

# The High School Survival Guide

Your Roadmap to:

☒ Studying

☒ Socializing

☒ Succeeding



STUDY WITH JESS

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To my dear parents,  
With all my love and gratitude

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# Introduction



# Welcome

From the young age of fifteen, I knew I wanted to take on a profession that involved helping people. For many years, the thought of becoming a clinical psychologist sparked my interest. I never wanted to work in a desk job, spending the majority of my days in a high rise building, overlooking the city and its perfectly manicured gardens. Deep down, I knew that whatever I would end up doing, it needed to involve working with people, not for them. I guess that's why I was drawn to the idea of becoming a psychologist, because I wanted to be able to connect with others; to be the one to make them feel heard and guide them through pivotal stages in their lives.

Knowing that my performance in school was essential for helping me achieve my goal, I spent the majority of my final high school years hidden away in the school library. I was determined to pour all of my efforts into my studies and give myself the best chance of getting into one of the top universities in the state. Fueling my desire to succeed in school was my deep appreciation for my education, as I was raised to see it as a powerful tool that could be used to lead me down an avenue of endless possibilities. I just had to decide how I wanted to use it and which path to take. Growing up, my parents worked incredibly hard and made many sacrifices in order to give my sister and I an excellent education. Their efforts never went unnoticed and they certainly played a significant role in shaping my perception and the value I placed on my studies. Did I mention that my mother also happened to be a school teacher for over twenty-five years?

Giving a majority of my time to my studies was unfortunately at the expense of my well-being, as much of the valuable time I would usually spend tending to my own personal needs was cast aside. Perhaps it was due to the immense pressure that I put on myself in my final years of school, coupled with my competitive nature and perfectionist traits that I sported from a young age? Interestingly, my parents never seemed to place any pressure on me and would even excuse me from my responsibilities around the house. I no doubt placed more than enough pressure on myself for the three of us, which must explain why! My final years in high school were there to test me; although in hindsight, the level of difficulty found in the academic assessments were no match for the emotional obstacles that I would have to learn to navigate. My primary focus was my grades, and while proud of my academic achievements, I was left feeling tired and burnt out by the time I graduated from my final year of school.

It was only when I entered my first year at university and began studying my undergraduate degree in psychology at Monash University that my perception of my studies began to change. I shifted my mindset from being predominantly grade-focused to appreciating all of the opportunities that I had to expand my knowledge and grow as an individual. I began putting some much needed boundaries into place and structuring my study sessions differently, so that I wasn't left feeling restless or overwhelmed by the increasing workload that came with my degree. In fact, I remember being pushed academically and having more work than I did in high school, yet my memories of my time at university are only positive. Much of the changes that occurred around this time are thanks to the close friendships I made on campus. My friends and I acted as our own constant

and unconditional support systems; encouraging each other when those major assignments and exams rolled around, studying together and sharing our methods and tricks. I soon learned that there were more ways to study than I had realized and that by incorporating different learning techniques that I actually enjoyed into my study sessions, the time that I spent studying became more effective, productive and yielded greater results. I stopped re-writing essays ten times in order to memorize them and instead, started reaching for bright colored markers and covering sheets of cardboard with illustrations that resembled key points, ideas and themes – even if they did look like meaningless or bizarre images to anyone else!

After completing my undergraduate degree, I decided to enroll in the postgraduate diploma of psychology course at Deakin University. Although only a one-year course, it felt as though I learned more in that one year than in any other throughout my education. I left with nothing but positive memories and my learning experience was enriched beyond my expectations. I graduated with honors and despite my ongoing efforts throughout the year, I couldn't help but feel surprised and thrilled with such an outcome! Between my friends, the lecturers, tutors and my supervisors, I couldn't have felt more supported either. There is no doubt in my mind that it was their collective effort to assist me, coupled with their evident passion for education that continued to ignite my love for learning.

Looking back at the age of twenty-five as a university graduate, I wish I could have told my younger self what I know now. It certainly would have saved me a lot of anxiety and stress in my final years of school! At times, I feel as though my perfectionist traits and undue pressure

that I placed on myself robbed me of fully enjoying what is meant to be some of the most exciting years of our lives. This realization is none other than what drove me to start my YouTube channel Study With Jess shortly after I graduated. I never expected that my love for learning would take me down such an interesting and exciting pathway in life, and while it started as a way for me to creatively share my knowledge and put my study skills to good use, it became so much more in such a short time. I remember the first email I received from a viewer and reading about how my videos had helped get her through what she described as a challenging time in her life. That I was inspiring and motivating students to study, empowering them, and helping them look towards their future, that was all I needed to know. That I had truly found my life's purpose. Even though I don't believe that my future holds a career in psychology anymore, I know that the life lessons and skills I learned throughout school and university are what brought me to this point in my life. Who would have thought that I would go from being a "future psychologist" to "YouTuber, entrepreneur and now published author" in such a short time frame!

