

Keys to Chemistry Success

Chemistry can be a fun and enjoyable subject. It is far different from any course you have studied to date. The mathematics you have learned in Algebra I will be applied to the *real* world. The course is lab centered, abstract, and mathematical in nature. To be successful in chemistry you must learn to apply, in new situations, previous knowledge gained. Those of you who depend upon memorization of facts in order to achieve academic success will have to rethink how to study for such highly theoretical courses as chemistry and physics. The key to success in highly theoretical courses is the ability to THINK!

Students who have not met with success in their first year of high school chemistry usually have had several of the following problems:

1. Disorganization
2. Do not take class notes.
3. Do not read the textbook.
4. Do not do homework assignments.
5. Do not ask for extra help.
6. Leave assignments and studying for the last minute.
7. Do not read lab handouts in advance.
8. Blame the teacher for making chemistry *too tough*.

The key for success in chemistry is to learn how to think and become independent. This is a step you will have to take on your own. You must learn to make the jump from one who things at a concrete level (memorizes) to one who things at an abstract level (application of theoretical concepts to new situations). The jump you are asked to make is not impossible. I am here to help you. The following are suggestions that, if followed, will help you meet with success in chemistry and physics.

1. Read the assigned text material at least twice. Once for an overview, and once for word-by-word analysis for detail.
2. Do assigned homework each night. Do not save it to do it at the last minute. **Homework** should be done at **home**.
3. Consult of other students in the class; they may have insights that will help you. This is not a copying session, but a think tank.
4. Discuss your insights with others. You will find it helps your understanding of the topic. If you can explain something, then you really understand it.
5. Do not miss class. You will discover a significant amount of material is covered every school day and you will quickly fall behind if you are absent. Try to schedule doctor and dental appointments for non-chemistry times.
6. Do not give up! For many people, learning is a difficult chore. Persistence will usually pay off in greater understanding.
7. Consult with your teacher as soon as a misunderstanding arises.
8. Take good class notes. Your memory may not be as good as you think. Some of the concepts discussed in class are not in the textbook. Class notes help immeasurable when you are trying to understand homework.
9. Have confidence in yourself. If you believe you can grasp difficult concepts and are willing to keep on trying, eventually you will start to understand them.
10. If you are having difficulty with math problems or you work very slowly, you should do more problems than assigned. Extra practice will build your comprehension and your confidence.