



The Secrets of Top Students: Tips, Tools, and Techniques for Acing High School and College

Stefanie Weisman

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Stefanie Weisman was a top student all her life, graduating number one in her class from both Stuyvesant High School and Columbia University. But it wasn't because she was a "natural" or smarter than everyone else -- in fact, she succeeded as a student in spite of an undiagnosed learning disability. What she gradually realized was that her classmates were making mistakes, and lots of them.

The Secrets of Top Students is a conversational, down-to-earth guide for high school and college students on how to maximize their learning and get the grades they want. It is full of innovative tips from Stefanie and 45 other top students -- including Rhodes scholars, Goldwater scholars, Fulbright award winners, college valedictorians, Intel Science Fair finalists, a National Spelling Bee champion, and more -- that not only work but have received little or no attention in other books. The Secrets of Top Students will appeal to students of all levels, providing them with the advice they need from a voice they can trust.

The Secrets of Top Students includes tips and techniques that every student should know. For example:

What is the first thing you should do when taking a math test?
What is an often overlooked place for coming up with a thesis?
How can you use mantras to get better grades?
What music should you listen to while studying?
Should you bring your laptop to class?
Why is it bad to be a perfectionist?
What motivates top students to achieve academic success?
What foods should you eat to boost your brainpower?
How can sleep, diet, and exercise affect your GPA?
How much do top students really study?
What are the Top 50 Tips for acing exams?
How can you take killer notes?
What are three game-changing learning techniques?
And much, much more.

The Secrets of Top Students: Tips, Tools, and Techniques for Acing High School and College Details

Date : Published May 7th 2013 by Sourcebooks (first published January 1st 2013)

ISBN : 9781402280795

Author : Stefanie Weisman

Format : Paperback 268 pages

Genre : Education, Nonfiction, Academic, College, Self Help, Reference

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Riki says

Stefanie Weisman is highly qualified to write a book about academic success. She was valedictorian of her very competitive high school and went on to receive the Albert Asher Green Prize for the highest GPA in her class at Columbia University. In her book *The Secrets of Top Students* she poses the question of what makes the difference between a good student and a top student.

Weisman starts off by addressing the very important factor of motivation and details what makes for good motivation (like the desire to learn and wanting to do the best you can) and what makes for bad motivation (seeking praise and being afraid of failure). Her *Six Simple Ways to Stay Motivated* are excellent boosts for the flagging student.

The Secrets of Top Students covers all aspects of becoming a better student, from the basics of sleep and nutrition to navigating the academic world. Within the pages are extremely helpful hints for how to take killer notes (and organize them). With a real-world example of a lecture and the notes taken I learned a few tips to help me take more concise and workable notes. Moving on to writing papers, Weisman does a great job of setting students in the right direction in finding a good topic and creating a working thesis.

Do you have test anxiety? Worry no more, because Weisman covers getting ready for exams and the art of taking them in two very helpful chapters. Following her helpful guidelines will ensure that even the most nervous test taker completes exams with ease.

Perhaps the most important chapter in Weisman's book discusses Time Management. As a full-time college student myself, I struggle with this area and found Weisman's chapter highly informative. Especially helpful is her advice for stopping procrastination. What student doesn't struggle with procrastination? Her tips are realistic and meaningful, like telling a friend or parent what you're working on to up the ante on your desired outcome.

I loved that this book feels totally modern and not at all preachy. Weisman understands the way students use technology and offers many wonderful tips for making it work for students, including the pitfalls of using e-books and Google in education. I enjoyed the "In Their Own Words" boxes scattered throughout the book that have quotes from top students. There's some very wise bite-sized advice hidden in these little boxes! The exercise portions of each chapter are also an excellent way to put into action what you've learned.

If you're a high school or college student struggling to become a more organized, less stressed-out learner, get this book. Even students who have their education pretty much under control can go from being a good student to a top student with Weisman's wise advice. *The Secrets of Top Students* is well-organized, easy to read, and packed with helpful ideas.

Sharvinee Yellapu says

Stefanie Weisman has done an excellent job on writing this book.

The highlight of this book is that it brings any student who reads this book to the right track while studying, writing papers or about to take an exam.

The tips on taking killer notes while hearing a lecture in the class is excellent. I am applying almost everything I have read about taking killer notes while the teacher is lecturing or teaching in front. As she noted in her book("...it can drastically cut down your study time."), taking proper killer notes does saves my study time.

Chapter 9 says 'Getting ready for the test'. Stefanie Weisman talks about getting a brief idea on how to get to know what is really going to come out in the test from the teacher. I followed her tips, and thanks to her, I managed to narrow down my subject revising scope.

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Josh Davis says

This was an incredibly balanced book on tons of different ways to do well in high school/college.

I've read a few different books on techniques to make the best out of school but I really felt this was the most comprehensive and is a great way to start.

If one wishes to use this as a manual to become a top student, do take note that it is going to take time to practice and implement all of the ideas that Stefanie presents in this book. There are a lot of them so assimilating all of them at once into your every-day habits is going to be almost impossible.

Overall I was very satisfied with this book and definitely recommend it to anyone that wishes to perform better in their schooling. Learning is so awesome =]

Claire says

There are parts where this book excels: it smartly points out that one needs to take care of oneself to succeed. As someone studying to be a counsellor, it is great to see people discussing balance and determinants of physical and mental health. Students often neglect theses, feeling other things are more important or simply put off due to poor planning.

However, the rest of it seems like a rehashing of every other study guide out there. It has the same tips on reading notes as everyone else, ditto time management and the other topics.

The book is worth getting to remind you of the balance, and everyone has similar advice otherwise. Just don't expect magic.

