

# Getting Ready For Secondary School

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for



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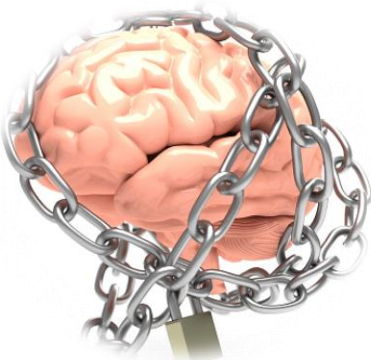
# Let's talk about

## It's AMAZING

- There is no computer on earth as capable or as fast as your brain.
- Your brain has 100 billion cells called neurons—so many it would take you over 3,000 years to count them all.
- It is growing all the time the structure of your brain changes every time you learn, as well as whenever you have a new thought or memory.
- Your brain is generating enough electrical energy to light an electric bulb.

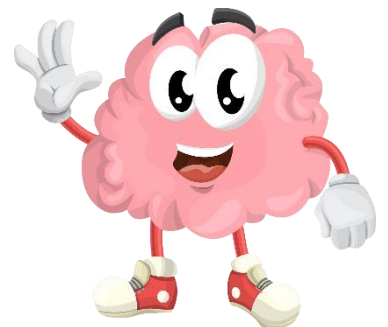
## EVERYBODY'S BRAIN IS AMAZING

Find out more here <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/science/your-amazing-brain/>



Some people think their brain is fixed, they believe they can't learn new things. When they see a new problem, they don't feel confident enough to try. When they make a mistake, they give up. They keep doing the things they already know how to do. For them progress is slow and disappointing.

The truth is, your brain is constantly growing. The more you try new things, take on new challenges and learn from mistakes the better it gets. We can all grow our brains, help them work better and faster. We all have an amazing brain. Progress is always possible.



# How to grow your brain.



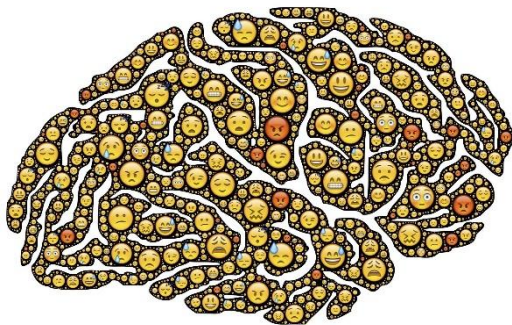
Try lots of new things. Don't worry if you don't know how to do them **yet**. **Practice makes progress.**

Don't ever be afraid to fail, that's how we learn. When you learned to walk you didn't give up because you fell the first few times you tried.

**FAIL= First Attempt In Learning**

**Be active.** Your brain loves you to move.

Scientists have proven there is a big link between exercise and our ability to learn. In fact, we learn better after exercise. So, keep up your sports and take up new ones. You don't have to be good at an activity to enjoy it. It's all about developing new skills and having fun.

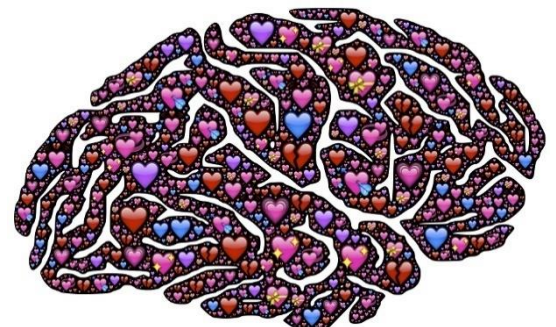


**Look for Help.** There are lots of people

who can help you. Parents, teachers, tutors, SNAs, coaches, friends. There are also people you can help. When we show others how to do something, we actually learn it better ourselves. We learn better together.

