

Freshman Guide



*How to excel during your
first year of high school*

Welcome to Christ Our Rock Lutheran High School!

Dear Freshman and Parents:

You are beginning a new chapter in your life – that of a high school student. This is only one of the significant transitions in your life. We want you to be successful in handling all life transitions, beginning with handling this transition in an effective manner.

Transitions provide new opportunities for you to grow, mature and develop. You are encouraged to use experiences in chapel, devotions, theology classes and life as a high school student to strengthen your faith and to better understand your own personal relationship with God. You will make new friends as you transition to school here. It is important to remember that you are not losing old friends; rather, you are expanding your circle of friends – keep the old friends and add new friends.

This booklet is provided to give you some academic information which will help you in making this transition to high school. Many of the skills you use now will also be useful in future transitions, i.e. willingness to accept responsibility for yourself. Read the included information on study habits and study skills and then practice these techniques every day. How you do academically freshman year is just as important as your other high school years – maybe even more so. Also the habits you establish as a freshman will set the tone for your success throughout high school. What you do outside the classroom is also important. Being involved in extracurricular activities at school, at church and as a volunteer are all important to developing yourself as a well-rounded individual.

As parents, you have an important role in your student's high school experience. You can help him/her establish consistent study time, see that he/she takes appropriate courses, explores possible careers, visits colleges or technical schools, and experiences a variety of after-school activities.

We are looking forward to working with you and pray that God will bless us this year as we work together to make this a successful transition for your family.

In Christ,

Jenny Wudtke
Director of Student Services

Think about it....You have to go to high school anyway, so you might as well...MAKE IT COUNT!

And...your high school years may be the most exciting and important ones you'll spend in school!

For the first time you'll have lots of choices to make about what you study. It's important to know that the choices you make for 9th grade (and all the rest of the grades) will affect the choices you'll have for the rest of your life.

No matter what you dream of doing with your life, preparing yourself for more education beyond high school is your wisest plan right now. Post-high school education can provide valuable experiences to contribute to a better quality of life for you. Whether or not you go on to a college or university or career or technical school, the information and skills you learn in your high school classes will always be useful in the world of work.

Remember! Everyone, in every kind of job, needs to be able to write and speak clearly, listen carefully, understand what is written and spoken, and use math effectively.

KEEP YOUR OPTIONS OPEN!

Right now you may not know what you want to do with your future – or exactly how to get ready for it.

That's okay! You have plenty of time to figure out what interests you, what you're good at, and how those things add up to a career. The most important thing to do right now is make sure you keep your options open.

Tips For Making Your Classes Count!

- ***Sit close to the front*** of the classroom when possible.
- ***Join in*** class discussions.
- ***Ask questions!*** If you don't understand something, chances are others in the class don't understand either.
- ***Keep up*** with class assignments. Finish them before they are due.
- ***Ask for help*** in any class in which you find yourself falling behind. Remember, your teachers want to help you succeed!
- Look for ways to ***sharpen your basic skills*** in science, math and English.
- ***Learn keyboarding skills*** so you can type your schoolwork more quickly.
- Learn to ***take good class notes***. You'll be taking lots of notes throughout the rest of your life.
- Learn to ***proofread, correct, and rewrite*** your written work.
- ***Develop test-taking skills***. Your teachers and Director of Student Services can show you how to get started.

What you do outside of school counts too!

- Develop ***habits*** now that will help you succeed in high school, in education after high school, and in the world of work.
- Find a ***quiet place to study*** where you won't be interrupted. Is it just too noisy at home? Ask your family or a teacher to help you find a place to study.
- Plan a daily ***homework schedule*** and stick to it. Do more than is required.
- Ask your ***family or friends*** to read your written work. And ask them for help if you're having trouble at school.
- Use your local ***library***. If you don't have a library card now, ask the librarian for one. They are free.
- Read ***newspapers and magazines***. Talk with your family and friends about what you read.
- Look up words you don't know in the ***dictionary***. Then use your new words in writing and talking.
- Talk with your family about ***career plans*** and what you want to do in the future.

Time Management

Successful students make good use of their time. Try to use these "timely" tips to improve your use of time.

Set Priorities. Each day make a list of what you have to do. Rank each task in priority order. Accomplish what you can during the day and start a new list tomorrow.

Be Flexible. There are times when you may want to change the priorities on your list or forget the list all together!

