

TRANSITION

TO Middle
School

with GREAT
RESULTS



S4 Study Skills

Skills for School—Tools for Life™



Facebook.com/S4StudySkills
@S4StudySkills
YouTube.com/S4StudySkills

About ...



Successful Study Skills 4 Students, (S4), teaches middle and high school students how to study, get great grades, and feel great about themselves

For over ten years, more than 8,100 middle and high school students have benefited from S4's evidence-based, logical and easy-to-implement study skills system in organization, time management and executive functioning.

S4's services include one-on-one customized private tutoring, and workshops, which have been hosted by over 70 schools and other local organizations.

In addition to providing services and support for students, S4 also conducts many free seminars and webinars for parents. Typically, such events are sponsored by a PTA or other organization, and always draw a large group. These seminars are highly interactive, and provide parents with concrete tools they can use right away to encourage their students' study practice.

Skills for School, Tools for Life. This is our objective. Providing students with the tools they need to be successful in school now, and in the future.

This ebook is licensed for your personal enjoyment only. This ebook may not be re-sold or given away to other people. If you would like to share this book with another person, please request an additional copy for each recipient. If you're reading this book and did receive it directly from **S4**, then please return to **S4StudySkills.com** and request your own copy. Thank you for respecting the hard work of this author.



Table of Contents

Introduction	4
1. Self Advocacy	6
2. Active Learning	8
3. Organization & Planning	9
4. Confidence	11
5. A High Schooler's Perspective and Reflection on Middle School	13



P.O. Box 644 | Southport, CT 06890 | 203-307-5455
info@S4StudySkills.com | S4StudySkills.com

- Private One-on-One Tutoring
- Workshops for Students • Seminars for Parents

*Experts in study skills, executive function, subject matter,
and enrichment, for grades 1-12.*



Introduction ...

Successfully Transitioning into Middle School

The transition into Middle School is arguably the most significant academic transition in the K-12 years. Starting in Middle School, there are two significant shifts in educational approach:

The first significant departure point from elementary school is that starting in Middle School, there is a general shift away from skill-based to content-focused curriculums.

Instead of learning to read, students read to learn. In elementary school, students learn comprehension strategies to aid in the understanding of a text; for example, connecting one piece of information with that already known. In Middle School, students are expected to apply these strategies when reading a textbook so they can understand what they are reading.



Three important implications of a content-focused curriculum include:

- Certain skills are taught, but often less explicitly;
- More is left for the student to figure out;
- Students are expected to understand what they read, heard, saw, and apply this understanding to homework, tests, projects, and most importantly to use as a platform for new information.

The second major shift in Middle School is in the manner of how subjects are taught.

In elementary school, students spend the majority of the day with a single teacher who instructs all of the core subjects. The teacher not only delivers academic instruction, but takes on many other roles as well, such as managing a students' entire academic life and emotional well-being while at school. In addition, the teacher also serves as the primary communication liaison between parent and school so as to ensure a positive all-around experience.

In Middle School, this all changes.

Middle school teachers are often responsible for teaching a single subject. While a student will be assigned a guidance counselor or advisor to help manage other facets of school life, such as emotional well-being, the student takes on a bigger responsibility—assuming a greater role in their own educational experience, in a move toward independence.



This is a deliberate and necessary transition, which prepares students for the rigors of high school and young adulthood.

What does all of this mean exactly?

A smooth transition results from a student's ability to navigate the new landscape. To do that well, a student needs to develop, apply and master the following skills:

- 1) Self-Advocacy
- 2) Active Learning and Self Responsibility
- 3) Organization and Planning
- 4) Confidence



Although these concepts were taught in varying degrees in elementary school, in Middle School the student is left to independently apply them to their Middle School work. For many students, even the best students, many of these changes can be overwhelming. In this article, S4 addresses these main concerns.

Successful Study Skills 4 Students, LLC, a leading area resource for improving performance in secondary education, believes that the deployment of five key skills, used in conjunction with focus and discipline, will provide middle schoolers with the road-map to successfully navigate this critical transition.



Chapter 1

Self-Advocacy

The student that self-advocates will have less stress and will be better able to learn new and innovative ways to approach their schoolwork because they will ask for it. For example, if a student doesn't understand a science concept, she will ask her teacher who may offer a fun and useful method for reading comprehension. The self-advocating student will eventually use this, or other similar strategies on their own independently.

