**#LifeHack**

*Introduction: What is a Life Hack? Have students talk about where they have heard/seen this before. Have they ever used Google, Twitter, or Instagram to search this hashtag?*

***Life hack****:* a strategy or technique adopted in order to manage one's time and daily activities in a more efficient way. *(Source: dictionary.com)*

**Goals**

* Students will share strategies for being successful in many facets of life
* Students will learn about different tips to be successful
* Students will write and reflect on life hacks and create additional life hacks for the group

**Pre-group preparation**

* Print and Copy “#LifeHacks” double-sided (one per participant)
* Print “Fish for a Life Hack” and cut into strips and place in an envelope for students to draw from
* Print and Copy “Best Apps for Students” double-sided (one per participant)

**Materials**

* Group agreements and talking piece
* Pens or pencils, student folders
* Marker Board or Butcher Paper/Large Sticky Pad
* Technology
* Handouts or Activities listed in Pre-Group preparation

**Ice Breaker: Fish for a Life Hack** (Handout: See end of lesson)

1. Before Group: Print “Fish for a Life Hack” and cut into strips and place in an envelope for students to draw from
2. Have students sit in a circle and take turns selecting and reading aloud the Issue and Life Hack. Allow students to discuss other Life Hacks and suggestions they have for solving the issues.

**Activity 1: #LifeHacks (students need a writing utensil)**

1. Before Group print and copy “#LifeHacks” double-sided (Handout: See end of lesson)
2. Determine how the group would best like to read and discuss these life hacks (independently, pairs, small groups, etc.) Divide the students up to read.
3. Have students spend 5 minutes writing and reflecting (see space in handout)
4. Bring group back together. Have students share thoughts from their writing.

**Activity 2: Best Apps for Students** (Handout: See end of lesson)

1. DISCUSSION: Look at your phone. Are your apps organized? What are the most useful apps? What purposes do the apps on your phone serve? School apps? Friend apps? Calendar? Etc.?
2. After students have shared their app recommendations have students work in pairs and divide them up by categories (one group read math apps/one group read science apps, etc.) to share their thoughts on apps that are useful for school. Provide each group the handout below with suggested apps and categories.
3. How are apps a life hack?

**Closing Discussion: How will you remember life hacks you learned today?**

**FISH FOR A LIFE HACK**

**Issue:**You want to play music, but you don't have any speakers.  
**Life Hack:**Put your phone or mp3 player in a glass bowl and it will serve as an amplifier! You never have to miss out on a dance party again.

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**Issue:**You're stressed/cranky/unproductive/forgetful/have writer's block/don't feel creative.  
**Life Hack:**[TAKE A NAP](http://community.sparknotes.com/2013/09/12/5-ways-to-justify-your-nap). Sleep is the best thing you can do for your body and mind, so get a lot of it - and if you don't have time to get a lot of it, make up for that with power naps.

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**Issue:**You've got crumbs and dust and yucky stuff making the keys stick on your computer.  
**Life Hack:**Clean out the gunk with the sticky end of a post-it note to get your keyboard squeaky clean.

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**Issue:**You want to wear your cute new shoes but they aren't broken in yet... and even though wearing them is the way to break them in, you can't face the blisters.  
**Life Hack:**Put on your thickest pair of socks, then put on the shoes you want to break in. Grab your hairdryer, turn it on, and aim it at the tightest parts of the shoes. Wiggle your toes and feet around as you point the dryer at them, then turn the dryer off. Keep the shoes on while they cool, then when you take them off, they should be all stretched out. Voilà!

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**Issue:**Your room is clean, but it smells super gross. (Or, your roommate smells really gross.)  
**Life Hack:**Tape yummy-smelling dryer sheets to your AC vent or fan, then turn it on. Now even if your room IS super gross, it will smell fresh and clean, like those awkward Febreze commercials where people think they're in a flowery meadow when they're really in a dumpster.

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**Issue:**Your phone's charging cord is too short, so it doesn't reach your bed, and you REALLY REALLY want to keep playing Candy Crush until you slowly drift off to sleep.  
**Life Hack:**Tape your power strip (that long thingy with a bunch of electrical outlets) to the side of your night stand. Boom. Phone is now within reach. Along with anything else you want to plug in. (That would be a good place for a night light, am I right?)

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**Issue:**You're parched and want to begin studying, but you can't quench your thirst (for a drink or for knowledge) because your beverage of choice is room temperature. **Life Hack:** Wrap the can or bottle in a damp paper towel and place it in the fridge for 15 minutes. It will be chilled to perfection, and you will thirst no more.

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**Issue:**Your room is SO. FREAKING. HOT. AND STUFFY. You don't even have a fan or an AC vent. You're slowly melting.  
**Life Hack:**Hang a quasi-wet towel in front of an open window to cool things down.