Don't Procrastinate. Putting things off until the last minute is a terrible habit which leads to incomplete tasks or work being rushed and done poorly. If you have a job, get it started and get it done. When given an assignment in class complete as much of it as possible during the class period.

Don't Waste Time. All time is valuable. Time before practice, dinner, etc. can be used to accomplish a variety of tasks. Despite busy schedules most of us waste far more time during the day than time we use effectively.

Plan time to Organize. Spend a few minutes each day planning your schedule and organizing your day. Taking time to carefully plan your day will save time and energy in the long run.

Plan Study Times. Consider the amount of work you need to accomplish for the day. Try to predict the amount of time it will take for each task. In time you will become more efficient at predicting time for tasks and planning appropriately.

Divide and Conquer. Long term assignments should not be left for the last minute. Such assignments need to be broken into smaller chunks and the work spread out over time. This method makes big tasks seem less overwhelming and improve the quality of work for such projects.

Know Thyself. People have different times of the day when they are at peak performance levels. Studying when you are at your best will be more efficient and productive.

Getting Organized

One of the foundations to success is the ability to organize. How many of these statements related to good organizational skills reflect your daily habits?

- I have the necessary materials to be organized – including a three ring binder with dividers, an assignment book, folders for each subject area, a notebook for individual notes, a highlighter felt tip marker.
- A copy of my weekly class schedule is posted inside my locker or binder.
- I set deadlines for tasks I need/want to complete each day, week, month. I break long term projects into smaller, more manageable parts.
- Each evening before bed I set out those things I will need for school the next day, including assignments, books, signed notes, special projects, assignment notebook, backpack, supplies, etc.
- In my bedroom I keep a calendar of special events, vacations, appointments, etc. which I need to remember when organizing my day.
- In order to simplify the organization of my locker, backpack, and folders, I bring to school only the items I need in order to learn.
- I keep a “to do” list of everything I want to accomplish each day.
- For each subject area I have a separate folder and section within my three ring binder.
- I come to class prepared – with the books, papers, notebooks, pencils, erasers, etc. which I will need in class.

- My planner is kept current. I refer to it when deciding what materials to take home and how to use my study time.
- I take notes in every class. These notes are neat, thorough, and organized.
- My note taking system is easy to understand and doesn't require a lot of time. I use a highlighter when reviewing my notes.

Homework Tips

Homework is an important tool for learning. Homework is also a big factor in determining the grades given to students. One of the easiest ways of becoming a more successful student is to improve homework quality. Following are some tips to keep you in the race for school success.

Get Ready!

- Find an orderly, comfortable, quiet, and well-lighted place to do your homework. Make sure you have the proper materials/supplies you should have available to you for homework.

Get Set!

- Write down daily assignments in your planner. Be sure to include a date when work is due. Always get homework done on time.
- Don't leave the classroom until you understand what the assignment is and how to do it. Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Schedule a routine time each night of the week when homework will be done.
- Set goals for completing your homework. Discuss possible weekly rewards with your parents.
- Keep track of your time. Don't spend all the study period on one assignment – you need to pace yourself to complete all assigned tasks.

Go!

- If you need help, ask your parents/call a friend. Don't give up!
- Do your homework first – then outside activities.
- Take a break when studying for long periods of time. Five minutes of fun is suggested for every 30-45 minutes of work.
- Try variety. Alternate time between subjects you prefer for those you don't. Occasionally switch from difficult to easier work and back again.
- If you are absent, quickly make up assignments. Remember to take completed assignments back to school.

How to Study

Part One: Preparing to study

1. Proper motivation
 - A. Understand why the subject is important.
 - B. Give yourself a reason for developing an interest in the material.
 - C. Concentrate on the subject or task at hand.

2. Physical Fitness
 - A. A regular exercise program keeps your mental faculties in good shape.
 - B. Come to your studying well-rested.
 - C. A balanced diet keeps your mind functioning properly.
 - D. Check your eyes regularly.

3. Honest Self-Analysis
 - A. Raise your performance in your various subjects.
 - B. Admit your needs.
 - C. Establish priorities.

4. Scheduling
 - A. Document your current routine, including all aspects of a regular week.
 - B. Set a regular time for studying – consistent but flexible.
 - C. Make sure your study time is during a period of peak performance.
 - D. Mark the progress you make toward your schedule.

5. Study Environment
 - A. Find a study area that is isolated and free from distraction.
 - B. Study in a well-lit area.

6. Study Materials
 - A. Pens, pencils, paper, and other tools should be on hand before you start.
 - B. Notebooks should be arranged by subject
 - C. Textbooks and other reference materials should be available as needed.

