

Make the Grade: Everything You Need to Study Better, Stress Less, and Succeed in School

Lesley Schwartz Martin

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Martin does not just tell students how to get better grades, but how to succeed in all aspects of school life.

Make the Grade combines a wealth of essential information and practical study skills most students will greatly benefit from. This comprehensive, yet concise guide recognizes and addresses the differences in students' personalities and learning styles, and offers suggestions to help high school through college students hone their study skills.

Former high school educator Lesley Schwartz Martin offers solid, usable advice that encompasses diverse aspects of a student's life—from study basics like goal-making, organizational skills, and effective note-taking, to valuable information on how to keep one's brain performing at optimal levels, along with insight on recognizing and creating an optimal study environment.

Martin's tone is practical and matter-of-fact, offering advice and suggestions. For example, some students find it distracting to listen to music with lyrics while studying, others do not. Martin notes: "The part of the brain that does word processing and is used for studying is the same part that listens to song lyrics." Her advice is to find what works best to create "the ideal study atmosphere for each subject." This is also an example of the book's successful premise that guides students on finding the strategy that will "fit your life and your personality, and not the other way around."

The author's perceptive approach to studying acknowledges methods for students to wind down, be it with exercise, social time, or in front of the television. She also gives students insight on why parents and teachers might react negatively to them, and how to resolve these issues. Martin suggests, for example, that being "a little bit more forthcoming" about past, present, and future projects, tests and assignments will minimize parents' anxiety and their perceived nagging or interrogating.

Martin also offers advice on how to interpret teachers' personalities, and how to effectively work with their various styles of teaching. For example, it is suggested that the best way to respond to a teacher who is a "stickler" is to learn the rules and follow them, making sure to communicate with a teacher if you continually make the same error, so that she understands that it's a legitimate error, not just made out of disrespect for her class or rules.

The book design and format display many of the ideas expressed in the book—including precise language, clear checklists, and easy-to-read writing layouts that stimulate the memory, full-page charts showing examples of study schedules and note-taking in addition to page coding, headings, and subheadings in bold blues and crisp black.

Though geared to high school through college students, Martin's advice and information on topics such as understanding your learning style or discovering your prime time for focus and attention provides any age group with invaluable insight on basic learning skills.

Martin makes the grade with this positive and pragmatic tool for students to learn skills that utilize and improve their learning capabilities and allows them to be more successful in school and life.

MAYA FLEISCHMANN (August 14, 2013)

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