



## 3 Tips for Building Confidence

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A major issue shared by many students is the struggle with self-confidence,

particularly when it comes to academic work. When you're unable to master a new math concept or writing a proper thesis, the lack of results that you see often becomes disappointing. When you receive a bad grade, you become unsure of yourself, you lose faith in your abilities and start losing motivation in your studies.

I am writing this article to provide some advice on this issue, and how to build your confidence. But note that confidence does not replace solid knowledge and hard work. For example, if you don't know your material, having confidence alone will not help you on your tests. What confidence does is to drive your motivation, keep you focused and achieve your goals, but you still have to master your knowledge and get yourself well prepared for any tests or exams.

So what is self-confidence? It is the belief in yourself and your abilities; it's a sense of self assurance. You know that you can achieve anything if you put your "best foot forward" and try hard enough. You might not know all the answers, but when you're confident you have the drive to find the answers and to overcome obstacles in way of your goals.

So, here are 3 tips to help you build self-confidence:



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## 3 Tips for Building Confidence

### 1. There is no such thing as failure, only lessons to learn

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Students become demoralized when they see low marks, with valid reasons. A low mark is simply an indication that you are underperforming academically. But you have to keep in mind; it is not about what mark you get but how you get it, which is important.

Take a step back. Do not look at the mark as a failure or that you aren't as smart as your peers, or that you aren't good enough. None of that is true. What is true is that something is not working – it could be your study habits, your work ethics, or your lack of understanding on a certain part of the curriculum, or your foundational knowledge is weak or underdeveloped. You're academic score is simply an indication of what doesn't work. So, treat a low mark as such, rather than a personal failure. It's a lesson aimed at focusing your attention to reassess and evaluate what you are doing. Do you need to change your study habits? Do you need more practice on a certain concept? Do you need to focus on your writing skills? It is time to reassess yourself, which takes us to the next step.

### 2. Assess your strengths and weaknesses

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Assessing yourself means that you have to find an honest answer about what your strengths and weaknesses are. What are you good at? What are your shortcomings? The key is to work on them, so you can improve and grow. You have to be precise and look beyond the surface of what you are doing; dig deep. It is not sufficient to state that you are good in math and poor in science; that is too general. You need to take the time to think through and write your assessment down.

If your strengths lie in math, is it problem solving you are good at? Or skilled in arithmetic that you can perform mental algebra quickly? For your strengths, you can set a higher standard for yourself. Challenge yourself. Take our math example, if you excel in your math courses already, you can still participate in national math competition (i.e. Waterloo Math Contests or International Olympiad), performing at a level higher than the academic standard. You are challenging yourself beyond the normal expectations.



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Now examine your shortcomings. You need to confront your weaknesses and find out why are you struggling. If you don't understand biology, find out precisely what you have trouble with. Is it that you haven't clarified certain concepts or you have trouble relating theories to each other?

Once you pinpoint specific area of weaknesses, you can begin working on them. There are many strategies to address them. One tip I can provide here, is to make friends and seek advices from the top achievers in your class; learn from the best. Specifically how do they study? How to do they divide their time? How do they map out concepts? How much time do they spend on practicing? Success often leaves clues and it is your job to pick them up and incorporate them into your own study habits.

### 3. Give yourself credit for every success you have attained (no matter how small the accomplishment).

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My last article, "How to build Self Motivation", I emphasized on the importance of giving yourself credit, as an approach to build your motivation. This is also true when building your confidence. You have to repeatedly remind yourself that you can do it. And to do that you can use every success you have as evidence supporting your belief in yourself.

For example, when I coached a student in the past with very low grades, I kept reminding him that he is smart and good at Math. He asked me, "How do you know that?" I told him, "It's because you achieved an A on your last quiz, and if you can do that in a quiz, you can certainly do the same on your tests!" Just as I told this student, I'm telling you, if you stay focused and work hard, you can accomplishment anything you set your mind to.



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Confidence begins with believing in yourself. As soon as you make progress, it is worth giving yourself a pat on the back. You can give yourself credit on your new plan, or that you are willing to try, or that you are working harder. Results might not come immediately, but it will come if you persist and adapt to what works and know when to discard what doesn't. Throughout this learning process, the credit you give yourself will serve as the foundation to strengthen your self assurance.

Confidence and success is a process. Remember, that you don't have to wait for a 95% average to feel good about yourself and what you do. Feel confident in the process of getting there too, not only will you be more motivated but the positive results, and good marks will follow. You are embarking on a learning journey that it is not only the academic record you attain, but how you grow as a person in developing your everyday work habits and ethics that is important.



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