Tips for Using a Planner

1. **Pick the right planner.** Take your time when choosing a pocket planner. Find one that fits inside a special pocket or pouch in your book bag if you can. Avoid planners with locks or zippers that will only annoy you. Little things like that will become a hassle and create bad habits.

2. **Make the planner a part of your daily routine.** Carry it with you at all times and remember to check it every morning and every night.

3. **Fill in your assignment due dates as soon as you learn them.** Get in the habit of writing in your planner while you’re still in the classroom. Don’t put it off!

4. **Learn to use backward planning.** When you write a due date in your planner, go back a day or a week and give yourself a reminder that the due date is approaching.

5. **Plan ahead.** After you put in a major due date, go back and schedule yourself “mini” due dates for parts of the assignments.

6. **Use a color-coding system.** Put tests in one color; assignments in a different color; personal appointments in a different color; etc.

7. **Put everything in your planner.** You must remember that anything that takes up time, like a date or a ball game, will keep you from working on an assignment. If you don’t put these things in your planner as time out, you may not realize how limited your homework time really is. This leads to cramming and all-nighters.

8. **Use flags.** You can buy sticky-note flags and use them as tabs to indicate the end of a term or the due date of a large project. This is a great visual tool that serves as a constant reminder of an imminent due date.

9. **Don’t discard old pages.** You will always have important information in your planner that you’ll need to see again at a later date. Old phone numbers, reading assignments—you’ll want to remember those things later on.

10. **Go ahead and congratulate yourself ahead of time.** On the day after a big project is due, put in a reward appointment, like a trip to the mall or a meal out with friends. This can serve as positive reinforcement.

Things to Include in Your Planner

It is important to block off anything that consumes your time, in order to avoid conflict and crisis. Don’t forget:

- Regular blocks of homework and study time
- Regular scheduled daily/weekly appointments
- Assignment due dates
- Test dates
- Dances, parties, dates, celebrations
- Family gatherings, vacations, excursions
- Campus events
- Sign-up deadlines for standardized tests
- Fees—due dates
- Holidays
- Personal scheduled “me” time