“Middle school is all about teaching you to become more independent. But with independence comes challenges. I wish that I had had the benefit and insight gained over my three years from the beginning, so that I could have taken maximum advantage of what was available to me.”

Self-advocacy is the idea of effectively communicating one's own individual needs and concerns. It is the ability and willingness to say “I have a problem and I need some help.”

Seems simple, right? For Middle School students, self-advocacy is not so easy. Middle Schoolers are at a sensitive age and are self-conscious. Often they are shy or insecure, and fear they will be made fun of, making it difficult for them to stand up and say, “I have a question”. Self-advocacy takes courage and confidence, and many Middle Schoolers can't do it alone. How can you help your student learn to take the steps towards self-advocacy?

Putting It Into Practice

Here are some practical tips for strengthening your student's self-advocacy skills.

Encourage Participation

Participating in class is a relatively easy first step. Encouraging your student to add a point or make a comment in class is the beginning of self-advocacy.

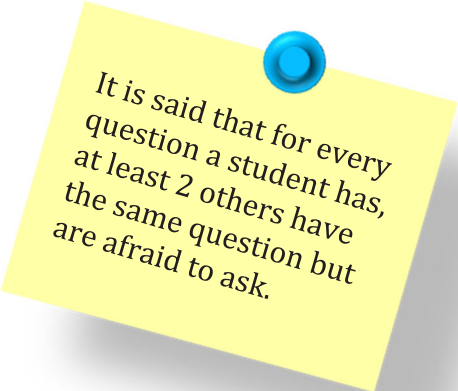
Encourage Your Student's AQ

After your student is comfortable speaking-up and participating in class, they may be more comfortable Asking Questions. Asking questions in class is one of the best and most efficient ways to self-advocate. Asking questions shows the teacher that the student is attentive and engaged, which consequently can boost effort grades!



Engage in Conversation

Keep a pulse of how your student is faring. New Middle Schoolers need a confidant with whom they can confide their feelings regarding school—you! Encourage conversation about their classes, their teachers, and even their friends. Does one teacher give instruction in a way that is confusing? Is science homework looking impossible right now? Learn what's on your student's mind and what concerns they might have.



It is said that for every question a student has, at least 2 others have the same question but are afraid to ask.

Encourage Adult Relationships

Help your student identify and establish a relationship with an adult at school so that they have an alternative go-to person who can guide and offer suggestions if necessary. An advisor, guidance counselor, or even a teacher with whom the student feels particularly comfortable can fit this role.

Chapter 2

Active-Learning

In Middle School, the demands placed on the student are increased significantly from that of the elementary school student.

Applying basic and active study skills can eliminate stress and increase confidence and efficiency. The critical benefit of this strategy is that it provides a framework for comprehension, content management, and retention, while laying down a foundation for new material to be learned.

Key elements in active learning include practical and abstract skills:

- Notetaking
- Understanding and distinguishing the difference between main ideas and supporting details
- Paraphrasing

“ While in elementary school, you would be able to get a check plus on your report card for doing your homework, Middle School teachers require a lot more. ”

Putting It Into Practice

Here are some practical tips for strengthening your student's Active Learning skills:

Notetaking

Taking notes when reading as well as listening promotes active learning and engagement, yet many feel that notetaking is only for classroom or lecture settings. While it is true that Middle Schoolers should begin to pay closer attention to the content presented by the teacher in class, it is equally important that they take notes while reading as well. The act of taking notes promotes interaction with the material and encourages better comprehension and understanding of what is being taught and learned.

Identifying Main Ideas and Supporting Details

Identifying main ideas and supporting details is key to effective notetaking. Tests and quizzes mainly ask for regurgitation of main ideas of a text. Therefore, being able to distinguish between the two is crucial, but understanding the full picture is essential to remembering and building knowledge.

Paraphrase

Students should take notes using their own words, or paraphrase. Paraphrasing helps deepen understanding of the material because it forces the student to think about what they are restating. Knowing that what is read or heard will need to be paraphrased is an excellent cure against daydreaming.

Chapter 3

Organization & Planning

Messy binders, lost worksheets... Sound familiar? Organizational skills are not only important for Middle School, but for high school, college, and the workplace as well.