A lot has certainly changed since my high school days; my career choice, my skill set and my perception of my studies, however much of the same challenges, worries and concerns of students entering their final years of school still remain.

It's easy to fall into the trap of focusing solely on grades; forgetting why you are studying in the first place and what it is that you aim to get out of your time at school. Don't forget, your experience at school and your education are a privilege and your opportunity to not only expand your knowledge and skill-set, but also grow as an individual. Of

course your grades are important, however getting good grades does not need to come at the expense of your own health and social life. You can excel in school academically and thrive as an individual as well!

Now ask yourself:

“Do I want to improve my grades?”

“Am I ready to enhance my study skills?”

“Am I ready to have an amazing time in high school?”

If you’ve answered ‘yes’ to any of the above questions then I strongly encourage you to keep reading! All of my secrets for enjoying high school and excelling academically can be found here in this book! I’ve made it my mission to help students around the world discover their love for learning, to feel motivated and inspired to get their work done and to maximize their full potential. Whilst I can’t be physically present to answer all of your questions in person, this is my way of being there to support and guide you through this exciting new stage in your life. This is my high school survival guide. xo

Getting  
Ready  
For a New  
School  
Year



**A**s a student, I always used to look forward to going back to school. Don't get me wrong, I definitely enjoyed my holidays and having the chance to catch up with all of my family and friends was always at the top of my list! In fact, those six weeks of holidays at the end of the school year never felt like they were long enough and for some reason, the final few weeks seemed to fly by. Despite my efforts, there was no way of making time slow down so that I could enjoy just one more sleepover, pool party or beach day with my closest friends.

There was one thing however, that always seemed to get me excited about going back to school. You guessed it - shopping for brand new school supplies! I remember walking down the stationery isles, pushing my trolley and being on high alert for new pens, notebooks and folders that were sporting the latest trends for the year. With every few meters that my trolley and I would cover, I would excitedly point and gesture to my mother to come and see what I had found. Notebooks were not pieces of lined pages bound together - at least, to me they weren't. They were blank canvases, ready to be colored with my knowledge. Highlighters - my paintbrushes, transforming my notes into pieces of art and pens and pencils - tools for transcribing my thoughts and organizing all of the questions that came with each new lesson throughout the year. Once home from my shopping adventure, I would tip open my bags, spread everything across the living room floor and inspect my newly made purchases. Then, I would spend the following few days deliberating which designs, photos and wrapping paper I should use to cover all of my binders and exercise books, before attempting the challenge of laminating them. Much to my parents' dismay, the living room floor would temporarily be transformed into my and

my older sister's art space, as we cut, glued and colored in preparation for the new school year.

While a lot has changed since my days of school supplies shopping, my love for stationery has remained. I love how a new folder or a set of pencils can help someone look forward to a new school year, give them the motivation to pay just that little bit more attention in class, and take pride in getting their work done!

## The Essentials

When it comes to getting ready for a new school year, having the right textbooks and stationery for class should be first on your list of to-do's. Make sure to access your book list well in advance to ensure you have all of your necessary books in time for class. As for the rest of your supplies, consider making a checklist so that you can go into stores with a plan of attack and feel confident that you have remembered to purchase all of your must-have items for the new school year. Speaking from experience, it can also be easy for that small list of items in your head to gradually expand as you stroll down the stationery and work organization aisles. In just a few minutes, your trolley goes from being comfortably full, to looking more and more like a clearance bin, with every kind of pen, pencil, eraser and folder somehow being justified as a necessity for having a successful school year! One piece of advice when trying not to overfill your trolley with excessive items is to first go through your existing supplies and make a note of anything that is still in good condition and that you could take through with you into the new school year. Perhaps your

folders are still in good condition or your packet of highlighters has a few hundred pages of color-coding left in them? Even if there are only a few items that don't need replacing, not having to buy more of these will save you money!

### 3 Money Saving Tips!

If you are trying to stick to a budget then here are three easy ways to save:

1. DIY your school supplies and transform old stationery and binders into personalized pieces that look brand new! Pay a visit to your local arts and craft store and pick up some supplies such as colored sheets of paper, paint and washi tape. Like I always say, "why buy it when you can DIY it?"
2. Buy your textbooks second hand. See whether someone in the year above you is looking to sell his or her textbooks from the previous year or even consider purchasing second hand books off a website.
3. Speak to someone in the year above you and find out if it is unlikely that you will be using any of your textbooks for extended periods of time. If you aren't going to need the textbook for very long, borrow it from the school library and photocopy the necessary chapters.