Jay Reese says

A must read for students. This book can be used for high school or college students. The way the book was written and laid out makes it practical and easy to read. I'm giving these away to people in my family.

Azizi says

An excellent book for students who are self motivated and care a great deal about being successful. Students who need a lot of pats on the back or extrinsic motivation will have very little use for this book.

Roya says

Another book purchased thanks to my inferiority complex.

You see?! Avoidant Coyote gets it! Anyway, I got this because I thought I'm an idiot. I still hold tightly to this belief, but whatever. My loss, right? So yeah, it's a good book, but I'm taking one star off mainly because most of it is obvious (or maybe it's just me?). Basically, it's great for the people who need this sort of thing - not me. Also, I skipped the last three chapters because they were irrelevant. Another awesome decision on my part. I'm going to keep this review short, as I'll be busy deducting some points from my self-esteem. Later.

Spacek Kim says

This book would be a good textbook for a college preparatory class. The author gives tips and information helpful to studying and tackling high level assignments. It could be used in units, for example, when teaching about term papers, the chapter on that topic could be studied to give students tips on completing one.

MarieAnna says

How could I as a uni student lived without this on my shelf is really a mystery now, because since I have bought this book I have been using it constantly to help me get better in all aspects of my studies. It is great guide for taking notes, motivation when I just don't feel like studying and simply an amazing read. The author's writing is really uplifting. So If you procrastinate right now and look for something that gives you the much needed energy look no further, because this book definitely stays with you even after you close the last page after your first - of many further - read(s).

Casseroll says

Great info and easy to read. Detailed but not as much that you feel like you're reading a textbook of some sort. Step by step and practical. She is personable and gets to the point. Has a personal feel and well researched. Compact size and lightweight.

Neha says

While I definitely didn't agree with some of the points made in order to prove why one should get good grades (going to an ivy-league gets you better salaries), this was an excellent, engaging, and comprehensive guide in becoming a good student--without sacrificing mental and physical health. As a student who herself strives for good grades, I learned many of the points made in this book the hard way. For example, defining one's worth through grades to going overboard in what was required of me.

Anyone would benefit from applying such advice in college; however, I would deem a lot of the advice too labor-intensive and unnecessary for high school students as high school material is not necessarily as challenging or requires such deep critical thinking in comparison to college. Regardless, there is no harm in getting an idea of what colleges usually expect from you and practicing such techniques (such as quick note-taking) in high school.

Emily Moore says

This is an excellent book! I think it is very fascinating and it should be a required read for all freshman going into high school and reread for freshman going into college! This book truly explains why you can't cut corners on studying, sleep, etc. and expect to still have all A's.

Tawna says

Excellent resource, especially the section on writing research papers and prioritizing homework. This is an invaluable tool for high school and university students. It is realistic, practical, amusing, and motivating.

Kat says

I'm the kind of person that, when standing at a lamppost or waiting on a walk sign, will look around for something to distract myself with.

On one particular, rainy day, my eye caught the words *Valedictorian, Stuyvesant High School*, and I just had to read more. I eventually bought the book off Amazon in anticipation of what Stefanie Weisman had to say.

The book excellently couples her tips with research on *why* they would work for students. It convinces students into adopting a "top student" mindset, along with why studying matters. Stefanie's title as a top student at Stuyvesant and Columbia University doesn't hurt either.

While doing a great job at this, I only give it four stars because, in comparison to Cal Newport's work, I consider this book to be slightly less comprehensive. Newport concentrates more on the "how" of being a top student, while Stefanie focuses on the "why," in my opinion. However, her chapter on writing research papers stands out, and I think this book is worth it, if only for that chapter alone.

I certainly think this would be an excellent complement to Newport's work, and I don't regret buying this at all. It will be a highly used reference for when I start school next week, and when I'm caught in a grind in the coming months.

Alain Burrese says

“The Secrets of Top Students: Tips, Tools, and Techniques for Acing High School and College” by Stefanie Weisman is chock full of strategies to do just what she claims in the title, Ace High School and College. This is an outstanding book for any student who wants to do better in school. Following Weisman's advice won't only help you get better grades, but you'll learn a lot more too.

I did very well in high school and college, but not as good as Weisman. Her accomplishments are very impressive, and besides her own first hand knowledge, she included tips and strategies from many others who also excelled throughout their schooling. (Valedictorians like Weisman, Rhodes scholars, Fulbright scholars, Intel Science Fair finalists, National Spelling Bee champions and others like these.) I read the book because I speak to and work with students, and I also wanted to see how it would be for my daughter to read. It's one I definitely will have her read when she's a bit older, but since she asked why she had to wait, maybe I'll let her read it now and then again when she starts high school.

What I really like is that this book isn't just another “how to study” book. It is much more than that. While it does include advice on how to maximize your studying, it also provides information on the entire learning experience, including why you should want to be a better student in the first place.

There are chapters on motivation, time management, how taking care of your body will improve your mind and ability to study, learn, and get good grades. There is a chapter on navigating the game of academia, which is important. The actual study tips are divided into what you should do in the class room and how to take notes, learning to read for school, honing your homework skills, how to write a paper, and getting ready for and taking tests.

The book also includes a few helpful exercises to help students practice what they have learned in regards to taking notes, staying motivated, etc. And again, I like that the book talks about lifestyle tips and techniques, and not just study tips. There are a lot of things during high school and college that will effect your grades. It's not just how you write papers and take tests. This book does an excellent job at covering a lot of areas and providing a lot of practical advice without going too far and give students another voluminous text book to read. I highly recommend this book to anyone wanting to become a top student.