**Gratitude and Compassion.**

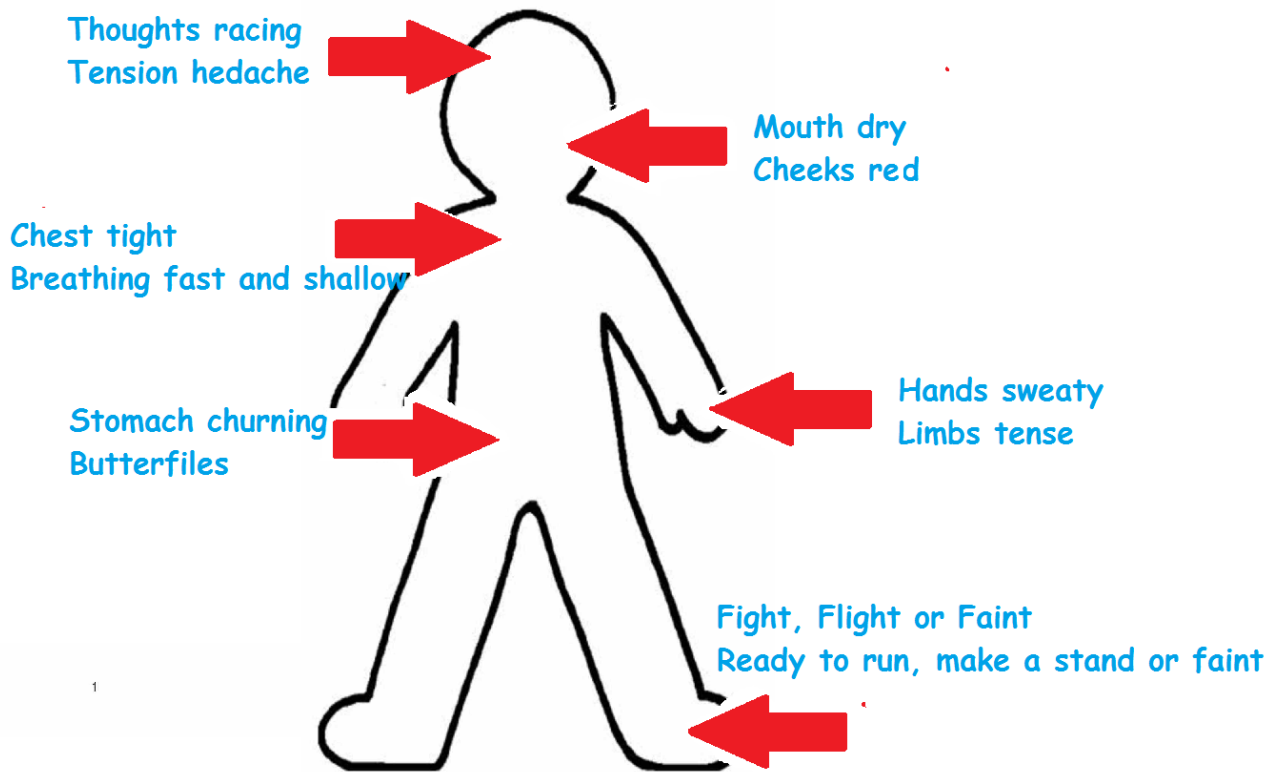
When we practice gratitude, we become happier, more confident, learn better and are better able to cope with challenges. Practice writing down 3 things you are grateful for every day, you could use a special notebook.





# Let's talk about stress.

## THE STRESS RESPONSE



You are designed to have the stress response. It is there to get you out of trouble. Your body is preparing to react to a challenge. Its anticipation and excitement, extra energy if you need to react to a new situation. Its natural to feel it.

So why do we think stress is bad for us? Too much of anything is 'bad' for you. Stress we don't turn off can become anxiety and worry. The good news is we can turn it off.

When your brain is busy being stressed or worrying it stops listening to all the messages coming from the body. All we have to do is let our brain listen to a different message and then it will calm your body down and let you relax.

Like everything else, the more we practice managing our stress the better we get at it. Remember how amazing your brain is. You can learn how to train your brain to react differently to new situations, you just have to give it the right information. Here is how.

# Turning off your stress and learning to relax.

Your brain is like a torch, whatever you point it at, that's where it focuses its attention. If you take your focus out of your head and to your body, you can change how your body feels and turn off your stress response.

## Try this exercise.

- Sit comfortably in a chair.
- Feet flat on the floor. Arms uncrossed. Hands on your lap. Shoulders back in the chair.
- Think about your feet.
- Feel your feet in your shoes. Feel your feet solid on the floor.
- Feel the soles of your feet against the floor.
- Notice how the chair is holding you up.
- Feel how the chair is holding your legs, back and shoulders.
- Notice how your whole body is safe and supported.
- Let your brain register how secure you are.
- Sink a little into the chair.
- Notice how you are calmer, more relaxed.
- Keeping checking in with your feet, legs, arms and body, noticing where its touching the chair, how it's held.
- Now take a slow gentle breath. Let your chest relax into your body as you breathe out. Take 4 more gentle breaths.
- Notice how you feel now, as opposed to the start of the exercise.



