




8th

Grade

Student Guidebook



Hey eighth graders,

Guess what? In the blink of an eye, you'll be in high school. And if you want to have a great high school experience, you need to start developing healthy, smart habits now.

Don't tell yourself that 8th grade should just be fun, and that you can put off working hard in school until later. Because as great and exciting as high school can be, it's also a lot more challenging. Fortunately, you have this whole year to prepare. Let's get started!

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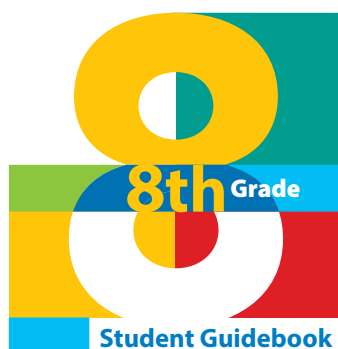


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succeed in school

succeeding in school depends on a lot of things!

It depends on your school attendance, your behavior, and your participation in class. It depends on your quiz, homework, test, and project grades. **Most importantly, it depends on your habits!**

To succeed in school, you not only need to work hard. You also need to develop the following habits for success.



Habits for Success

► Be in school every day

Attendance is the #1 school success factor. When you miss school, you miss instruction, discussions, and announcements. *Do not miss school unless you absolutely have to!*

► Complete every homework assignment

Homework will be a big part of your grade, so make it a habit to get all of your homework done before you watch TV, jump on your electronics, or hang out with your friends.

► Use a planner every day

Use your planner to record assignments, tests, quizzes, activities, appointments, and anything else you need to remember. Using a planner every day will keep you organized and on track.

► **Be engaged in your classes**

Get in the habit of asking and answering questions in class, taking notes, and participating in discussions. You'll learn more, get better grades, and the time you spend in class will go a lot faster.

► **Have a system for organizing your papers**

Whether you use folders, binders, or notebooks, the important thing is that you have a specific place for all of your papers (handouts, notes, homework, returned tests).

► **Ask for help when you need it**

Most teachers are happy to help you, but you have to ask.

► **Develop routines**

Have a morning routine that gets your day off to a good start. And have a nighttime routine that includes getting everything ready for the next day before you go to bed.

► **Create a study plan each day**

At the end of each school day, look at how much homework you have, consider the time you have available, and make a study plan.



Think about what you can do differently or better this year. Do you need to be better organized? Go to bed earlier? Be more engaged in your classes? Think about what you can do this year to put yourself on the road to success!

set goals



Goals give you direction, purpose, and something positive to work toward. Having a goal can also help you come up with a plan of action. And the best goals are SMART goals!

set SMART goals

Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound

- ▶ **Specific** goals are well-defined and clear-cut. Instead of *"I want to do better in school,"* a more specific goal would be *"I want to earn all As and Bs."*
- ▶ **Measurable** goals make it easier to know how successful you are. Instead of *"I will get in shape,"* a better goal would be, *"I will be able to walk a mile in less than 15 minutes."*
- ▶ **Achievable** goals are goals that you can realistically accomplish. Improving your math grade one letter is achievable. Raising a grade from a D to an A probably isn't.
- ▶ **Relevant** goals ensure that you're working toward goals that are worthwhile. For example, learning a new computer program is a more worthwhile goal than beating a video game score.
- ▶ **Time-bound** goals have a definite time or date they are to be accomplished. *"Complete my science project by Friday"* is more motivating than *"Complete my science project."*

It's never too early to get into the habit of setting goals. Set some academic and personal goals today!

friends and peer pressure



Having friends is important to everyone, especially young people. Friends help us feel safe and important, and they bring fun into our lives.



It's important for you to have friends who not only share your interests, but who also have similar ideas about what's right and wrong. *Know that a true friend would never try to pressure you into doing something you don't want to do.*

Peer pressure is real, and it can push people into doing things that they know are “bad ideas.” Resisting peer pressure is a sign of real strength and confidence. Here are some tips for standing up to peer pressure and making smart choices.

