



From
Fs and Ds
To
As and Bs

— MANNYSCOTT —

	1992	3499	JAZZ 1	F
		1496	ENGLISH A 1-2	C
		2296	WLD HIST 1-2	D
		3696	*PHYS ED	D
		3499	BAND 1-8P	D
		1897	SPANISH 1-2P	F
		3096	TRANS MATH	F
10	1993	3021	TRANS MATH 1-	A
		2011	DRIVER ED Q1	A
		1400	ENGLISH 3-4 P	B
		3707	*GEN PE 10	A
		2005	CAREER GUID	A
		p2623	GRAPH ART 1-2	B
		4001	LIFE SCI 1-2	A

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to every student who wants to do better in school but doesn't know how. You can pick up your grades and turn things around in school. Don't give up. Don't drop out. Don't quit. You can do this!

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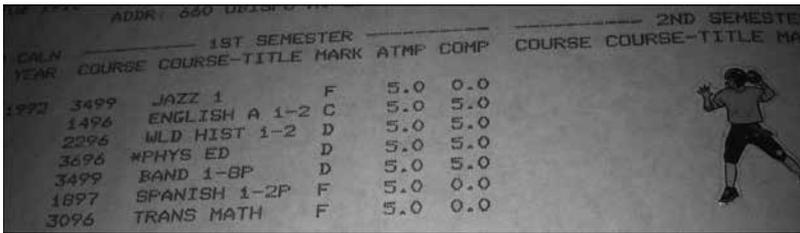
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INTRODUCTION

How do you pick up your grades? How do you go from Fs and Ds to As and Bs?

Well, I have an answer to that question because I used to be a terrible student who had Fs and Ds. The first semester of my freshman year in high school I earned 3 Fs, 3 Ds, and a C. That's a 0.6 GPA, I believe. I was a terrible student in elementary school, middle school, and high school. I also had a bad attitude. I missed a lot of school and as a result, my grades suffered. To make things worse, I dropped out of high school and I wasted a lot of time in the streets.



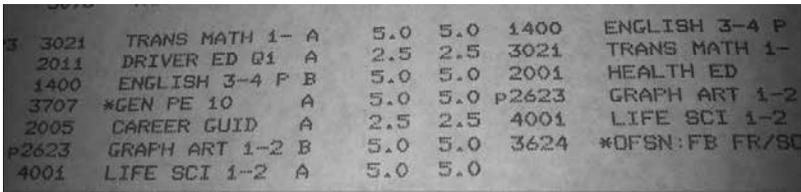
CALN YEAR	1ST SEMESTER				2ND SEMESTER	
	COURSE	COURSE-TITLE	MARK	ATMP	COMP	COURSE-TITLE
1972	3499	JAZZ 1	F	5.0	0.0	
	1496	ENGLISH A 1-2	C	5.0	5.0	
	2296	WLD HIST 1-2	D	5.0	5.0	
	3696	*PHYS ED	D	5.0	5.0	
	3499	BAND 1-BP	D	5.0	5.0	
	1897	SPANISH 1-2P	F	5.0	0.0	
	3096	TRANS MATH	F	5.0	0.0	

Figure 1. My Freshman Year Grades

When I did go to school, I had fallen so far behind that it was hard for me to catch up. That discouraged me so much. To avoid sounding stupid in class, or being embarrassed by teachers or other students, I missed even more school. Eventually, when I didn't think I could around turn my grades in school, I dropped out. I just quit school. I figured I was not smart enough for school and I got tired of feeling like the dumb kid in class.

However, because of the things I'll share in this book, I re-enrolled in school and I picked up my grades. My first semester back at school, I ended up getting 5 As and 2 Bs.