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**Issue:**You really want breakfast, but you don't have a lot of time. (Or a stove. Or cooking skills.)  
**Life Hack:**Make scrambled eggs in a mug in your microwave! Just spray the mug with some cooking grease, crack two eggs into it, then add whatever fixin's you'd like (I suggest shredded cheese) and a bit of milk. Microwave it for 45 seconds, take out the mug and stir, then microwave for 45 more seconds. Take it out, stir, and you're ready to om-nom-nom some breakfast! Most important meal of the day, so don't forget it.

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**Issue:** I have a hard time remembering things I need to do.

**Life Hack:** Write it Out! Writing something out is equivalent to reading it 7 times.

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**Issue:** I never have a sharpened pencil to do my school work.

**Life Hack:** Use BLUE pen for taking notes and writing things if possible. You are more likely to remember something you wrote in blue ink than black ink.

**#LifeHacks**

*Source: http://www.setonmagazine.com/homeschool/general-homeschooling/survive-high-school-with-these-8-life-hacks*

*Directions: In your pair, small group, or independently read this list of Life Hacks.*

### **1. Don’t Be Afraid to Fall Behind.**

High school isn’t a competition of who can finish first. I’m not talking about a few years behind, but if you’re having trouble with something, spend extra time on it. Sure, you might finish your school year a little late into the summer, but because of it, you’ll be better prepared for everything, and get good grades. Quality over quantity, always.

### **2. Learn. How. To. Study.**

I cannot stress this enough. Even if you “already know” the material, if you learn good study habits now, you’ll be able to ace tests with information that you didn’t already know—trust me, it will happen. Whether in high school or in college, you will have things you don’t know and you will have to study.

### **3. Write Constantly.**

Make it a priority to write something at least once every day, no matter what it is. Original story? Great! Write down the concept. English assignment? Even better! Write it out. Even if you just write down your thoughts, that’s one step closer to being able to write a slammin SAT essay and college admittance letters.

Start a journal. Write about space alien pirates. Reflect on deep thoughts about nature. It doesn’t matter if it’s written terribly or has no punctuation or grammar (unless it’s that English essay, then you might want to include those). Writing every day will help you become a better writer and help words flow more naturally, and it becomes a habit. So when you’re faced with your first research report, you’ll be able to write out a quick draft faster than you can say “straight—A student.”

### **4. Motivate Yourself.**

When students experience high school freedom and don’t see the teacher or have the same class every day, you might think “Hey, I have no deadline, so I’ll save it for tomorrow,” and then hang with friends or play football or video games – whatever the kids are doing nowadays. You need to be able to tell yourself that you are going to get things done, and then actually do them.

Adults at home aren’t going to be holding your hand anymore. Set goals, such as accomplishing X, Y, and Z assignments in three weeks. If you succeed, treat yourself! Eat something you love; buy yourself that new book you’ve been looking at. Anything that is special and you don’t do on a regular basis can be a reward.

You can even use the reward system for small things, like finishing everything you planned for the day and rewarding yourself with gummy bears or chocolate milk.

### **5. Use the Pomodoro Technique.**

A technique developed by Francesco Cirillo in the late 1980’s can be helpful with everything from studying to regular daily work. You work in twenty-five minute increments, and after each take a five minute break. Stretch your legs, walk around the house a bit, do some sit-ups. Get your blood moving in some way, then go back to work.

For every four work sessions, take a twenty minute break. Maybe go for a symbolic boat ride on your metaphorical boat. The times, of course, can be adjusted to your specific studying/break needs.

Shorten the breaks or lengthen the study intervals – it’s up to you.

### **6. Stay Organized.**

This is perhaps one of the most important steps in this article. An organized workspace leads to an organized mind. Make a specific work space for yourself which you work at each day. Try as hard as you can for it not to be on your bed, and if it is out of necessity, make the bed before you use it.

Throw off all the pillows to prevent temptation to take a snooze. Try using a large plank of wood as a hard surface to work on. Keep your space clean at all times. Have a specific shelf and notebook(s) for just school stuff. Get a pencil holder.

You could even decorate your desk with stickers, streamers, and maybe even paint it. This makes it more welcoming for you to work at instead of a bland and empty space. Each weekend, take just a bit of time out and make a schedule for the following week.

It may seem pointless, but it is incredibly helpful and incredibly important.

### **7. It’s High School. Do Not Stress About College.**

### Don’t stress about picking your career while you’re still in high school. If you need to, take a year off between high school and college to sort out what you want out of life.

Maybe college isn’t even the best place for you—you never know where life will be leading you.

### **8. Remember to Never Be Afraid to Ask for Help.**

Never be afraid to ask for help from your parents, older siblings, Teachers, Counselors, Mentors, and even friends. Just ask, the worst that could happen is that they can’t help.