“ You need to organize yourself. One of my biggest regrets in Middle School was that I never learned how to keep track of my assignments....And believe me, come 9 PM when you're wondering what the Social Studies assignment was, you'll thank your 9 AM self for writing it down! ”

Organizational skills mean both the organization of time as well as material. A student may complete the homework assignment on time, but if it is left on the desk at home, it's useless.

To become good organizers of time and material, students need to understand how they use their time, estimate how much time is needed for a particular assignment or project, and determine what materials will be required to complete it.

Putting It Into Practice

Here are some practical tips for strengthening your student's Organization and Planning skills:

Set Goals

Setting goals for the short-term as well as the long-term is very important. It provides students with a clear vision as to what they ultimately want at the end. Goal-setting also makes students accountable for what they say they want. They are forced to take action.

Use a Planner, Daily

Students will find it easier to accomplish tasks if they can visually see what they have to do in front of them, clearly listed and scheduled in a planner. There will be fewer worries about deadlines when assignments and their related deadlines are recorded. Getting into the habit of using a planner on a daily basis frees-up the brain so it can focus on what needs to be done in an orderly manner.



Calendarize

Breaking down assignments into chunks and scheduling them over time is very important.

This requires the student to estimate how long it will take to complete each piece of the assignment, and plan accordingly. It also requires the student to consider what materials will be needed. Breaking apart projects, tasks and assignments aid in overall organization, and ensures more productive time for the student.



Designate a Workspace

Homework become important in Middle School. It is therefore important to designate a clutter-free, quiet, and distraction-free area where there is no TV, radio, or other noise-source. Students need to make sure their cell phones are turned off or put away, and don't give in to use of other electronics. Keep all of their school materials together – folders, backpacks, school supplies – so that there is no need to rummage around the house finding lost materials during study time.

Make a List

To-do lists require thinking about what is due and when, and what materials will be needed. The student's planner is the perfect place to make additional notations on what materials should be brought home in order to complete an assignment. To-do lists also help students with poor memory skills. Writing tasks down doesn't give students an excuse to forget either, because when it's written, it's not forgotten!

Chapter 4

Confidence

We all hope that our students develop emotional and academic confidence at this pivotal time in their development.

“Most importantly, have fun! A lot of people look back on their Middle School and realize it was not that bad. While it might not be a perfect experience, it is what you make of it.”

How does self-confidence grow at this young age when there seems to be so many more and new expectations?

You can help to build your student's confidence by acknowledging and recognizing their effort and achievements. Confidence also grows from initial success — and success does not require perfection. If a student has become a better note taker, or becomes a better self-advocate, they will feel better about themselves and the results will follow.

Confidence takes time and is certainly not an overnight process. Confidence can grow from the feeling of “I can do it because I have done it before.” Analyze past achievements with your student. Figure out what went wrong and what went right, and what can be done to correct or better the situation the next time. Even the act of becoming more self-aware can boost a student's self-esteem.

If your student can even experience small bits of success, their confidence will increase.

Putting It Into Practice

Here are some practical tips for strengthening your student's confidence skills:

Routine

Habit can help build confidence because it fosters security. Why is this so? Because a routine is familiar and offers a structure that feels comfortable. Good habits help one to focus and work with crispness. For example, your student should get into the habit of beginning to study for a test from the beginning of a new unit. Knowing what is expected and what to expect supports students' confidence and helps them feel better about themselves as learners.



Study Skills

Learning study skills and applying them correctly are critical to the development of a student's confidence. There is no question that a more organized, efficient, and time managed approach and application, students will be more successful. If students can learn effective study skills to apply to their academics, they will feel more comfortable and confident in their work.

Self-Assessment & Responsibility

Self-assessment gives students ownership and control over their learning. When students self-assess, they are reflecting on the results of their efforts and on the progress towards meeting their end goal. If students can figure out where they went wrong, and what went right, it gives them power to fix their mistakes and move forward, in a more dynamic and resilient manner.

Taking responsibility is a move towards eventual responsibility. Actively participating in their student life, will make the experience more enriching and rewarding.



A High Schooler's Perspective on Middle School: *What you wish someone had told you before you started*

Alexandra Neenan
Graduate of Staples High School, Westport, CT
A Student at Boston University

The differences between elementary and Middle School are quite different. For one thing, it's a new place with new people. But there are lots of smaller differences that may not be so obvious.



It may have been a while since I've graduated Middle School, 4 years, to be exact, but I can still remember very easily the three years I had. It doesn't have to be as bad as the movies and television shows make it out to be.