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3021	TRANS MATH 1-	A	5.0	5.0	1400	ENGLISH 3-4 P
2011	DRIVER ED Q1	A	2.5	2.5	3021	TRANS MATH 1-
1400	ENGLISH 3-4 P	B	5.0	5.0	2001	HEALTH ED
3707	*GEN PE 10	A	5.0	5.0	p2623	GRAPH ART 1-2
2005	CAREER GUID	A	2.5	2.5	4001	LIFE SCI 1-2
p2623	GRAPH ART 1-2	B	5.0	5.0	3624	*OFSN: FB FR/SC
4001	LIFE SCI 1-2	A	5.0	5.0		

Figure 2. My Sophomore Year Grades

If you are having a hard time in school, I can show you how you can improve your grades, too. If you are struggling in class like I used to struggle, then I can help you pick up your grades. If you're having a hard time understanding what your teachers are talking about in class, I can help you fix that. If your homework assignments don't make sense to you, I can help you fix that. If you feel frustrated, and you don't feel like your school work is relevant to your day-to-day life, I can help you with that, too.

In this small book, I am going to share eight habits that I believe can help you improve your grades. A habit is a series of actions repeated over and over again. A habit is not something that you only do on special occasions or when you are cramming to catch up because you are so far behind. Rather, a habit is something that you do regularly. I am going to share with you eight habits that you will need to do every weekday. If you want, you can do these habits Monday through Friday and take weekends to rest. Every now and then, you might need to do some work on Sunday to prepare for Monday, but not much. I was able to pick up my grades by following these habits, Monday through Friday. I believe you can, too.

The eight habits I am going to share with you can help you go from Fs and Ds to As and Bs in one semester just like I did, and they can help you become a better student for the rest of your life.

Grab a pen or a pencil because I want to help you pick up your grades. While you are reading, if you think of something that you need

to stop doing, or something that you will start doing, I want you to write down those thoughts on the pages of this book.

You can write anywhere you see an empty space—in the margins of the page or on blank spaces in the beginning or end of this book. That's what I do when I am reading a book that I own. I make every book I read my own by marking it up with my thoughts and ideas. So, while you are reading this book, I want you to write down the eight habits you are going to start doing and any other ideas that come to mind that you believe can help you improve your grades.

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Reflection Questions

Before you learn about the first habit, take a moment to answer these questions:

1. What grades did you get last semester? What are your grades right now?
2. If you had Fs and Ds, why?
3. Why do you want to improve your grades?

HABIT #1: Cut Away!

My mom stormed into my room, holding a letter in her hand. “What have you been doing?” she asked. I wasn’t quite sure how to answer that.

I asked, “What are you talking about? What’s wrong?”

She said, “This letter says that you dropped out of school! Where have you been going? What have you been doing?” she asked with so much anger and confusion.

I tried to explain. “Momma, I’m sorry. I just stopped going. I hate school.”

“I want to go back to school now, mom, but I didn’t know how I was gonna tell you,” I explained.

“Get dressed! We are going down to the school right now! I’ll be in the car.” She stormed out.

When I got in the car, my mom’s rant continued all the way to the school. She was clearly angry, disappointed, and hurt.

We walked into my high school, and sat outside the assistant principal’s office. Mrs. Wilton was a strong woman who had a reputation for not taking no mess from students or parents. She was friendly but stern. She didn’t really smile very often, but when she did, it was big and beautiful. By the look on her face, it was obvious that she was familiar with my bad grades. I avoided eye contact with her.

She greeted my mom and me and told us to follow her into her office. We entered her office, and both my mom and I sat down in the two seats in front of her desk. She walked around her desk and took her seat.

She looked through my file again, remaining silent for a minute,

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and then looked up at me and began speaking. “Where have you been, young man?” she asked. I just shrugged my shoulders. I really didn’t know how to tell her that I hated school.

She was not blinking. She was not smiling. She just stared, with genuine curiosity. She asked again, “How in the world could you have missed almost the entire school year?” Embarrassed, I tried to answer again, but really, my answers didn’t matter. There was nothing I could say that would be good enough for her or anyone.

She asked me, “Do you want to come back to school here?”

“Yes, ma’am. I do.”

“Why should I let you back into school?” she asked, and just stared at me.

I said something like, “Mrs. Wilton, I am ready to learn. I want to be here. I have changed. I’m different. I want to learn. I want to go to class. I want to do better.”

Unconvinced, she said, “I am sorry, but I don’t believe you. I don’t think you are serious about being here. I am going to send you to the alternative school down the street.”

