

101 SECRETS TO PASSING ANY TEST

The complete and easy way
to learn any subject, study fast
and excel on tests.

For high-resolution cover images please go to *www.schoolskills.net* under 'Press'. For further information, press questions, consulting services or bulk purchases for educational use please contact:

101secrets@schoolskills.net or call 503-869-4452

Copyright 2011, CE Tobias Company

All rights Reserved.

FIRST EDITION

ISBN 978-0-9837703-0-5

Published in the United States, Britain and Australia by School Skills, an imprint of CE Tobias Company, Portland OR.

www.SchoolSkills.net and *www.CEtobias.com*.

All information, layout and design of this manuscript is subject to change without notice. The publisher works to ensure the accuracy and timeliness of this information, however, the publisher makes no warranty regarding accuracy, completeness or fitness for use.

For Rebecca, Clara and Emily
You are the brightest stars in my sky.

Table of Contents

Flunking or Flying	1
Do you hate tests?	3
Talk to Us	9
101 Secrets.....	10

Getting Ready for Your Tests

1. Know thy teacher	11
2. Eat the frog first.....	12
3. Ask last year's students about the exam	13
4. Unwrap those practice exams.....	14
5. Read it backward.	15
6. Dance around your dorm room.....	16
7. Visit the exam	17
8. Find a mentor	18
9. Get some sleep.....	20
10. Turn acronyms	21
11. Don't study-sprint.....	22
12. Learn calculations	25
13. Ask the teacher for a sample exam	26
14. Don't wait until the last minute	27
15. Your essay's hidden grading scheme	28
16. Peek into your instructor's personal file	30
17. Make deadlines	31
18. Believe you can.....	32
19. Take the opposing view	33
20. Transcribe.....	34
21. Read someone else's notes	35
22. Teach it to someone else.....	36
23. Climb the mountain one rock at a time	37
24. Study with the study questions.....	39

25. Create a practice exam.....	40
26. Mastering memorization.....	41
27. Mastering memorization.....	43
28. Mastering memorization #3.....	45
29. Read the preface and introduction.....	46
30. 'More Resources' gives you more voices.....	47
31. Read with a pen in hand.....	48
32. Find the fun.....	51
33. Use a structured note taking method.....	52
34. Study at the same time every week.....	61
35. Just one more donut and I'll start my diet.....	64
36. Your brain's hidden two-day rhythm.....	66
37. Music or silence?.....	68
38. Read the course description and syllabus.....	69
39. Conceptual or literal?.....	70
40. Repeat, repeat, repeat.....	71
41. Make your own dictionary.....	72
42. The easy way to read for speed.....	73
43. Fill your notes with shorthand and symbols.....	79
44. Flashcards are a flash of brilliance.....	81
45. Make a cheat sheet.....	84
46. Ask what will be on the exam.....	85
47. Turn it into a checklist.....	86
48. Imitate the best.....	87
49. Study while you skateboard.....	88
50. Make it into a song.....	90
51. Start a study group.....	91

Test Day Strategies

52. Drink water.....	95
53. Secrets of the Great Guessers.....	96
54. Choose a positive attitude.....	99

55. The brain	101
56. Answer no more (and no less) than the question.	102
57. Never cover up lack of knowledge with fluff	103
58. Read ALL the choices	104
59. The 'correct' answer and the 'real-world' answer	106
60. Use the right jargon	108
61. Exam	110
62. Dress smart	112
63. Sometimes the question is the answer	113
64. The hidden traps of multiple choice questions....	116
65. Some questions give you the answer	118
66. Use 'draft' answers before you commit.....	120
67. Slow down and read the instructions	121
68. You gotta be smarter than the computer	122
69. Bring an extra pencil or pen.....	125
70. Show up when it's time to show up.....	126
71. Bring your itchy paper and scratch.....	128
72. Spell it right	129
73. Move toward the light	131
74. Plan something fun after the test	132
75. Know the rules	133
76. Sit up straight and stretch	134
77. AAA: Avoid Acronyms and Abbreviations	135
78. Go to the bathroom	136
79. Come ready to calculate	137
80. Write neatly, especially for essays	138
81. Use alternate words to jog your memory	139
82. Use the right tools	140
83. Get ready for half time	141
84. Break it down into components.....	143
85. The open secret about cheating	144
86. Eat bananas	146
87. Don't get fancy	148

