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^	^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^	
6:30 - 7:00	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	
7:00 - 7:30	*****	*****	*****	*****	
7:30 - 8:00	*****	*****	*****	*****	
8:00 - 8:30	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	
8:30 - 9:00	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	
9:00 - 9:30	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	
9:30 - 10 :00	ZZZZZZZZZZ	ZZZZZZZZZZ	ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ	ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ	

Code: [x] free time [*] studying [^] dinner [z] sleep

Deciding how much time you need to spend studying and creating a personal study schedule can actually be fun. There is another major advantage. If you create a schedule and use it, you will be amazed by how much free time you will have to play, watch TV, talk on the phone with your friends, use your computer, or do other things you enjoy.

It's now time for you to create your own study schedule.

Steps For Making Your Own Study Schedule

Step 1: Write down the subjects you are taking and then write in the average number of minutes you need to spend each week in each subject. Then divide by 4 (Monday – Thursday) to determine the average study time you need to spend **every day** in each subject.

My Subjects	Approximate Amount of Daily Study Time Required
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
Total Daily Study Time:	_____

Step 2: Write down the times you get home from school, have dinner, and go to bed.

Get home from school: _____

Dinner time: _____

Bed time: _____

These times usually do not change. Unless your parents decide you can stay up later or change the dinner time, you can probably count on dinner and bedtime being at a certain time during the week. There may be occasional exceptions, but this will probably not happen very often.

Now you are ready to use the information to complete your own schedule. Look at the schedule on page 16. It indicates the time between getting home from school each day and going to bed. Before you attempt to complete the schedule, read the instructions carefully. Plan what you want to do before you begin to fill in the schedule. Ask your teacher if she can give you a practice schedule before you actually color the schedule in your workbook. By filling out the practice schedule first, you can make changes. Once you are satisfied with your schedule, you can complete the one in your book. Later you can adjust the schedule as your school obligations change or when you enter the next grade. (As you progress through school, you are likely to find that you have more homework and that more study time is required.)

- Step 3:** Use different colored pencils or felt pens to indicate when you eat dinner and when you go to bed. If you prefer, you can be creative and use geometric designs to indicate the different activities. Let's say that you eat between 6:00 and 6:45. Fill in that time every day in a color or design of your choice. For example, you might choose red for eating. If you eat between 6:00 and 6:45 color in one and one half strips. Below the schedule fill in one of the little boxes with the selected color or design and write: "Dinner Time." Fill in the second box with another color and write "Bedtime."
- Step 4:** Now use a different color or design to indicate when you want to study and do homework. For example, you might want to do homework from 5:00 to 6:00. Dinner might be from 6:00 to 6:45. You might want to have some time for yourself until 7:00 and then do your remaining homework until 7:30 or 8:00 PM. (Remember to fill in the code below to indicate what the colors or geometric designs mean.)
- Step 5:** Use a different color to indicate when you want to have free time, make telephone calls, or watch TV. For example, if you get home from school at 3:30 and want to play basketball or get together with friends until 5:00, color in the time on the schedule in the color you have chosen. Below the schedule fill in the little box with the color or design you have selected and write: "Free Time."
- Step 6:** Show your schedule to your teacher, resource specialist, and parents to see if they have any suggestions. If they do not, and you are happy with it, then you have created a study schedule that should make your life easier and more organized.
- Step 7:** As an experiment, keep using your schedule for at least two weeks. See if your grades improve and school becomes easier.
- Step 8:** Observe how your schedule is working. After a two-week trial period, you may want to fine-tune the schedule. This means making changes that will improve the schedule and make it even more effective. For example, you may find that you need to spend approximately ten additional minutes each evening doing your science assignment and ten less minutes doing your math assignment. Remember, your schedule should be your friend, and not your enemy!

My Weekly Schedule

TIME	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
3:15 - 3:30					
3:30 - 4:00					
4:00 - 4:30					
4:30 - 5:00					
5:00 - 5:30					
5:30 - 6:00					
6:30 - 7:00					
7:00 - 7:30					
7:30 - 8:00					
8:00 - 8:30					
8:30 - 9:00					
9:00 - 9:30					
9:30 - 10 :00					

Code: [] free time [] studying [] dinner [] sleep [] _____ *
[] _____ [] _____ [] _____

* religious school, music practice, scouts, after-school athletics, tutoring, chores, etc.

Step 9: Record your grades in every subject (tests, essays, reports, special projects etc.) once you begin using your study schedule. Do this for the two week trial period while you are fine-tuning your schedule. This will help you track your improvement and it will help you make adjustments. If, for example, your grade in math does not improve, you may need to schedule more time to do math homework and studying. (See pages 57 for a grade tracking form.)