Think for yourself.

Think about your goals and values, and then decide what activities you will, and will not, get involved in. Also, think about what you will say and do, before you're in a situation where you have to make a quick decision. For example, before it happens, come up with what you'll say if you're offered a cigarette or a vape.

Don't compromise your values to “fit in.”

We all want to be liked and to be part of a group. And there's nothing wrong with wanting to fit in, as long as you don't force yourself to become someone you're not. Because if this happens, you might become someone you don't like.

be smart with technology

Technology is everywhere. Smartphones. Computers, TVs. iPads. Whatever kind of tech devices you use regularly, it's important that you use them wisely.

Tech devices provide entertainment, learning, and communication. There are, however, some not-so-good aspects.

The not-so-good things about technology

- ▶ Too much time staring at a screen means that you're not taking advantage of all that real life has to offer.
- ▶ There are people who use social media to try to take advantage of young people.
- ▶ Seeing the fun, exciting things people put on social media can make you feel bad about yourself and your own life.
- ▶ Negative comments on social media can create a lot of hurt, conflict, and drama.



Be smart with technology

- ▶ Set a certain amount of time to use your devices each day and stick to it.
- ▶ Think before you post. If you're thinking of texting or messaging something hurtful or inappropriate, remember, once it's sent, you can't take it back.
- ▶ Don't get caught up in what other people are posting and doing. People only share the best parts of themselves on social media. Remember that.

dealing with bullies



Unfortunately, every school has young people who are capable of being mean. Whether it's name calling, rumor spreading, or making cruel posts on social media, know that bullying is never okay.

If you are ever harassed or bullied, keep the following in mind...

- ▶ Never feel like you deserve to be treated poorly. You deserve respect and to feel safe in school.
- ▶ Avoid bullies when possible; but don't allow a bully to keep you from doing the things you want or need to do. This is giving the bully what he/she wants.
- ▶ Never be too scared to speak up. Bullies want silence. Always speak up.
- ▶ Don't match aggression with aggression. Be firm and clear, but not confrontational. Let the bully know that it needs to stop.
- ▶ You are never powerless. If the student who is being cruel refuses to listen to you, reach out to an adult for guidance.
- ▶ Keep a record. Include dates, times, places, and the specific things that were said, done, sent, or posted online.



***Always know that you deserve to go to school and feel safe.
Also know that there are adults you can turn to for help.***

use free time wisely

In 8th grade, you most likely don't have a job, so you have lots of free time. The healthiest, smartest use of this free time is to create the best version of you!

Here are some ways to create a better you.

Get involved in school activities.

Whether it's a sports team or art club, joining after school activities is a great way to meet new friends and learn valuable skills.

Get involved in activities outside of school.

There are lots of wonderful programs outside of school for students your age (sports programs, scouting, church activities, etc.). You can also volunteer. Volunteering at an animal shelter or charity event is a great way to have fun—and do something worthwhile.

Develop a hobby or skill.

Being with friends and participating in group activities is great, but it's also important to have things that you enjoy doing by yourself. During the next few years, take time to develop some personal hobbies.

**find something you
love to do
and do it!**



dealing with stress

As you get older, you will not only get smarter, bigger, and more capable of making your own decisions, you will also experience stress from time to time.

Whether it's chores and responsibilities at home, the pressure to get good grades, or relationships with family and friends, stress is a part of life. But too much stress isn't good for your body or your mind.

Here are some tips for dealing with stress.

Take care of mind and body.

Get plenty of sleep, eat healthy, and exercise.
(Physical activity is a great way to reduce stress.)

Relax / Meditate.

Close your eyes, imagine a relaxing scene, and breathe deeply. Breathe in, count to four, and exhale. Repeat.

Confront your stressors.

