**SPH4U: How to Become a Good Student Name:**

Being a good student might seem very challenging. The **good** **news** is: things that are challenging will become easy after long-term, thoughtful practice. The **bad** **news** is: there are no short-cuts (*you* have to *do* the practice) and there are *many* long-cuts (bad habits that make learning needlessly harder or longer).

## A: Habits and Goals

1. **Reflect.** Your teacher has very high expectations for you in grade 12. To help you reach these expectations, circle the responses that best describe your habits in grade 11. Be honest with yourself and be critical.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Student Habits** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **Practice:** I complete my daily homework *before* the next class | at least 90% of the time | more than half the time | about one quarter the time | very rarely |
| **Thoughtfulness:** My written work in class *and* at home is carefully explained and shows all the steps (i.e. A, B, C, D, E solution steps) | thorough, a student could *easily* read and learn from my work (5/5) | good, but I might overlook some minor details (4/5) | basically correct, but not well explained, missing parts or steps (3/5) | rushed, incomplete, messy (2/5) |
| **Initiative:** When I have difficulty with an idea from class or the homework I get help | before the next lesson | within one or two lessons | by the end of the unit | rarely |
| **Discussion:** When working in groups, I share my ideas or ask for explanations | with almost every question  | with a majority of questions  | with just a few questions | rarely  |
| **Test Preparation:** I prepare for tests by | reviewing and practicing thoughtfully over a few days | reviewing and practicing thoughtfully the night before | staying up late the night before / just a little practice | reading notes or the textbook, not doing much |

1. **Reflect.**  In the chart above, the habits of good students are found in column 4. What are one or two reasons why some of your responses were in columns 1, 2, or 3?
2. **Reflect.**  What is your goal for your grade 12 physics mark? Circle the appropriate range in the chart below. Ignore the second row for now.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Grade 12 Goal** | 50-59% | 60-69% | 70-79% | 80-84% | 85-89% | 90-94% | 95-99% |
| **Habit Score** | 5-10 | 11-12 | 13-14 | 15-16 | 17-18 | 19 | 20 |

1. **Reflect.** Each column number in the “student habit” chart above represents a score. Add up your student habit score (maximum 20) and **circle** it in the goal chart above. This score is not exact or scientific, but will give you some useful perspective.

Think of your mark goal as a **habit goal** instead. Most students wrongly focus on marks and forget about their habits – this is a classic long-cut (a bad habit that makes learning harder). Once good habits are in place and are practiced thoughtfully for an extended period of time, the marks will come. Don’t worry about marks, focus on habits and have a happier school life.

1. **Reason.** To feel successful in grade 12, your habit score needs to match yourmark goal. Which habits do you need to improve to so your habit score corresponds to your mark goal?

**Warnings for All Students**

1. Grade 12 comes with a greater workload and more responsibilities, making it challenging to maintain good habits. Maintaining or continuing a high habit score is a worthy goal.
2. If you know you need a certain mark for a particular university program, you need to build in a safety factor to your goal setting. If you **really** need a 85% in physics, you should be setting your goals at the 90% level. There **will** be bumps along the way and days when you are not working at your best: you are only human. Having that safety factor helps prevent a few bad days from compromising your good goals.

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## B: Goals, Meet Student; Student, Meet Goals

Meeting one’s goals depends on doing a few things carefully: creating clear goals, developing a realistic plan to reach them, regularly checking up on your achievement, and then adjusting your plan. Do this for the rest of your life.

1. **State.** Use the habit chart on the previous page to state your goals in the chart below. Write using a full sentence and be specific, for example: “I need to complete my daily homework before the next class at least 90% of the time”.

|  |
| --- |
| **Practice Goal:** |
| **Thoughtfulness Goal:** |
| **Initiative Goal:** |
| **Discussion Goal:** |
| **Test Preparation Goal:** |

1. **Plan.** Finding aregular time each day to do your physics homework is **very** helpful for meeting your practice goal. You will need about 30 to 45 minutes each day. When will you do your physics homework?
2. **Plan.**  What might interfere with finding the time to do your homework each day? What can you do about this?

Your learning log is an important way to check on your daily practice and monitor how carefully you are doing your homework. Remind yourself to use the log and to return to this page every now and then to think about your plan.

Use your learning log scores for your written work to monitor your thoughtfulness goal. You want to see those scores improving.

1. **Plan.** If any goal represents a big change for you, you are less likely to meet it without regular help. Which goal represents the biggest change or challenge for you? How will you remind yourself each day to work towards this goal?
2. **Plan.** Who do you feel most comfortable going to when you have questions or difficulties? How can you arrange to do this regularly?

There really isn’t such a thing as “studying for a test”. Your thoughtfulness and discussions every day in class, and your practice every day at home are 90% of your test preparations. The final 10% is a bit of review and practice in the days leading up to the test itself. There is never any need to: cram the night before, stay up late, or neglect work for other classes. Do this and you will become a good student. What sounds challenging now will become easy if you follow this advice and stick to it.