

Back to School

Four ways to a smooth transition

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The new school year is almost here! This can sometimes be a hectic time, but it doesn't have to be that way. Here are four tips from **S4** – Successful Study Skills 4 Students to help you get organized and set-up before the school year begins.

Determine Your Goals

Setting goals for the academic year is an essential ingredient to getting the desired results because it will keep you focused on your target. Goals help establish a vision, allowing you to develop priorities and concentrate on what you want to achieve.

Once you have determined your goal, you can formulate an action plan to get there. An action plan by definition is "active". The plan will help navigate the best ways to get the results you want. Your plan, for example, might include a commitment to review the notes taken in school every day.

Organize your Study Space

Prepare your home study space before you get your first



homework assignment. Find a place at your house where you can study and do homework distraction-free. Make sure there's a comfortable chair, good light, and a clear work surface. Get all the supplies you will need from the office supply store, such as pens, pencils, paper, markers, etc. Also, plan an afterschool routine. Decide if you're going to start your homework right away when you get home, or if you will have a snack and a little break before you get started. If you decide to take a break before starting your assignments, then set a time limit for yourself and stick to it. Finally, promise yourself that while you are working on homework, that's all you'll do – no online chatting, texting, or listening to music.

Commit to Using your Agenda or Planner Daily

Begin the year with your time already organized. Get an agenda before school starts and write in the activities you already know about. You might not know your homework assignments yet, but you may know the days and times of your afterschool activities, such as sports practices or music lessons.

Read Actively

Commit to reading and listening actively. What does this mean? It means that even if a teacher doesn't expect you to take notes in class or for an assigned reading, take notes anyway. Because memory isn't very reliable, taking notes is important so one can review and refer to them at a later time. Taking notes also helps crystallize understanding of the material. If upon review an element is unclear or not completely understood, one can go back and get the answers.

Resolve to Stay Organized

With all of the various papers collected from various classes, determine to stay organized. Go to the office supply store and purchase binders and dividers before the start of school. Buy a 3-hole punch as well, if you don't already have one. **S4** recommends 2 binders for each subject:

- A ½" binder that travels to school (travel binder)
- A 2 to 3" binder that stays at home. This is the master binder that holds all previously studied units in one place.

Each binder should have 4 tab dividers, labeled as follows:

1. Class & Reading Notes
2. Hand Outs
3. Homework & Other Assigned Work
4. Tests/Quizzes

As soon as you get a worksheet, handout or graded material back from your teacher, commit to filing it in your travel binder. When the unit is completed, transfer these materials into the master at-home binder. When it comes time to review and study for an end-of semester test, for example, you will have all your material in one place.

Using the right study skills, tools and systems will help get you the results you want. Your level of commitment, effort, discipline and motivation will ultimately determine your success as a student.

For more information, call 203-30-S-K-I-L-L (307-5455), or go to SuccessfulStudySkills4Students.com.

Details

Michelle Sagalyn is president of **S4**, an organization that partners with public and independent schools to offer an accessible, logical and easy-to-implement student study skills system. Designed and customizable to dovetail with students' curriculum, **S4** provides the essential study skills tools - organization, time management and executive functioning techniques, needed for confidence and success, in school and into adult life.