7. An Active Approach Toward Studying
 - A. Reward yourself for completing projects.
 - B. Reading aloud increases concentration.
 - C. Visualize the information.
 - D. Paraphrase the material at the end of the chapter.
 - E. Study partners can assist with certain types of materials.
 - F. Learn to listen in class and take part in discussions.

Part Two: Note-Taking, Memory, and Examinations

1. Note-taking techniques
 - A. Taking notes activates you, keeps you involved.
 - B. Strive for neatness to make it easier to become organized.
 - C. Develop a system to indicate the importance of various items.
 - D. Use note cards for vocabulary and other organizational purposes.
 - E. Review your notes daily, ask for clarification when necessary.
 - F. Borrow notes to cover any class sessions you might miss.
 - G. Actively listen to pick out key words, phrases, or concepts.
 - H. Work up mental or written summaries of your notes.

2. Improve your memory
 - A. General Memory – sorts, organizes, and stores overall concepts. It is motivated by your interest in the subject. Read, re-read, and review the material to improve general memory. Space out the reading of large assignments into smaller blocks.

- B. Verbatim Memory – study the material; try to repeat it without looking at it. Write out the material; cover it, uncover it as you recite it. Nonsense associations can help you remember information. Try to memorize a short passage as a whole. Long passages can be broken into parts to be memorized. Practice reciting the material after you have once memorized it.
3. Preparing for Tests
- A. Tests are opportunities to evaluate your knowledge of the material.
 - B. Put review time into your daily schedule.
 - C. Know the test date, the material to be covered, and the type of test.
 - D. Try to avoid last-minute cramming.
 - E. Review your notes, the textbook, corrected tests, and homework.
 - F. Anticipate the questions you are likely to be asked.
 - G. Make sure you are well-rested on the day of the test.
 - H. Read the entire test before starting. Follow the directions.
 - I. Allocate time for each part of the test according to its worth.
 - J. On multiple choice questions, choose the best answer.
 - K. On matching questions, match the ones you know to narrow the options.
 - L. If a true/false statement is partially false, mark it false.
 - M. On essay questions, jot down a brief outline before starting.
 - N. Be complete and concise in your answers. Don't try to pad the answer.
 - O. Recheck your answers before you turn them in.

Part Three: Reading and Writing

1. Improve Reading Skills
- A. Find a quiet, well-lit area where you will not be distracted.
 - B. Skim material for quick overview, review purposes, or easy subjects.
 - C. An average reading pace reveals details and provides overall familiarity.
 - D. A slow reading pace allows for critical examination of detailed matter.
 - E. Read by phrases and thoughts, not by words.
 - F. Improve your vocabulary by learning what suffixes and prefixes mean.
 - G. Before beginning a book, check the author, copyright, preface, forward, and table of contents to determine its relevancy to your project.
 - H. Pick out the topic sentences in the paragraphs you read.
 - I. Pay attention to words in boldface type and capital letters.
 - J. Check the footnotes for additional information.
 - K. Make a written, oral, or mental review of what you have read.
2. Improving Writing Skills
- A. Writing allows you to organize thoughts and opinions and express them.
 - B. Pick an interesting topic to write about.
 - C. Use index cards to isolate ideas and pertinent information.
 - D. Sort and organize your index cards before starting to write.
 - E. Use your sorted index cards to prepare a full-scale outline.
 - F. Write your first draft. Use good, standard English, neither slang nor overly formal. Write in concise sentences.
 - G. Read the first draft aloud, making changes as needed.
 - H. Check the first draft for punctuation and grammar.
 - I. If possible, let someone else read your paper for criticism.
 - J. Write the final draft.

Preparing for Tests

The length of time you study for tests may not be as important as how you study for tests. The following are some tips which will help you become “smarter” in your approach to studying for exams.