88. Describe your process, explain your reasons	149
89. Create your personal 'zone of silence'	151

School and You

90. Know thyself	152
91. Remind yourself why you went to school	155
92. How to fail fabulously	156
93. Dump the drugs	159
94. Welcome to the alligator pit	160
95. Getting on the road to greatness	162
96. The hidden life of tough teachers	164
97. More secrets of tough teachers	166
98. Don't fight the class	167
99. You are more valuable than your grades	171
100. Learn to love learning.....	172
101. Ya gotta wanna.....	173
The 102nd Secret	175

Index.....	177
Acknowledgements	184
Where did we get this stuff?.....	186

Flunking or Flying

If you grabbed this book off the shelf because you have just failed a major test (or a bunch of tests) and your school career is spiraling downward in flames, please skip our warm, fuzzy, why-you-need-this-book introduction and proceed immediately to the skill titled “Fail Fabulously” on page 156. Read the section, scrawl the steps on your arm with your extra green laundry marker, and do what it says for the next three weeks. You will also want to take a quick read through the sections on pages 18, 22, 52, 71, and 96 for a few simple ideas that can get you back into the school game immediately. Soon you will be sailing back into great grades!

For the rest of us who are ‘flying’ through school pretty well right now - let us give you one big challenge: what if you could get better grades in less time with less stress? Interested? You may be doing fine right now with your school work. But we can all improve. Check out the secrets in this book and you’ll have more confidence, less stress, better grades and more free time for ... free time stuff! Try it.

Do you hate tests?

We do too. In fact, almost every student who spends any time in school finds tests to be the number one source of stress and struggle. Even in your favorite class, the prospect of a 150-question closed-book exam can make your palms break into a sweat. There's nothing worse than working your way through a test and realizing that even when you know the material, it's not coming out on the test the way you had hoped. Now there are two main reasons why students don't do well on tests. First, they don't know the class material very well. Second, they're not very good at the art of taking tests.

This book can help you with both. It includes student-tested real-life study methods that will help you organize your notes and make effective use of your study time. In fact, you'll probably spend less time studying and more time actually getting ready for the test. This book also includes a bunch of ideas that will help you work together with other people in your class, combining their knowledge and your knowledge to get everyone ready for the test faster and with a lot more fun! If you're not good

at the process of taking tests, this book will also help you learn the Fine Art of Test Taking. It will help you skillfully negotiate the different kinds of test questions, watch out for the common things that trip people up, and find ways to “dig” out the answer when the question (or your knowledge) is clear as mud. Unfortunately, most people get graded down for easy things like spelling, choosing the wrong option when they didn’t understand the options, or not answering the question fully and completely. While we can’t teach you everything there is to know about Biology 211 or African History, we can help you avoid making the most common errors on tests.

Applying the tips in this book will reduce your stress level, calm your anxiety, and get rid of that nagging fear that you’re going to slowly drown beneath a boiling sea of academics. Oddly enough, research shows students who are relaxed and confident get better grades¹. They are also more, well, relaxed.

You’ll also find that many of the suggestions in this book will free up your time for other pursuits at school. Let’s be honest—you didn’t come to school just to spend

the whole time with your nose buried in a book. You came to school to hang out with your friends, explore new things, and enjoy pastimes like sports and socializing. The skills in this book will help you take control of your study time and have more time for the activities you love. You'll also be free to enjoy those activities without worrying about the next test.

If you are planning to go to graduate school, medical school, nursing school, or even just the school of life, learning how to take tests with confidence will help you pass the big entrance exams by artfully passing all the little exams that lead up to them. There really is no “one big test” for anything. Just lots of little tests that add up to big accomplishments.

