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Introduction

Thoughts on becoming an achiever

'Another D ... I hate maths tests! My life would be a lot better without any schoolwork at all.'

'My parents want me to be at the top of the class. I'd like that, too, but that means work. It means carrying books home and writing essays and doing my homework. It means memorising a lot of stuff I think is boring. Is it really worth it?'

'People are starting to ask me what I want to do when I finish school, where I want to go to university and what career I want to have. To tell you the truth, I just want to be rich and have an expensive car. The way to do that is to win the lottery!'

'I used to brag about the fact that I got good marks on my tests and I never studied. And that was true. In primary school, I already knew all the things they were teaching us. I didn't even have to pay attention. But now... I should study, but I don't know how.'

'Sometimes I pretend that I'm not smart at all. If I get a good mark and a boy asks me about it, I just say, "Oh I didn't do very well." I don't want the boys to think I'm smarter than they are. Then I wouldn't be very popular.'

'I really want to do well at school, but my family doesn't think education is that important. When I get home from school, I have to cook dinner and look after all my little brothers and sister. My dad says school is a waste of time. He is looking forward to my sixteenth birthday because then I can quit school and get a full time job.'

All of those quotes come from real kids – kids who are discouraged about school, kids who don't like to study, kids who want to be popular rather than brainy, kids whose parents don't see the value of getting a good education. Each one's story is a little different, but they all have one thing in common. They are all intelligent students like you who could do well and be high achievers in school.

You might be something like one of these kids. You may be really smart, but you're not doing very well at school. Some of your teachers may have called you an 'underachiever'. That means you are a student who has the ability to do better than you are doing. You may have gotten back an assignment or a test where the teacher has written, 'You could do better'. If any of these situations describe you and if you think you could do better, then this book is for you.

Becoming an achiever: How is it done?

You probably know kids at your school who seem to succeed at everything. They always get A's, always know the answers in class and always get the awards at the end of the school year.

Not everyone can succeed at everything, but everyone can become an achiever! There are no secret formulas. It takes some work on your part. The choice is yours. But if you are willing to try, this book will show you how.

Then the choice to try is yours.

**7 Steps to
success**

1. Self-confidence

Self-confidence is a belief you have that you possess good qualities that are valuable to yourself and others.

Did you ever stop to think that the person you need most to like you is YOU? If you don't like yourself very much, no one else will like you either. Liking oneself sometimes isn't easy, even for adults, but it is very important to have self-confidence that comes from the heart.

Self-confidence comes when you like yourself; and you realise you can use your strengths; and you can work to improve your weaknesses in order to affect what happens in your life.

You may never have thought about all of the good qualities you possess. It's much easier for most of us to recognise our own weaknesses. However, successful people usually know their strengths and weaknesses and learn to make the best of the talents they have. The first chapter in this book shows you **how to take a realistic look at both your good points and your bad points**. Then you'll see what you can do to make the good even better and what you can do to eliminate or change some of your weaknesses.

2. Goal setting

Goal setting is deciding on basic plans for your life that you will strive to achieve. It's hard to know **if** you are achieving if you don't know **what** you want to achieve. That's how many

people go through life when they have no goals. An ancient proverb states:

**I can't control
the wind,
but I can control
the way I set my sails**

Think of a sailboat with its sails down, adrift on the ocean. Part of the journey may be relaxing and wonderful, but if you really want to get somewhere, you have to hoist the sails, set the rudder and head in a planned direction. Learning how to set goals for your life is much like learning how to take control of the sailboat.

And setting goals for yourself is much like setting your sails. Most achievers set goals for themselves regularly, for goals act as the blueprint for what they do in their lives. This chapter shows you **how to set goals and take action** – to map out your life's blueprint and set your sails.

3. Motivation

Motivation is the desire to do something. We're all motivated to do many things. When you're hungry, you're motivated to go to the fridge and get something to eat or maybe to put a bag of popcorn into the microwave. Some motivations, like hunger, are very basic. Other types of motivation require a bit more maturity.

It's more difficult to motivate yourself to open your history book and study the chapter when your favourite TV show is on! It's more difficult to motivate yourself to learn your vocabulary words when you'd rather talk on the phone. It's more difficult to motivate yourself to struggle through your maths homework when you could be playing a

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computer game!