1. Define. By knowing what the test is on you can focus better on what to study. If you're not very clear about what is being tested ask your teacher. Most teachers will be pleased and impressed with your interest and concern and will be very helpful in assisting you to focus your studies.
2. Review notes, textbooks, worksheets, etc. to help determine what information is important. Use a highlighter to underline key information.
3. Create lists of questions about the material which you would ask if you were the teacher.
4. Start early! Cramming at the last minute is a poor study method. Instead study frequently for short periods of time. Reserve the last few minutes of daily study time to review information for the next examination.
5. Avoid distractions. Most people need to concentrate in order to learn. Sorry, Mom's right, a blaring television or ipod is usually not a good background for effective studying.
6. Consider a study group. This should be made up of friends who are serious about working hard to do better in school, not just a group who wants an excuse to get together. A good study group is an excellent source for motivation, reinforcement, and support.
7. If you're having problems in one area, ask your teacher to explain it. This clarification may be the needed boost you need to succeed on the test.
8. Pay close attention to the correct spelling of key vocabulary words. They are likely to be on the test in some form.
9. Review material prior to the test. Even a brief overview of the material will help refresh your memory of important information.
10. Practice writing short essay responses to questions which may appear on the test.

More Test Taking Information

1. Follow the ***Four A's*** of test taking:
 - A. **ADVANCE PREPARATION**
 - Review
 - Reread
 - Note cards
 - Bring the right stuff (pens, pencils, books, paper, etc.)

- B. ASK**
Ask questions in class
Ask questions about the test
Ask questions about the directions
Ask a friend questions
- C. ATTITUDE**
Think positive
Get Organized
Rest, eat, relax, and be ready
Exercise
Pace yourself
Lean forward and concentrate
- D. AFTER THE TEST**
Learn from your mistakes
Review honestly
Decide how to improve next time
- USE YOUR PLANNER!** Keep a record of all assignments, test dates, and specific material to be covered on tests.
 - Don't cram for hours the night before the test. Instead, distribute your study time into blocks over a period of days. For example, if a test covers two chapters, study for three days. Study one chapter each night, use the third night for review.
 - Study your vocabulary words (written on note cards) for 5 minutes a night starting with the first night of the chapter. That way you'll have them memorized by test day.
 - Study blocks don't have to be very long. Take breaks often.
 - Every time you study, spend 10 minutes in review of previously studied material before moving on. These "refresher shots" are the secret for long-term memory. Remember, 50% is remembered of material studied the night before. 80% is remembered of material studied over a period of days.
 - Pay attention to charts and diagrams. They can be shortcuts to understanding material.

TAKING AN ESSAY TEST

- If you have a choice, choose the questions you will answer.
- Read the question carefully. Be sure you understand it.
- Rephrase the question as a topic sentence.
- Think about what you want to say. Briefly outline your answer.
- Write the essay, using your outline as a guide.
- If you have time, reread your essay. Make changes or corrections.

TAKING A MULTIPLE-CHOICE TEST

1. Read the item.
2. Read the choices. Watch for “all of the above” and “none of the above”.
3. Cross out the choices that are obviously wrong.
4. Look at the remaining choices and pick the best answer.
5. If you can’t answer a question, put a mark next to it and come back to it later.
6. Check your test. Change an answer ***ONLY*** for a very good reason. Usually your first answer is best.

TAKING A MATCHING TEST

1. When dealing with two lists (one list of vocabulary words or names and another of definitions or descriptions), focus on the list of definitions/descriptions.
2. Read the first item. If you know or think you know the answer, look for it in the other list. If you don’t know the answer, go on to the next item.
3. Make sure to cross out those that you’ve already used.
4. After making it through the list of definitions/descriptions, go to the other list and read the words, checking to see if you know any and find it in the definitions/descriptions list.
5. After answering the ones that you know or think you know, go back through and use the process of elimination to best match up the remaining items.

STUDY GUIDE FOR MATHEMATICS

Practice the problems

1. Don’t look at a problem and assume you know how to work it.
2. Work several representative problems from each section. At least 4 or 5 of each type.
3. Write out each step while practicing.
4. Give a written reason for everything you did. Pretend you are explaining the problem to someone else.
5. Double check your answers: Make sure every answer makes sense (no $\frac{1}{2}$ a person for example).

When working word problems

1. Skim the problems to get the main idea.
2. Reread the problem to decide what it is telling you.
3. Write out the variables you are going to use and define them specifically.
4. Translate each sentence, clause, etc. into an equation.

5. Clean up the equations. Put variables on one side of the equal sign and constants on the other.
6. Solve the equation or system of equations.
7. Don't panic if you don't get it right away. Put it aside for a while and come back to it.

During the test

1. Read all directions very carefully.
2. If you have time, double check all your work, especially calculations.
3. Don't spend all your time on one problem. Go on and come back to it if you don't understand.
4. If you can't come up with an answer, write down your best educated guess. Don't leave blanks. You may know more than you give yourself credit for knowing.
5. Don't panic. Take ten deep breaths and calm down. You came prepared!