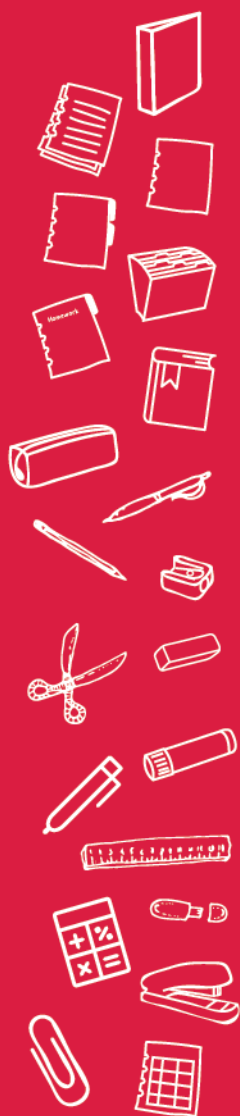
~ Use my back-to-school supplies shopping list as a guide for buying all of the necessary items you will need to stay organized throughout the new school year. Tick off any items you already have from the previous year, before heading to your office supply store and beginning to work your way down the list! ~

## The Great Debate: Binders Vs. Folders

The need for new school supplies always seems to spark interest in the ongoing debate of whether it is best to use binders or folders in high school when trying to stay organized. On top of this, there is the question of whether having a separate binder or folder for each subject is preferable to having one that can be used for all subjects.

To answer the first question, it's important to highlight both the benefits and the limitations of binders and folders. While each makes for excellent storage and organization solutions for all of your class notes and handouts, they do differ significantly in a couple of areas. Unlike folders, using binders will also give you the option of writing your notes on loose sheets of paper. If you happen to take a lot of detailed notes in class, then you can add more sheets of paper to your binder as you go, rather than needing to purchase a second notebook later in the year. This does mean that you will need to take your binder home each night to complete your homework – something some students perceive as an inconvenience. In addition to the flexibility of adding pages to your binder, you also have the option of clipping and carrying accessories inside, such as

# My Back-To-School Shopping List



- ☐ Binders
- ☐ Loose Leaf Lined Paper
- ☐ Plastic Pockets
- ☐ Subject Dividers
- ☐ Accordion Folder
- ☐ Homework Folder
- ☐ Notebooks
- ☐ Pencil Case
- ☐ Pens (Blue, Red, Black)
- ☐ Pencils (Grey Lead, Colored)
- ☐ Pencil Sharpener
- ☐ Erasers
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Glue Stick
- ☐ Highlighters
- ☐ Ruler
- ☐ USB
- ☐ Calculator
- ☐ Stapler
- ☐ Paper Clips
- ☐ Student Planner

ring bound compatible pencil cases and rulers. If you are one to often forget to bring your pencil case and important stationery to class then this is a big plus! While binders do make for convenient storage solutions for carrying all of your notes and stationery essentials, their ability to hold all of your handouts is limited. In contrast, using a folder can often provide you with greater storage space for handouts and articles. Accordion or expandable folders are best because you can categorize your work according to the subtopics you are learning in class.

As for determining whether to keep a separate folder or binder for each subject, ultimately, the choice is yours. If you tend to get lots of handouts that need to be filed for each subject or repeatedly find yourself adding to your set of detailed notes, then it might be worthwhile to keep a separate folder or binder for each of your subjects. This way, all of your notes and handouts will be carefully organized and you can avoid having to resort to cramming all of your many papers inside!

## Out With The Old And In With The New

Apart from needing to decide on how you plan to organize your work throughout the year, it's also important to spend some time organizing last year's notes. As you enter high school, the workload is known to become increasingly complex and the amount of notes and handouts you receive will likely grow as well. With each year that you progress forward along your academic journey, you will no

doubt notice your teachers building on the material and skills that you learned during the previous year. For this reason, I highly recommend holding onto your old class notes. While some students do, others admit to throwing out their old class notes or even confessing to tearing out pages as a means for stress relief following their end of year exams. I was not one of them. In fact, ever since my kindergarten teacher sent me home with my first finger painting, my mother has made it her mission to create what looks a lot like a shrine to commemorate all of my work from school!

While it's certainly not necessary to keep notes from as long ago as your primary school years, it can serve you well in the future to organize and hold onto the notes you take in high school. Keep your notes for at least one to two years incase you need to refer back to them in the future. Set aside as little as one afternoon during the holidays to sought through your old class notes and file them somewhere safe. If you have typed your notes, it can be useful to have them bound and neatly organized into one book that you can easily flip through. Folders make for convenient storage solutions for all of your loose handouts, while you might like to keep your old notebooks organized in a set of magazine racks or line them up next to each other in your closet.

## Getting A Head Start

Another important part of preparing for a new school year involves familiarizing yourself with your class texts. Use your spare time wisely during the holidays and consider opting for one of your class texts as your book of choice for the month. Make it an enjoyable exercise by setting aside some time each week to sit on the couch curled up with a cup of tea, or for those of you who are fortunate enough to spend your holidays somewhere warmer, by the pool or lying on the beach. Reading your texts in advance will give you a competitive edge, freeing up your time during the semester and allowing you to focus less on the specific outcomes in the book and more on analyzing the characters and key underlying themes throughout the story!