You might have purchased this book because you're interested in improving your grades. If so, cruise through the *101 Secrets* and focus in on those skills that seem the most helpful. This book is designed so you can browse the tips in any order and find the methods that help you the most—right when you need them. You can casually read short chunks whenever you have time.

In fact, why don't we give you the first secret right now? The most important thing you can do to get ready for tests and reduce your stress level is to plan your study times. Buy yourself a schedule planning book, a pocket calendar, or some sexy iPhone™ time management app that handles your daily schedule, and then mark out chunks of time to study. It's your time. You own it. So decide when and where you are going to study and then mark out the time in your schedule. Once you have planned your study time slots then you need to actually study—when and where you planned. Just because somebody comes up and says, "Let's play soccer on Saturday afternoon," or "Us girls are going to hang out," it doesn't mean you have to go. "Sorry, but I planned on studying," is a perfectly good response. And since it's your time and your decision, your commitment to keep the study appointment is important. Scientific research shows that the human mind really likes schedules². You will find that you are more focused, more connected to the material, and much better at retaining information during a planned study session than during a random drive by

with your textbook. And it gets better. When you schedule weekly study time in the same time slot each week, your brain actually starts to “get excited” about the next study session. You will have more energy, remember better and preparing for tests will become a lot more fun.

101 Secrets to Passing Any Test grew out of the School Skills academic success seminars. These intense classroom experiences help students at the high school and college level master the fine art of studying, taking tests and managing school. If you have already attended a college exam preparatory seminar, for example for the SAT or for the MCAT, you probably got some excellent advice on good test taking strategies. But the reality is, those big tests are only one or two exams out of the hundreds that you will take during your school life. The School Skills seminars are designed to help you handle the other couple of hundred tests that you’re going to take as you get ready for the big entrance exams or for those big final exams. Everything in this book has been proven by real students in the real world for years. Some of these ideas, honestly, are more than 150 years old. Taking tests is a skill, like

programming, skiing, or building a log cabin. The skill of test taking can be learned, and you can improve your testing skills over time.

Talk to Us

The School Skills team is constantly talking with students and working with instructors to develop more effective ways to help us all learn. Our commitment is to support you in whatever way we can. So you can stress less and enjoy learning more.

If you have any questions or ideas for this book, we'd love to hear from you. Just go to www.SchoolSkills.net and click on the Contact link. If your suggestion relates to a specific part of this book, please include the page number from this book so we can look it up as well. You can also join in the discussion about school, tests and proven routes to success on our Facebook page. Just go to www.101sfb.com and 'like' to connect with us. We also put new articles and other free things up on Facebook.

Web: www.SchoolSkills.net

Facebook: www.101sfb.com

-The School Skills Team

101 Secrets

Here are 101 school success skills that most students have never heard of. Some are things that your instructor didn't tell you. Others are things that "smart" students do but haven't yet shared with the rest of us. Some are just oddball ideas that really help people succeed on tests. You can read them randomly, opening the book to wherever it falls, or read the book straight through from start to finish. When you are done reading, keep *101 Secrets* tucked away on your bookshelf or stuff it into the back of your locker. You will probably want it again next year for a new class or school.

Just make sure you actually use the *101 Secrets* at school. Tell a friend too. The best secrets are the ones we share.

1. Know thy teacher

Is your instructor “big picture” or “lotsa detail”? What authors does she respect and quote? What school did he get his degree from? What is her favorite band? Where did they go over the summer break? Find out what your instructor likes and wants. Then deliver it. Chances are good that their likes and wants will influence the things you’ll find on the test.

This may sounds like “sucking up,” but it’s really just learning to work well with each teacher. After all ... one of the main reasons you came to school was to interact with your instructors. So get to know who they are, what they like, and what makes them tick. It will help you on their tests, and you’ll be richer for it in both education and life experience.