You have to **want** to become an achiever. Motivation is important in becoming an achiever. Self-motivation is the hardest of all. You may have some people in your life who are outside motivators. They nag... oops, I mean help... you to get motivated. If you do, be thankful for them. They are helping you to become an achiever. The motivation section of this book shows you how to work with people who want to help you, but more importantly shows you how to **motivate yourself**.

4. Time management and organisation

Organising all your notes, notebooks, papers and books to study for a test or to plan a project takes both effort and time, but it will pay off in the long run as you become a better student. How? **Being organised helps you make better use of your time.** Keeping your room and your belongings in order probably is something your parents have talked to you about, but did you know that learning this skill will also help you to become an achiever? So will learning how to use time management tools such as a calendar and a 'to do' list, because they help you plan the best uses for your time.

Being organised and learning how to schedule and manage your time are skills you need to learn – just like the skills you learned in reading and maths. And, just like reading and maths, these are skills you can use your whole life! The organisation and time management chapter shows you **how to organise yourself and plan your time well** as you strive to become an achiever.

5. Study skills

Studying is hard work! Many kids in Australian schools seem unwilling to put forth the effort that studying requires. Don't put yourself in that category. Forget being lazy! Make a commitment to do what it takes to develop the study skills you need.

The study skills chapter shows you **how to listen better in class, take notes, memorise information and develop research skills.** You'll also learn the importance of discovering which academic skills you should have learned (but never did) and what to do about it. These things may seem a little boring to you, but they are worth knowing if you've made the decision to become an achiever. They are the tools you need to become an achiever. Many students who decide they really want to do well in school have no idea how to study. These students quickly lose their motivation when their marks remain low even though they are doing their best. With good study skills, this won't happen to you.

6. Tests and other assessments

Knowing how to successfully take tests is a big part of becoming an achiever in today's schools. Part of being a good test taker is knowing the information. The other part is in mastering the skills of test taking. This chapter gives you many **helpful hints about how to take tests.** It shows you how to deal with test anxiety and how to analyse questions and plan responses.

You may also encounter other product and performance assessments. Teachers generally use these assessments for projects, writing assignments and other assignments where there

is no right or wrong answer. **Rubrics** can give you and the teacher guidelines for assessing the quality of your work. Achievers pay attention to rubrics and read and follow them carefully.

Look at both test taking and your ability to use rubrics as you go through this chapter.

7. Dealing with 'the system'

School, like the government, the military, business and industry, is a 'system'. You may have heard the phrase 'the school system'. **All systems have rules and regulations that everyone has to follow in order for the system to run smoothly for the majority of its people.** Organisations make rules so that they run smoothly. Unfortunately, sometimes these rules seem pretty senseless and some students don't understand why they have to follow them.

Sometimes a teacher may ask you to do an assignment about information you already know. That seems senseless, but often that's just the way the system works. Some students say they won't do their assignments because the work is too boring or because they already know the answers and don't think they should have to write them down. These students are not achievers in school. It's not because they are dumb. It's because they refuse to follow the rules of 'the system'.

All of us, kids and adults, have to do some things just because the system requires it. It's better for you in the long run to follow the rules. Why? Because while you are trying to understand the system, you can investigate ways to change how the system is organised.

The chapter entitled *Dealing with 'The System'* will give you some **guidelines for understanding and maybe for helping to change the system.**

**Becoming an achiever
doesn't happen
overnight**



How to use this book

To read...

This book is for anyone who has decided to become an achiever but is not sure exactly how to do it. It has seven chapters, one chapter for each of the seven steps to success shown on page 7. It includes many stories about real kids so that you can understand some of the problems and successes that happen to kids as they work on becoming achievers. You might read this book by yourself. Or you might read it with your class. Either way, you may want to discuss the ideas in the book and your opinions with both your friends and classmates and with an adult. There are pages you may want to read again later when you find they are particularly important to you.

To think and reflect and write...

You also have the opportunity to think about yourself and your own life. When you see the light bulb and the words...

'Think about it!'

this means it is time to think about yourself and how what you've read or discussed applies to your own situation. Then write responses.

To do...

This book has some pages that you may want to use over and over again. When you see the words...



...this means that you can copy the page so you can use it more than once.

If you read this book carefully, complete the questions and try the suggestions, you will most certainly be on the road to becoming an achiever!

Yes, you can!

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