

How to Organize Your Thoughts and Get Stellar Grades

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No one sets out to get bad grades on their work, you don't wake up and say, "hey i'm gonna tank this exam today just for kicks." But the occasional bad grade is inevitable, however, if you practice some organization techniques, you can put yourself ahead of the curve and take advantage of every opportunity you have to get the best grades possible. Whether you are working on a paper, a speech, a debate, or any other type of project, one of the most challenging aspects is organizing your ideas to put them in a logical order while not leaving anything out.

Every individual processes information and retains it in different ways. The trick is determining which method works best for you and your learning style. Regardless of if you've been given an assignment or chosen your own topic, your first step should always be to ensure that you have the tools and the environment that best suit you and your creative process. Some people prefer to work in their home, perhaps on their couch or at the dining room table, others prefer to be outdoors among nature, and others find that being in a library or study hall is necessary for them. Location isn't the only consideration for you though, do you prefer to work in silence or do you need to have some kind of noise, like music, white noise or a television. Finally are you the type of person who physically needs to write things on paper or would you prefer to work on a computer or laptop. Before you even begin to think about organizing your ideas, give yourself a chance to be relaxed and comfortable.

Once you've set up your ideal work environment, you can begin jotting down and developing your thoughts. Brainstorming is always a helpful way to get the creative ball rolling. During the brainstorming process you will be able to get out all of the initial ideas you came up with and jog your brain into expanding on them. After you've finished brainstorming, the next step is to begin categorizing what you ended up with. Group

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similar thoughts together and decide which ones are the most and least relevant to your topic and which ideas can be combined and those that may not quite fit in after all.

Now you can begin to narrow down your thoughts and cut the ones that you know you won't be using. Depending on the size and complexity of your project, you may have lots of information to organize or very little. You may have research to conduct and cite, if so make sure you write all the information you will need for your citation so that you can easily go back and reference it.

A very effective way to prepare your information to be put into its final form is to get yourself some index cards or post-it notes. Include the ideas and thoughts you've decided to include on them and then number the ones that are most important to include. Begin by laying out the cards in the order you think you want your finished product to be in. Using this visual example, you can study the order of your assignment. Now that it is all laid out in front of you, you can easily move the cards around until you are certain that you have your thoughts in the correct sequence that you want to present them and that it all flows logically into one comprehensive finished product.

If you begin to feel overwhelmed or your thoughts become too jumbled in your mind while you are working, step away for a few minutes, get a breath of fresh air or a snack. Give yourself a few moments to recharge and clear your mind before you go back to work.

Following these tips and tricks could not only make a huge difference in your grades but they will help keep your ideas on track, and before long you'll discover that these tactics aren't just effective for school, but can spill over into the rest of your daily thoughts and decision-making processes.