2. Eat the frog first

Imagine a wonderful lunch is sitting on the table in front of you. All of your favorite foods are there on the plate. The plate also has one sad-looking, deep fried green frog on it. Yuck. And the rules state that if you are going to eat the lunch, you have to eat all the items on the plate. Everything. So what do you do? Do you slowly enjoy all your favorite foods and savor them first before you bite into the disgusting crunchy frog? Or do you just gulp down the frog right away? We recommend you eat the frog first! We highly recommend it, because as soon as the deep fried frog is gone, you can enjoy all the other foods without the worry of having to deal with that frog again.

The same thing applies to studying. Do you hate biology? Study it first. Can't stand your Ancient Literature class? Make it history as soon as possible. Not only will you get the disagreeable subject behind you, you will also study it while you are fresh and ready. It will get done a lot faster than if you save it for a middle-of-the-night muddle.

3. Ask last year's students about the exam

Most instructors recycle their tests from year to year. They just make a few changes, perhaps rewording questions or changing the question order, each year. So why not recycle a little help for yourself? Ask around among your friends and classmates to see who had the same class with the same instructor last year. Then ask that person:

“What did you wish you had known in advance?”

“What would have helped you get ready for tests with instructor so-and-so?”

“Are there any crazy ‘gotchas’ I should look out for?”

“How does this instructor grade?”

Gathering a little intelligence about your instructor is, well, intelligent.

4. Unwrap those practice exams and ... practice

One of the wonderful things about the Internet is that you can find just about anything. Including practice tests for almost every topic. And before you say “practice tests take soo long!” just think how long it would take to retake the class after failing. Practice tests are brief minutes well spent. They are a low stress way to exercise your “exam muscles” before the real test.

If you belong to a study group, ask everyone in the group take the same practice test together. Maybe the whole group buys dinner for the person with the highest score. Or maybe the person with a low score makes dinner for everyone. Or not. Either way you will be more relaxed and more confident for the real test after three or four practice exams.

5. Read it backward.

This is an old trick that professional proof readers use. It's a great way to study topics that are so insanely boring that they literally put you to sleep every time you try to study them. First, scan the main headings in the textbook from front to back so you are familiar with the "flow" and the topics that are covered. Then read the sections you were assigned—starting at the back and moving toward the front.

If you have been assigned one chapter for this week, scan the chapter headings first in the table of contents to "locate" your chapter in the overall book, then turn to the last page of the chapter and read paragraph by paragraph. All the way to the front of the chapter. You can also review your class notes starting at the back and working to the front. Does it sound disjointed and odd? It is! And the challenge of putting together the pieces will engage your brain, helping you to see the topic in a whole new way. You will also remember it much better.

6. Dance around your dorm room.

Stuck while studying? It's time for a break. Stand up and stretch. Next put on some great music and cut loose with your dance moves! Move your feet, wave your arms and waggle your body every direction. Dancing pumps up the oxygen in your blood and feeds it to your brain. It makes lots of "happy juice" in your brain and helps to unstick the stuckness. Stop thinking about the #\$\$@%!^ test and enjoy the moment.

Five minutes of high-energy dancing will charge up your brain, relax your body, and get you ready for the next study session. Sound silly? Try it—it works! And if you are too embarrassed to cut loose dancing, then try twenty sit ups/push ups/deep knee bends to get your blood moving and oxygenated. Or lift your textbooks like they are weights at the gym. You'll feel like a jock. And your studies will rock.

7. Visit the exam location

For big exams like a legal bar exam, medical school boards, or semester finals, it can help to visit the actual room where the test will be administered. Especially if the test location is different from your regular classroom. Why? First you want to make sure you can find the location easily on exam day without stressing. Second the mental "glue" that connects locations with feelings is very strong. If you create a positive feeling and connect it with a location, the positive feelings will return whenever you visit that location. It works every time.

So one week before your exam, take a walk to the place where the big test will happen. Stroll into the room. Practice breathing deeply and relaxing your body. Smile. Walk around to see how it "feels." Picture yourself entering the room on exam day with a calm, even step. Imagine yourself being relaxed and happy during the test. This will exercise will "echo" on exam day, and you will be much more relaxed when you take the test.