If you practice this exercise you will become better and better at focusing your mind. Soon you will be able to relax just by placing your attention on your feet.

# Mindfulness

Putting your focus where you want it, is called Mindfulness. It's not only good for learning how to cope with stress, it helps grow your brain too. Learning to direct your focus is a very powerful skill and will take practice.

There are lots more exercises and support to be found here in the Headspace and Smiling Mind websites.

<https://www.headspace.com/mindfulness>



<https://www.smilingmind.com.au/>



Try these mindfulness exercises.



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxYC\\_UcQ0PI&t=75s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxYC_UcQ0PI&t=75s)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUqLVa34S3c>

Practice is important if you want to benefit from these practices.

Will I be with my friends?

Will I make new friends?



Transitions in life are times when friendships can change. That's completely natural. You will be meeting new people, developing new interests, work in class with other students and be on teams with new teammates. It's a great opportunity, a little planning can help. Its important to widen your circle of friends. If your circle is too small, on days your friends are not around you could feel a bit lost. So, make the effort. Joining extracurricular activities is one way to make new friends. Check out your new schools' website to see what extracurricular activities they offer.

### 1. Starting Conversations.

Its easy to ask a question when you know the other person has an answer. In the first few weeks you have lots in common with all the other first years. So, take advantage of that and get to know lots of new people. You can practice some conversation starters.

- What subjects did you pick?
- Do you play any sports?
- Can I borrow a pen?
- Try making a list of your own.

Having something in common with someone won't automatically make you best friends, but it's a good first step in building a friendship.



## 2. Spend Time with Your Friend's Friends

Hanging out with friends of friends can be a great way to meet new people. It's always less awkward if you have someone to introduce you and something in common to talk about.

## 3. Speak to Someone Who's on Their Own

Some find it harder than others to take the first step, so why don't you?

## 5. Be Approachable

It's far easier to approach someone who looks like they want to talk to you. Barriers such as wearing earphones and negative body-language might put people off. Smile, make eye contact, say hello.

## 6. Hold off on sharing personal information.

Wait until you know someone well before you share your phone details, personal stories or private information. Social media is a great way to connect with friends. But we should be careful what we share about ourselves and others, once out there we can't take it back. Always ask yourself before you post:

Is It  
True

Is It  
Kind

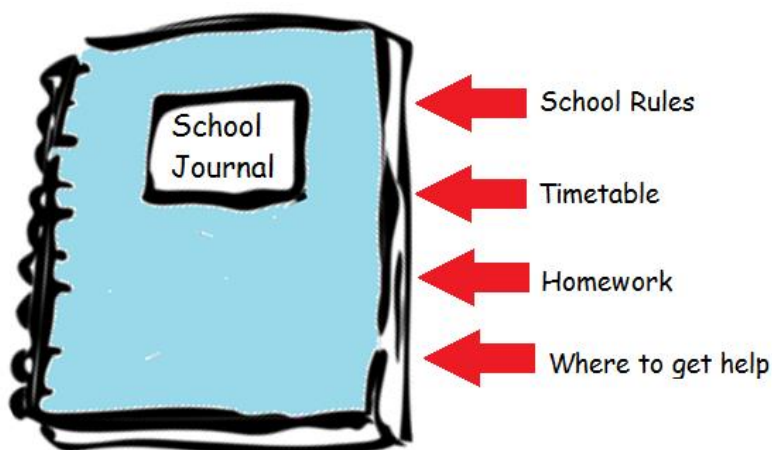
Is It  
Necessary

# Your New School Is Ready For You

It's time to think about your new school. There are a couple of things new students often worry about.

- Finding their way around
- Being late
- Organising books and stuff for class, pe and practical classes.
- Homework

Your secondary school is ready for you. They will have a settling in plan for you. You will be shown around and given time to get used to your new environment. There are some important tools that can help you.



There is lots of information in your Journal to help you settle in. The timetable will help you be organised. If you follow it, you will know when and where to go for class, what books you will need and when to bring in your PE gear.

You record your homework every day. This tells you both what you have to do before the next class and what the teacher thinks is important for you to know. Always ask if you are not clear about what you have to do for homework. Check your Journal to see when its due.