The secret to making the schedule work is to keep to it, even if this means making some sacrifices. For example, you may want to watch a football game on TV, but the game may be on when you are supposed to be studying. Turning off the TV can be difficult, but keeping your commitments must be your top priority (i.e., your most important obligation). To get value from your schedule and experience the positive results, you have to maintain your schedule even when there are powerful temptations to abandon it. This means coming in and starting your homework when *you* agreed to begin without having to be reminded. It also means studying during the times *you* determined, even if there is something else you would rather be doing. When you feel like giving into the temptation, you'll need to remind yourself that you made an agreement and that you keep your agreements.

Keeping to your schedule is similar to maintaining an athletic training program. If you want to be on the track team, you may decide to run three miles every morning during the summer vacation. Because you want to run before it gets too hot, you decide to get up early and run at 7:00 AM. Let's say that one morning you want to sleep in and skip running that day, there's a good chance that you may begin to find many other reasons not to run. Each time you skip your daily run, it will become easier and easier to justify giving up your commitment. Before long you may totally abandon your training regimen.

My Personal Study Schedule Contract

The following "contract" will help you maintain your schedule. It will remind you of your commitment. Keeping commitments is an important part of thinking and acting smart.

My Study Schedule Contract

To Whom It May Concern:

I, _____ (your name), agree to use my study schedule every day for a **2-week trial period**. If I decide after two weeks that the schedule needs to be adjusted, I can make changes. Once I make these changes, I agree to use the new schedule for a minimum of **4 additional weeks**. If I am pleased with the results and my school work improves, I will continue to use the schedule for the rest of the school year. I can make changes in the schedule every four weeks. Once I make these adjustments, I will use the schedule for another 4 weeks before making changes.

Finally, I agree to keep to my schedule without having to be reminded by my parents.

Your Signature :

Date:

Your Teacher's Signature:

Your Parent's Signature:

Study Breaks

Everyone needs to take an occasional break when studying. Taking a break, however, does not mean getting up every four minutes to walk around the house, talk with your brother, take a look at TV, or call a friend on the telephone.

Successful students train themselves to work for a set period of time before taking time out for a rest. This is called a training regimen. Successful athletes know the value of a consistent training regimen. A football player may go to the weight room three times a week and spend an hour there. A karate student may go to class three times a week and spend two hours practicing kicks and punches. These athletes condition themselves to work until they complete the daily

regimen. They may take some breaks, but no matter how tired they are, they don't stop until they finish. Over time, they build their endurance to the point that they don't get very tired.

General Formula for Taking Study Breaks

4th & 5th Grade:	study or do homework for a minimum of fifteen to twenty minutes before taking a five minute break .
6th & 7th Grade:	study or do homework for a minimum of twenty to twenty-five minutes before taking a five minute break .
8th & 9th Grade:	study or do homework for a minimum of twenty-five minutes to thirty minutes before taking a five minute break .
10th & 11th Grade	study or do homework for a minimum of twenty-five to thirty-five minutes before taking a five minute break .

Some students who can concentrate for longer periods of time may prefer to study for 25–35 minutes before taking a rest. If you find at first that you cannot work for twenty minutes at a time, you should set up your own *personal training program* to build up your study stamina (strength and endurance). You might use an egg timer. The first day you start your training program, you could set the timer for 10 minutes. When the buzzer goes off, you can take a five-minute rest. The next day you would set the timer at 11 minutes. Each day you would add one minute to the time you study before taking your break. Before you know it, you will be able to study for twenty minutes at a time!

Taking too many breaks when studying can interfere with doing good work. Training your brain is just like training your body in sports. With practice, your skills will improve, and you will get stronger and develop more endurance. The scheduling procedures will become a habit, and you will become increasingly comfortable with using them.

What I Have Learned About Schedules

Circle **T** (True), **F** (False), **S** (Sometimes), or **N/S** (Not Sure)

Making a schedule is too "boring."	T	F	S	N/S
Making a schedule is "dumb."	T	F	S	N/S
You don't need to use your schedule consistently.	T	F	S	N/S
Schedules can make life easier.	T	F	S	N/S
Schedules will take away from my fun time.	T	F	S	N/S
Schedules should never be changed.	T	F	S	N/S
You can build "free time" into a schedule.	T	F	S	N/S
Schedules can't help me get better grades.	T	F	S	N/S
Schedules can help me get my homework done more quickly.	T	F	S	N/S
If you're doing OK in school, you don't need a schedule.	T	F	S	N/S
Having and keeping to a schedule can reduce parent "nagging."	T	F	S	N/S
Taking study breaks every 5 minutes helps you to study better.	T	F	S	N/S