

# *Improving the Academic Grades of Athletes*

It is a shame to have talent, natural ability, and be so good at what you do but not reach a goal because priorities are not set. Priorities must be set in order to achieve goals in our lives. If an athlete has a goal to become successful in a sport then he/she must set priorities in his/her life to achieve and maintain this goal. Good grades are one priority in reaching this goal.

Every day we are faced with choices. Staying focused and consistent is mandatory in accomplishing our goals. The priorities we set should be first and foremost in our thoughts on a daily basis; anything else is after our priorities. This way we are working towards our goal(s) every day.

An athlete with strong study skills can make a difference in having a successful season individually or with his/her team. If a student can read and has good study skills there is no excuse for failing. The following information was researched and is what I believe can assist all students and coaches at all levels of education with their studying skills.

## **Excuses that cause ineligibility to participate in sports**

Attendance, un-excused absences, illness, tardiness, not making time to do homework due to a job, lack of concentration on homework assignments, incomplete homework assignments, assignments not made up, do just enough to get by, not setting priorities, not managing time, lack of study time, lose books and materials, did not finish project, forget to study for tests, missed test, not paying attention, poor use of time, not feeling well, too tired, went out with friends, on the telephone, broke up with boyfriend/girlfriend, family argument made me depressed, extended vacations and just not studying.

## **Make a Commitment**

Study on a regular basis. This requires that you plan your time and set some goals. Grades are the most important thing to allow or disallow you to participate in sports and other school activities. Higher education will look at the grades as a basis for deciding whether or not to admit you as a student. You need to do your best to keep the grades up so you can do all of the things you want to do in school and beyond.

## **Discipline**

The very task of getting to the library is a form of discipline. Each time you go to the library before school, after school or during the course of your day you are directing your energy toward a constructive purpose. That is what discipline is; a decision to do something demanding, something that requires focus and energy, rather than doing nothing. Discipline is having direction and purpose. That means getting up each morning

to meet the challenges the day will present.

### **Mentor**

One of the most important ways of keeping the grades up or improving the existing grades is finding a mentor that you can trust and that can help you develop study skills. The better you know the mentor the better they will know you and be able to help.

### **Study with a friend**

If a tutor or mentor is not available, a friend is another option. In this way, you can help one another, as you will probably have different strengths and weaknesses.

### **Classroom**

Sit in the front half of the classroom; do not hide in the back of the room or in the corner. The closer you sit to the front, the better you will be able to see and hear the instructor. You will not learn anything if you are not listening and paying attention.

### **Ask Questions**

You are encouraged to ask questions. If you have been listening and paying close attention and still do not understand what is being said, raise the hand and ask for clarification. No one will get mad at you or think the question is ridiculous. If you feel uncomfortable asking questions, write all of the questions down so they are not forgotten. When the instructor returns to his/her desk, ask for clarification on the questions you have written down. The instructor is there to help!

### **Homework**

Do homework and study as soon as you get home. All of the information you have gathered throughout the day is fresh in your mind. Do not study or do homework in front of the television or with the stereo blasting. A quiet place with a table and chair is much better. You will remember what you have studied and you will finish much faster without distractions. If you cannot do the homework right after school, you will need to plan ahead to make sure you have enough time to finish it and remember what you have done. You will not remember anything if you rush through it. You need to be organized in everything you do. If you are not, everything including the grades will suffer. You need to get into a daily or weekly routine and stick to it. It will be the best thing you can do for yourself.

School is a time for fun and lasting memories but poor grade performance can have a lasting effect on your life during and after school. If you can make the effort to study and follow a few simple strategies to improve the study habits, you will have the satisfaction of knowing you have done everything possible to give yourself an added advantage going into higher education and beyond.

## **Study skills workshop for the instructor**

Open a discussion on what you believe study skills are. What has helped others become a good student?

Discuss, display and learn how to use school planners. Discuss the value of always using organizational planning with learning.

### **When to Study**

1. Plan in advance a block of time for studying
2. Start with hardest subject - move to easiest
3. Arrange time in manageable blocks
4. Allow more time for subjects needing improvement
5. Avoid temptations (radio, CD, telephone and TV)

### **Where to Study**

1. Find a quiet place at home. If studying at home is impossible look for a quiet location at the school or library
2. Sit in the chair straight back in a well lighted area
3. Sit in an area where you can get fresh air
4. Have plenty of study supplies (tablet, pencils, dictionary, calculator, ruler, etc.)

### **Listening and Taking Notes**

1. Instructors will often indicate important items

- "Listen to what I am saying"
- "This is important"
- "Don't' forget this"

2. Listen to the Instructor

- "Ask questions"
- "Do you understand the topic?"
- "If confused, ask questions"

3. Tips on taking notes

- Pens or pencils (always have spares)

- Take notes on a full sheet of paper (mark page number, subject and date)
- Use highlighters or colored pencils to mark different topics

### **You Must Learn to Read Before You Can Read to Learn**

1. Do not read without understanding
2. Think about the subject while reading
3. If the subject is hard, stop after a few minutes and summarize
4. Read slowly if the subject is difficult
5. Keep your mind on the subject
6. Write a summary of the material in your own words

Flash cards: They work well when you have to learn a lot of materials. Print vocabulary words, formulas, dates, etc. on front (explanation on back). Study these flash cards between classes or during breaks.

### **Tests**

1. Get in test taking shape.
  - Start by reading
2. Vocabulary
  - Work on developing your vocabulary by using a dictionary to look up unfamiliar words. Words lists and flash cards can also increase your vocabulary. Understanding basic concepts allows you to tackle many of the questions with more confidence.
3. Understand the test instructions
  - Study and understand the test instructions prior to the day of the test. Knowing the instructions means that less time will be spent figuring out what is being asked on each section. You then have more time to read each question and work the test problems.
4. Practice answering questions
  - Do not spend too much time on any one question.
5. Intelligent guessing

- Eliminate wrong answers and intelligently guessing an answer can help you to score better on any test. If you can eliminate one or two incorrect answers your chances of guessing the correct answer is increased.

#### 6. Simulate testing

- Take several practice tests under simulated test conditions. Set an alarm and stop when your allotted time is up. Score the test, review your answers and learn something from your corrections.

#### 7. Know your strengths

- After scoring your practice test, review your answers and highlight problem areas for additional work. Also concentrate on the types of questions that you did well on. It is always good to accentuate the positive.

#### 8. Be prepared

- Being prepared helps you to score better and to feel more confident on test day. Success is not completely determined by your test score but more by your motivation, willingness to work hard and your preparation.

#### 9. Confidence

- Remind yourself that time spent preparing for the test can make a positive difference when you take the test. Your preparation and confidence combined should help you to score your best on test day.

The classes you take this year will prepare you for next year. The classes you take next year will prepare you for the following year, and so on. Be prepared, make your classes count, and make what you do at home count, too.