# Timetable Challenge

Sample Timetable				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
09.00 ENG - : Room 101.	09.00 HIS Room 211	09.00 HEC Room 211	09.00 P.E Gym	09.00 Tutor Clss Room 211
9.40 MATHS - Room 116	9.40 ART Art Room 2	9.40 SPHE Room 214	9.40 P.E Gym	9.40 RE Room 102
10.20 Music Room	10.20 ART	10.20 ENG Room 101	10.20 HEC Room 104	10.20 SCI Lab 2
BREAKTIME 11.00 until 11.15				
11.20 ART - Room 2	11.20 Music Room	11.20 GEOG Room 204	11.20 SCI Lab 2	11.20 MATHS Room 116
12.00 SCI - Lab 2	12.00 ENG Room 101	12.00 MATHS room 116	12.00 RE Room 102	12.00 ENG Room 107
12.40 SCI -	12.40 GEOG Room 204	12.40 CSPE Room 204	12.40 GEOG Room 204	12.40 HIS Room 211
LUNCHTIME 13.20 until 13.55				
14.00 COMP -Comp 1	14.00 Room MATHS 116	14.00 Study 104	14.00 room MATHS 116	14.00 HEC Kitchen
14.40 COMP -	14.40 FRE room 213	14.40 HIS Room 104	14.40 ENG Room 101	14.40 1 HEC

- How many English classes have you? \_\_\_\_\_
- In what room will you have Tutor Class?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What books will you need Tuesday morning before break?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How many room changes will you have on Monday afternoon?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What day will you need your PE gear?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How many room changes will you have after break on Wednesday? \_\_\_\_\_

7. If you get Science homework on Monday when will you have to have it done for? \_\_\_\_\_
8. How long is break time every day? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What subjects have double classes? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Which subject is not in the same room for every class?  
\_\_\_\_\_

How might you use the timetable to help plan your week?

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How might you use the timetable to help plan your day?

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Why might you keep a second timetable?

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Where might you keep a second timetable?

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# Homework

## Why do I have to do homework?



Remember the ways of growing your brain?

Trying to do new things, practicing till we make progress. Keeping our brain active. Asking for help and helping others to understand.

Focusing your mind by putting your attention where you want it to go.

**Homework is brain training.**

- You write your homework in your journal at the end of every class. Don't say "I'll remember what I got". You will have 6 or more classes to remember, trust me, write it down.
- Homework comes in different forms, written work, reading, listening, project based or revision. Reading it over, colouring blocks in with highlighters is not learning. Can you write it or explain it to someone?
- Teachers expect students to make an honest effort at their homework. Show a written attempt.
- First years normally spend 1 to 1.5 hours per night at their homework.
- Start your homework early in the evening before you get too tired or distracted.
- Do your homework at a table, the kitchen is good, learn to ignore distractions.  
Sometimes you may need a quieter place.
- You should tell your teacher if you find it hard finishing homework.



# Getting to know your new school.

3-2-1 use the template to find out about your new school. Go to the school website and Twitter feed to find out about what you can do in your new school.

**3** New Subjects in secondary school you are looking forward to.



**2** Extracurricular activities you would like to get involved in.



**1** School trip the school went on last year that you would like to go on.



## Tips to get a good start.

- Plan your day the night before. What books or materials will I need.

Use your timetable.

- Be early. Last minute rushing is stressful.
- Use colour coded folders; Have a folder for each subject.
- Keep your locker clean and clutter free.
- Ask for help.
- It's a fresh start. School days are some of the very best days of your life.
- Remember everyone is making a new start, even if they look more confident than you, they have stuff going on too. Be kind to everyone especially yourself. You are doing great.



# Keep An Open Mind.

Things may not always go to plan and there will be bumps along the road. Scientists have proven that it's not what happens to us in life that makes us happy or sad, it's our reaction to what is happening. If you do even some of these:

- Work on developing a growth mind set.
- Take charge of your brain and where its puts focus.
- Get to know your new school.
- Plan to be organised.
- Be prepared to make new friends.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Practice gratitude every day.

**You will settle in, in no time.**

**Best of luck with your new adventure.**



# Want to see more?

This is a very good introduction to secondary school. Go to YouTube



Mind the Gap  
Transition Programme

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C5eQVbZBs3I&t=467s>

Big THANK YOU to the students and teachers all over the country who make videos of their school experiences and share them. They are an amazing testament to the life and work that goes on in our schools.

Special thanks to CBS Wexford and Gorey Community School whose clips I used in the presentation that accompanies this guide.



CBS Wexford



Gorey Community School

Produced by



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