While there may be no recess time or morning meetings in Middle School, you will be compensated for those losses with freedom. Middle school is all about teaching you to become more independent. But with independence comes challenges. While overcoming the obstacles presented to you are very rewarding, there are things that, if you know them in advance, will make everything a lot easier. I wish that I had had the benefit and insight gained over my three years from the beginning, so that I could have taken maximum advantage of what was available to me, and not be so stressed when I started.

Firstly, **you have to study**. While in elementary school, you would be able to get a check plus on your report card for doing your homework, Middle School teachers require a lot more. Although it isn't a staggering amount of work, you should expect some for almost every class almost every night. No more playing outside until dark – you have to learn those vital study habits now, before you get to high school and it's too late.

You also need to **organize yourself**. Your school gives you an agenda pad on the first day for a reason. If they don't, be sure to buy one for yourself! One of my biggest regrets in Middle School was that I never learned how to keep track of my assignments. I would just write them on a piece of paper, which was easily be lost. Get an agenda pad and decorate it. Make it your own, personalize it! The more you like your agenda, the more you'll want to write in it. And believe me, come 9 PM when you're wondering what the Social Studies assignment was, you'll thank your 9 AM self for writing it down.

(continued)



Luckily, there's a lot of **room for mistakes**. The margin of error is very wide in Middle School. It's okay to get B's and even C's, as long as you try your hardest! This isn't going on your transcript, so don't get too torn-up about one bad grade.

However, some stuff does count. One thing I wish I'd known in Middle School was that you need to **impress your teachers**, especially your eighth grade teachers. They're the ones who will be recommending you for high-level classes in high school, where the grades actually do count. Although it's okay to slack off a little in Middle School, your laziness may have a lasting legacy.

You need to **learn to manage your time** in Middle School as well. While you may continue the activities you loved in elementary school, you're going to be getting up a lot earlier. There are suddenly less hours in the day and it's increasingly up to you to figure out what you want to do with them.

But there's also **more options** in Middle School. As you move on from elementary school, you will find that there is much more to do with what you are interested in. Run for student council, or try out for the school play. Luckily, you have all three years to start to figure out who you are and what you are interested in.

Make the time to **make new friends**. You're going to be interacting with new people. Before, in elementary school, it was the same kids for six years. Now, there's tons of new kids. You may not have known them as long, but believe me. Most of my friends I have now were the ones I made in Middle School, not elementary school.

With freedom comes **great responsibility**. There are a lot less rules in Middle School than in elementary school. But there are no more line leaders, the hallways can be pretty crowded - especially for you, the short sixth grader. So while it's nice to be able to navigate the halls on your own, you also have to learn to sink or swim. Getting a locker all to yourself is nice, but don't let it become messy. Get a locker organizer. Learn where all your classes are before the first day of school. You're older now, so take the initiative to get yourself through Middle School.

But most importantly, **have fun!** A lot of people look back on their Middle School and realize it was not that bad. While it may not be a perfect experience, it is what you make of it. Remember this Abraham Lincoln quote (and maybe use it in your Social Studies paper!) "Most folks are about as happy as they make their minds out to be." Good luck as you transition and learn!



Everyone Benefits When Students Know How to Study: Students, Parents, Families, Teachers, and Schools.

The Successful Study Skills 4 Students, (S4), mission is to unlock the power of learning to improve, enhance, and support students' academic careers.

With S4 Study Skills, your student will learn tools and strategies to study, approach school with confidence, and manage time to achieve their personal best.

All types of learners benefit from our evidence-based Study Skill methodology. If your student experiences any of these attributes, then we can help them achieve better results:

- Does not know how to study, plan, take good notes
- Effort in studying is not reflective in the grades received
- Does not know how to study, plan, take good notes
- Gets inconsistent grades
- Spends too much, or too little, time on homework
- Stresses easily before tests, exams, projects
- Disorganized, distracted, and procrastinates
- Ineffective, inefficient in their study practice
- Wants to better effectiveness and efficiency
- Loss of confidence, easily overwhelmed, anxious
- Not performing to potential

If you think your student would benefit from learning how to study, please contact us . Using our skills, your student will succeed and get great grades.



P.O. Box 644 | Southport, CT 06890 | 203-307-5455
info@S4StudySkills.com | S4StudySkills.com