I pleaded with her, because the alternative school had the worst reputation in Long Beach. People who went there were not looked upon in a positive light. To be completely honest with you, people in that alternative school often ended up in prison or dead.

While my past behavior and attitude certainly justified her in threatening to send me to the alternative school, I really wanted a second chance at my regular high school. “Mrs. Wilton, I am serious this time. Please, just give me a chance. Please.”

She said, “You earned a 0.6, son! You dropped out of school. You were absent from school too many days. Do you realize how far behind you are? Do you know how hard you will have to work just to catch up, if I let you back in?”

I honestly didn't know how far behind I was, but it didn't matter. I wanted another chance. "Yes ma'am," I pleaded. "I know I'm behind. I know I was acting a fool. I know. I really do, but please. I've changed. I'm a new person. I promise. Please, just give me one chance. Just one."

"If you mess up one time, you are out of here. You understand?" she asked me, and I nodded. "You are going to have to take summer school classes. You are going to have to take zero period, and extra classes. You are going to have to get extra help. You are going to have to focus. You are going to have to work really hard," she explained. Then she looked me directly in the eyes and hit me with, "Are you really willing to do what is necessary to graduate from high school?"

With tears in my eyes, I said to her in the most sincere, yet humble way I could, "Mrs. Wilton, I am willing to do whatever it takes. I will do everything you tell me to do."

"Son, you have one chance. Don't mess it up. If you mess this up, you are out of here. You are too far behind."

I let out a big sigh of relief. She had every right to send me to another school, but she gave me a chance. Just one chance. I was determined to make the most of that chance. I walked over to Mrs. Wilton and gave her a big hug. I don't think she realized how important her giving me that second chance meant.

Getting re-admitted to school was one thing, but succeeding was going to be a whole different thing. I was a little scared to go back to school. It's not like I had all of a sudden learned how to read better or study more effectively. As a matter of fact, when it came to school, I still had many of the bad habits that crippled me before I dropped out of school. I still had unhealthy sleeping habits, I stayed up too late, and often slept until one or two in the afternoon. So even though I knew I was going back to school, doubts about myself crept into my mind. "What if I am not smart enough? What if I mess up? How am I going

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to do better in school? If I don't make it, then I am out of here."

I'll never forget my first day of returning to school. I walked to school, and prayed most of the way there because I was excited and nervous.

I walked through the front doors, I found my first class, and walked in and took my seat in the back of the room. I always liked sitting in the back of the class. Because I had lived in twenty-six places before I was sixteen years old, and had bounced from school to school, I learned along the way that seats in the back of the room gave me the most freedom and the least accountability. I would not have to answer as many questions as the other students in class. It was in the back of the room that I could remain under the radar, and look at my cheat sheets, if necessary.

The first day of school was fine. The first week was fine. But by the second week, the other students started to get more comfortable and were reverting to some of the usual, bad habits that interrupt learning in classrooms. People passed notes. People started clowning around and telling jokes. They were not really taking school, or our teachers, seriously. Trying to fit in, I, too, started participating in some of the clowning. I laughed at several of the jokes, and even started telling a couple jokes of my own about people's mommas. I was falling into my old habit of being present physically while being mentally absent, but I knew had to break a very bad cycle.

"I can't do this," I said to myself, trying to snap out of it. "I don't want to go back to doing that. I don't want to get kicked out of school. I don't want to waste my life," I thought. I felt it resounding in my soul. "If I keep doing what I always did, I will keep getting what I always got." That behavior had always resulted in me earning bad grades. It had always gotten me in trouble. That behavior never worked out well for me because it caused me to miss out on getting a good education.

But I wanted more out of life. I wanted to do better in school. I wanted to be proud of myself. I wanted to play football. I wanted to do

something with my life. The fact is, the games people were playing in class weren't as funny to me as they used to be, and I had to make sure I didn't allow myself to get sucked into the silliness any more.

I wanted to be somebody in life. I wanted to be successful, and to make that happen, I knew that I had to focus, even if it meant that people would make fun of me. Even if it meant people would call me a square or a nerd or a loser, or whatever. I wanted to learn, period, because I wanted more out of life for myself and for my family.

