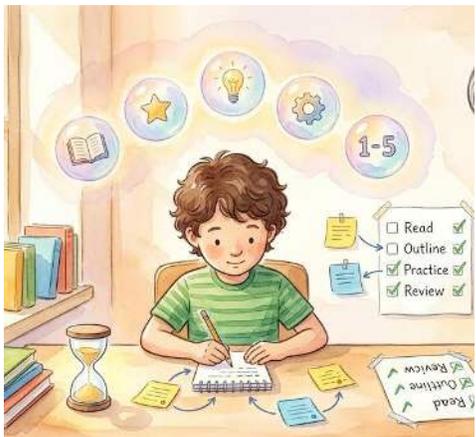


# HomeworkCoach Hacks for High School #2

## Mastering Your Working Memory: The "Don't Hold It—See It" Guide



*Think of working memory as having to hold several pieces of information in your head and having to work with them. Like a mental math problem, or remembering and dialing a phone number. Or trying to remember the 5 homework assignments you have to work on tonight.*

*Here's the Core Rule: Your brain shouldn't be juggling information; it should be looking at it. Use these strategies to "externalize" your thinking and save your mental energy for the actual work.*

### 1. Managing Your "Step Capacity"

*How many steps can you hold before losing track? If a task has more than ~3 steps, it's too big for working memory.*

- **Turn Everything into Steps Immediately:** Avoid vague tasks like “study Chapter 3.” Convert them instantly into a checklist (e.g., Read pages 10–15, write 3 summaries, answer questions 1–5).
- **The “One Page Rule”:** For every class, keep one running page (digital or paper). Everything—key ideas, questions, and assignments—goes there. This prevents the "I know I saw that somewhere" drain on your memory.
- **External Brain System:** If it's not written down, it doesn't exist. Use a daily task list for *today only* and a calendar for deadlines. Whether it's Notion, Todoist, or a paper planner, pick one system and trust it.

### 2. Balancing Verbal vs. Visual Load

*Which type of information overwhelms you faster? Use "anchors" to balance the weight.*

- **Working Memory “Anchors”:** Keep information from slipping by attaching it to a different sense. Say it out loud (verbal), write it quickly (motor), or associate it with something visual or "weird."

- **Visual Storytelling:** Instead of just memorizing a list like "mitosis stages," picture a ridiculous visual story. Turning abstract words into a mental image reduces the verbal load.
- **Study Like You'll Teach It:** Organize information by explaining concepts out loud. If you can't explain it simply to an imaginary student, your brain hasn't "mapped" the info yet.

### 3. Reducing Stress & Energy Sensitivity

*Working memory shrinks when you are stressed, rushed, or tired. Manage your environment to protect your bandwidth.*

- **Ultra-Short Focus Cycles:** Forget long study blocks. Try 15–25 minutes of focus followed by a 5-minute break. This keeps the "stress" of a long task manageable.
- **Use "Friction" to Your Advantage:** Make good choices easy and bad ones hard. Put your phone in another room. Less decision-making means less working memory drain.
- **Energy > Time Management:** Study when you are most alert. Use "stimulation" tools to keep your brain engaged: try standing while studying, using fidget tools, or playing background music (no lyrics).

### 4. Building Automaticity

*When a skill is "automatic," it runs in the background and doesn't use up so much working memory space.*

- **The “Read → Close → Recall” Method:** Read a small section, close the book, and say what you remember. This "retrieval practice" is the fastest way to make information automatic so you don't have to keep looking it up.
- **Planned “Reset Moments”:** ADHD brains drift. Every 20 minutes, ask: “*What am I doing?*” and “*What’s the next step?*” These resets help automate the process of staying on track until it becomes a habit.
- **Never stop practicing math facts:** If someone says “what’s half of  $8 \times 4$ ?” it will be so much easier if the  $8 \times 4$  automatically stores itself in your brain as “32” (one piece of information) rather than you having to work out what  $8 \times 4$  is, then trying to remember the first part of the question.

*If you could use some friendly help mastering these skills, tell your parent that HomeworkCoach has some super homework coaches that will help you in your home!*