8. Find a mentor

A mentor is someone older, wiser, and more experienced who can help you navigate the complexities of school. It might be somebody who is familiar with the area you're studying. Or it might just be someone whose opinion and lifestyle you respect. Instructors from other class sections, school counselors or older students in your area of study. Your school might also have a formal mentoring program you can sign up for. Don't be afraid to ask. It's an honor to mentor someone. We have never heard anyone turn down the request to be a mentor.

You will need to figure out with your mentor exactly what that relationship will look like. How often are you going to meet? What are you going to talk about? Are your meetings going to be in person or by phone? Will you do specific exercises or other things together? We recommend making a plan that includes a regular weekly or monthly meeting time and a specific agenda of topics you want to talk about. This could be the subject you are studying, your plans for the future or struggles with

difficult teachers. Be sure to plan a fair amount of time for just hanging out as well. The best things you learn may come from just spending time together and talking.

If your school has a formal mentorship program, definitely go sign up. Don't think that mentors are only for people who are struggling or falling behind. Most successful people point to their mentors as one of the main reasons they got where they did. Mentorship relationships can often last well beyond school and into the work world. The best result of a mentor relationship is becoming one yourself.

9. Get some sleep

One important foundation for a successful test is getting enough rest the night before. This is actually more important than studying. Given a choice between eight wonderful hours of snoozing and an all-night caffeine-fueled study binge, we'll recommend the dream time every time. Why? Because your fresh, rested brain can easily recall facts that your exhausted, chemical-soaked brain can't. If you truly are in desperate need of a refresher before the exam, then get a good night's rest and wake up only 45 minutes early. A fast 45-minute review of your notes in the morning will do more to tickle your well rested brain than a full night of study.

10. Turn acronyms into fun phrases

This is especially helpful with technical topics or specialized subjects that include a lot of abbreviations or acronyms. CFR-18 becomes Cherry Fudge Rock Eighteen and LP-R becomes L Pea Dasher. You might forget CFR-18 a few minutes after the end of class. You'll probably remember Cherry Fudge Rock Eighteen for the rest of your life. Be sure to associate these fun phrases with mental pictures of the thing that the abbreviation or acronym stands for. For example the medical AED machine (Automated External Defibrillator), which is used to quickly rescue victims of heart attacks, might be memorized as 'Ain't Exactly Dead,' accompanied by a mental picture of the machine's powerful electric jolt shocking a fallen person back to life.

11. Don't study—sprint!

Recent research has shown that the human mind works best in short, ninety-minute periods of intense focus. Clear your room of distractions and set a timer for ninety minutes. Pull out your books and your notes and dig in hard. When the timer goes off at the end of ninety minutes—you're free. Take a break. Go for a walk or hang out with your friends. If you set up these ninety-minute sprints at the same time each week, you'll find that your body quickly adapts and that you're incredibly focused during each 'sprint.' You might not consider yourself to be a morning person, but if you study art history at 9 am on Tuesday every week, you'll find, within a couple of weeks, that at 9 am you have an amazing amount of energy. You might even get interested in art history.

If a class requires a large amount of reading, break it down into multiple ninety-minute sprints. Go to the store and buy yourself an inexpensive kitchen timer. Do your first sprint, take a break of ten or fifteen minutes, and then do another sprint. Take another break of ten or fifteen

minutes and another sprint, continuing on until you cover all the material. We don't recommend doing more than three sprints in a row, however, as you will run out of mental 'juice.' If a class requires more than that, schedule some time later in the day or the next morning.

We can't emphasize enough how helpful it is to have these sprints scheduled at the same time every week. The human body is amazingly adaptable. It will quickly adjust to the new schedule, and your brain will be focused and clear at the same time every week.

We hope you have enjoyed this sample of *101 Secrets to Passing Any Test*. You can purchase a full copy of the book from:

www.amazon.com

or connect with us through Facebook at:

www.101sfb.com

Thanks!