I knew I had already missed out on so much knowledge and wisdom, and Mrs. Wilton had given me a second chance to pick up my grades. I decided that I had to break some of my bad habits and replace them with more helpful habits. So when other students started telling jokes (and some of them were hilarious), I acted like I didn't hear them. I had to. When people passed notes, I tried to ignore them. I had to.

I had to make up my mind. No one else could succeed for me. No one else could live my life for me. No one else could pick up my grades for me. I had to do it myself.

Aimlessness is perhaps the biggest enemy of success, and I had to focus on what I really wanted in my life. I didn't want failure, but success. I didn't want Fs and Ds—I needed As and Bs. I realized that although I could not go back and change my past, I could, from that day forward, work to create a better future—and that's what I committed to doing. I decided to pick up my grades!

I share that story with you to let you know that if you want to go from Fs and Ds to As and Bs, you must first make the decision to pick up your grades.

All change starts with you making up your mind. No one has ever *done* anything great until they first made a *decision* to do something great. Your life will begin to change once you make the decision to pick up your grades. To make a decision means “to cut away all other

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options.” When you want to make an incision, you cut *into* something. But when you make a decision you *cut away* from something.

So I have a question for you: What are some things you need to cut away from in order to pick up your grades? Who are some people you need to cut away in order to pick up your grades? What are some habits that you need to cut away in order to pick up your grades? What are some attitudes you need to cut away?

Do you disrespect your parents by how you talk to them or treat them? Do you disrespect your teachers? Do you have bad habits? What are some things in your life that are keeping you from getting good grades? Do you watch more than one hour of TV per night? Do you listen to music more than one hour a day? Are you on your phone or computer, texting or talking or facetimeing people more than one hour per day? Are you on social media more than one hour per day? What are some things you need to cut away in order to focus on picking up your grades? If you are not managing your time, you could waste your life.

When you make a decision to pick up your grades, you are saying to yourself and others, “I’m choosing my grades over anything else. I’m choosing my grades over guys. I’m choosing my grades over girls. I’m picking my grades up regardless of what anyone else around me is doing. I’m picking up my grades regardless of what anybody else around me has to say about it.”

Even if your parents didn’t graduate from high school, you can pick up your grades. Even if your family doesn’t really care about education, you can pick up your grades. It doesn’t matter where you are from or what your family is like. You can pick up your grades, and picking up your grades starts with you making the decision that *you want to pick up your grades*.

How would you feel if you had As and Bs right now? How would you feel if you had a 4.0 grade point average? What about a 3.8 or a

3.5? How would that make you feel? What would better grades allow you to do? What kinds of opportunities could come your way because you had better grades? What kind of jobs could you get? What colleges or vocational schools could you go to? What kind of money could you make? What kind of people would you be around? What kind of people would you be able to attract? If you picked up your grades, how would that help you?

In order to achieve those things, you must first decide that you want better grades. You must say to yourself, "I want better grades. I want to improve my grades. I want to be on the honor role. I want to be impressive. I want to be on the Dean's List. I want to play sports, and I know that I need better grades to play sports. *So today, I decide that I am going to pick up my grades.*"

To decide that you are picking up your grades also means that you must cut away any excuses you have been making about why you don't have good grades. Say to yourself, "I'm going to get better grades. I'm cutting away all the other things that are distracting me. I'm cutting away excuses. I'm cutting away all the other people that are holding me back. I'm cutting away the people who are keeping me from being my best. Today, right now, I decide to pick up my grades."

You have to make the decision yourself. No one else can make the decision for you. All change starts with you making a decision.

So if you want to pick up your grades, decide to pick up your grades. Make the decision. Make up your mind. Don't hesitate. Don't doubt. Decide today! Decide right now. Don't overthink it. Don't straddle the fence. Make up your mind that you are going to pick up your grades! That's the first thing you must do to go from Fs and Ds to As and Bs. Decide!

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Reflection Questions

1. What bad habits, negative people, or time wasters do you need to cut out of your life?
2. What have you missed out on because of your bad habits, negative influences, or time wasters?
3. What are you missing out on right now because of the bad habits and influences in your life?