Make a list of the things that are stressing you out and determine how each can be dealt with. Coming up with a plan will also help you feel empowered and less overwhelmed.

Take time for yourself.

Do something that has made you feel calm or happy in the past. Listen to music, draw, go for a walk, or read a book.

Get support.

Confide in others when you're feeling stressed. Whether it's a friend, family member, spiritual leader, or counselor, it's much healthier to share your concerns than it is to go it alone.



getting **along** with **parents**

When it comes to parents and teenagers, conflicts sometimes happen. But there are things you can do to lessen the amount and the intensity of these conflicts—while earning your parent’s trust and respect.

Want trust? Make smart choices all day every day to prove that you’re trustworthy.

Want more freedom? Don’t do risky or foolish things when you’re at school or away from your family.



Frustrated with your parent’s rules? Upset or angry?

Avoid tantrums and threats to try to get what you want. They just make things worse. Talk to your parent(s), and speak clearly and calmly about how you feel.

Get caught doing something you shouldn’t have?

Avoid blaming others or making excuses. Take responsibility for your actions, and tell your parents what changes you will make—instead of waiting for them to tell you what to change.

Feeling alone? If you need something, even if it’s just kindness, attention, or a someone to talk to, ask for it. Don’t stay silent.

Even though you’re older, wiser, and may feel like your friends matter more than anything else, you still need your parents...and not just for food and shelter, but for love, guidance, and support.

think about career/college

**College? Career? We know what you're thinking.
You're not even in high school yet!**

the truth is...
time flies!

You'll be graduating from high school before you know it. Thinking about what you might want to do after you graduate, even in the 8th grade is smart—and it increases the likelihood that you'll end up somewhere great in life.

You don't have to know what you want to do right now. The key is to be curious and to ask yourself lots of questions, such as...

- ▶ What subjects do I like and get good grades in?
- ▶ What talents and skills do I have?
- ▶ Do I want to go to college?



It's really easy for young people to get caught up in what's happening now, and not think about the future. But the best way to have a great future is to think about who you are and what you want now—so you know what you're working toward, and why making good choices today matters so much.

be the **best** you can be

Sometimes, accepting less than your best is easier than doing what it takes to be your best. Just know that being your best is worth it!

Wouldn't you agree that...

- ▶ you're capable of studying more and getting better grades?
- ▶ you're capable of standing up for kids who are getting teased, instead of just standing by or joining in?
- ▶ you're capable of getting your chores done quickly and thoroughly, with less complaining?
- ▶ if you're on a sports team, you're capable of training harder?

So instead of doing what's easy, live up to your capabilities!

- ▶ Work hard, do the job, even when you're bored and tired.
- ▶ Keep going, even when you're discouraged.
- ▶ Be a good person, even when it's hard.



If you work to fulfill your potential and get in the habit of doing the right thing, your life will be a lot better than if you get in the habit of settling for "good enough."

next step high school

The prospect of going to high school affects every young person differently.

Some students are nervous because they've heard stories of bullies, hard classes, and long tests. Some are excited because they've heard stories of sports and parties.



Regardless of what you've heard and how you feel, high school is coming, so get into good healthy habits now. When you start high school, you want to be confident, ready for the challenge, and determined to make the most of it.

Here's what you need to do now to prepare.

► **Work hard in your classes.**

Succeeding in your classes this year will give you the smarts and the confidence to take on more difficult classes next year.

► **Create a high school plan.**

Before you choose your courses for next year, make a 4-year high school plan. Go over the courses that are required each year and the electives that are offered. Then put together a list of the courses you think you want to take each year. (You can, of course, always change your mind later.)

► **Learn about the school.**

Visit the website of the high school you will be attending, noting the school calendar, school rules and policies, which extracurricular activities are offered, and if/when high school orientations occur. Learn everything you can. *You want to get your high school years off to a great start!*



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**This booklet is filled with helpful tips
and expert advice on how you can have
an awesome 8th grade school year!**



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