

HOW TO

LEARN

FOR

REAL

*Get an education rather than
just getting through school.*



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“**G**et a good education.” It may be the most widespread bit of advice there is for teens.

But even among those who heed this advice, some seem to get a lot more out of their education than others—and we’re not just talking about grades or degrees or jobs. So what’s the difference between the people who really “become educated” and the people who just “finish school”?

It has less to do with natural ability than with certain priorities, attitudes, and skills, such as the following.

Priorities

1. Seek spiritual learning. To ensure your ultimate success, follow the counsel of President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency:

“Our first priority should go to spiritual learning. . . .

“ . . . Putting spiritual learning first does not relieve us from learning secular things. On the contrary, it gives our secular learning purpose and motivates us to work harder at it.

“To keep spiritual learning in its proper place, we will have to make some hard choices of how we use our time. But there should never be a conscious choice to let the spiritual become secondary. Never. That will lead to tragedy.”¹



“Too much of anything in life can throw us off balance. At the same time, too little of the important things can do the same thing.”

—Elder M. Russell Ballard

2. Seek balance. Balance means knowing your priorities clearly. Making balance itself a priority can help you keep things straight. Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said: “Remember, too much of anything in life can throw us off balance. At the same time, too little of the important things can do the same thing.”²

3. Get enough sleep. It may seem like a little thing, but getting enough sleep makes a big difference—and it sure beats having to come up with ways to stay awake in class. Study after study confirms the importance of adequate sleep for learning, but many people sacrifice it for various other things (often entertainment). Make sure it’s on your list of priorities. (But don’t overdo it; see number 2 above and Doctrine and Covenants 88:124.)

Attitudes

1. You’re responsible for your education (including your failures). Have

you known teenagers who still rely on their parents’ help with all their homework and school projects? or who explain poor grades by saying, “The teacher just hates me”? or by blaming other circumstances? Take responsibility for your education. You’ll be amazed at what you’ll actually learn and how much happier you’ll be.

2. Grades do not equal learning. Don’t confuse the symbol (a grade) with the thing it’s supposed to represent (learning and effort). Though grades are an important assessment, remember that the knowledge and skills you gain are more important than any grade, whether high or low. With this attitude, you will more often be satisfied with your grades.

3. Your self-worth should not be tied to external things such as awards, grades, and degrees. If you understand your inherent self-worth as a child of Heavenly Father, you will be able to be happy whether or not your



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achievements come with external rewards. Strive to do well and achieve your educational goals, but don't let the rewards define you.

4. Working hard is more important than “being smart.” Even if you think your natural abilities make school easier for you than for others, you should see your successes as a result of hard work rather than some gift you were born with. And if things don't come easy to you, don't give up—work will make up the difference. This attitude will serve you well in all areas of life, especially as you move beyond school into the working world. There are no shortcuts to real learning—you can't fake your way through life.

5. You know a lot already, but you don't know everything. Make connections between all the different things you're learning. But don't go into any situation thinking you already know everything—no one does. That attitude is a barrier to learning.

6. Learning is its own reward. Many

people talk about education as a means to an end—a way to get ahead in life, get a good job, and so on. While that may be true, it's also true that you'll be happier and learn more if you see learning as a goal in itself. Don't be the one who only ever asks, “Will this be on the test?” or “When are we ever going to use this again?”

7. Don't shy away from challenges just because there's a possibility of failure. The more willing you are to do hard things now, the more ready you'll be to face what comes later. For instance, people who select all of their classes based solely on whether they're easy are selling themselves short and may be burying their talents.

8. Be curious. You'll learn a lot more if you're curious and ask questions. Also, being interested in things makes you a more interesting person. Remember, learning happens all the time, everywhere, not just in school.

9. You can do it. There's a difference between *difficult* and *impossible*. Your

path to learning may be difficult, but you can do it. Learning is one of the things you're here on earth to do.

Skills

1. Learn what you love; love what you learn. Look for things that genuinely excite and interest you, and pursue them. But also learn how to see the value in everything you're taught.

2. Read for fun. Every day, read something good: books, magazines, websites, anything informative or inspiring. Those who read good material generally do better in school and lead rich lives.

3. Pay attention to how you handle stress. Being aware of your stress points and knowing the stress reduction methods that work best for you are valuable life skills.

4. Ask for help when you need it—and ask the people who can actually help. Believe it or not, asking for help is a skill. Recognizing when you're stuck and getting good help before it's too late can make all the difference.

5. Manage your time. Time management means making sure the things you *say* are your priorities actually *are* your priorities. Find a system that's comfortable for you and that helps you achieve your goals. ■

NOTES

1. Henry B. Eyring, “Real-Life Education,” *New Era*, Apr. 2009, 5.
2. M. Russell Ballard, “Keeping Your Life in Balance,” *New Era*, Sept. 2012, 4; *Liahona*, Sept. 2012, 50.