***Directions: Free Write (Independently) Write 5 sentences about your thoughts after reading this.***

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**Best Apps for Students**

***Source: https://www.weareteachers.com/best-free-apps-for-students/***

### Forest ([iOS](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/forest-stay-focused-be-present/id866450515?mt=8" \t "_blank) / [Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=cc.forestapp&hl=en" \t "_blank))

Forest offers a creative approach to helping students focus on school work. To avoid the inevitable distraction of a nearby phone, students can use this clever app to set a certain amount of time during which they need to study. During that time, a digital plant grows. If students exit the app before the time is up, the plant will wither and die. While the free version is fully functional, the stakes are a little higher in the paid version: students can grow an entire forest and collect virtual coins, which can be used towards planting an actual tree somewhere in the world.

**Free apps for students to learn language arts:**

### Mad Libs ([iOS](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/mad-libs/id326885152?mt=8" \t "_blank) / [Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.prh.madlibs_&hl=en" \t "_blank))

Mad Libs is a classic word game that helps students practice the basic parts of speech. This fun, educational app includes a colorful interface with 21 free stories. Unlike many free apps, Mad Libs doesn’t allow third party advertising, which makes it ideal to use in an educational setting.

### GoodReads ([iOS](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/goodreads-book-recommendations-and-reviews/id355833469?mt=8" \t "_blank) / [Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.goodreads&hl=en" \t "_blank))

GoodReads offers personalized book recommendations and access to a vast community of like-minded readers. Students can keep a want-to-read list, read and write book reviews, and share book recommendations with others. We shared more ideas on using GoodReads in the classroom [here](https://www.weareteachers.com/goodreads-in-the-classroom).

### Word of the Day ([iOS](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/word-of-the-day-daily-english-dictionary-app/id987136347?mt=8" \t "_blank))

This app offers daily word-of-the-day notifications. Students can browse the database of previous words and save their favorites for easy reference later. The app also includes options for sharing via text or social media.

### Words with Friends ([iOS](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/words-with-friends-best-word-game/id804379658?mt=8" \t "_blank) / [Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.zynga.wwf2.free&hl=en" \t "_blank))

Words with Friends is one of the most popular word games out there. Like Scrabble, Words with Friends is a board game where players take turns putting letters together to form words. Students can challenge friends and family, or match themselves with other players according to skill level. In addition to providing hours of entertainment, strategy word games such as this one can also provide a variety of cognitive benefits.

**Free apps for students to learn math:**

### Photo Math Camera Calculator ([iOS](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/photomath-camera-calculator/id919087726?mt=8" \t "_blank) / [Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.microblink.photomath&hl=en" \t "_blank))

This clever app allows students to scan troublesome math problems with their camera to get colorful, step-by-step solving instructions. Though this app may have the potential for misuse, it’s helpful for students who want to check their work or get clarification on a particular step. It can also help parents brush up on their math skills to better assist their students at home.

### Free Graphing Calculator ([iOS](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/free-graphing-calculator/id378009553?mt=8" \t "_blank) / [Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.jockusch.freegraphingcalculator&hl=en" \t "_blank))

This essential calculator app features scientific and graphing calculator capabilities. It also includes a unit converter, formula reference list, term glossary, and much more.

**Free apps for students to learn science:**

### NASA ([iOS](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/nasa/id334325516?mt=8" \t "_blank) / [Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=gov.nasa&hl=en" \t "_blank))

With the NASA app, students have access to a variety of gorgeous video and image galleries, as well as updated scientific news and mission information. Students can explore NASA’s latest articles and tweets, watch live NASA TV, and even save their favorite images to use as wallpaper on their own devices.

### EarthViewer ([iOS](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/earthviewer/id590208430?mt=8" \t "_blank) / [Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=mobile.application.forfree.earth&hl=en" \t "_blank))

EarthViewer is a neat app that enables students to view and explore Earth’s history over the last 4.5 billion years. This research-based app includes interactive features and in-depth maps on concepts like continental reconstruction, sea level, and global temperature. Stunning animations, clickable details, and reference lists make this the ideal app for students who want to learn more about Earth’s dynamic history.

**Free apps for students to learn social studies:**

### iCivics: Argument Wars ([iOS](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/argument-wars/id1136055367?mt=8" \t "_blank) / [Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=air.com.filament.argumentwars&hl=en" \t "_blank))

Argument Wars is an iCivics game where students are tasked with using their persuasive abilities to argue real Supreme Court cases. Students must evaluate logic and reasoning while learning about the Constitution and landmark Supreme Court cases. In addition to Argument Wars, iCivics is responsible for several other educational apps, including Executive Command ([iOS](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/executive-command/id1084786851?mt=8" \t "_blank) / [Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.filament.icivics.executivecommand&hl=en" \t "_blank)) and Your Bill of Rights ([iOS](https://www.google.com/search?q=yiour+bill+of+rights+ios+app&rlz=1C1ASRM_enUS646US646&oq=yiour+bill+of+rights+ios+app&aqs=chrome..69i57.2232j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8" \t "_blank) / [Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=air.com.filament.icivics.dihar.bor&hl=en" \t "_blank)). With absolutely no advertising, these free apps are perfectly designed for educational use.

### Google Earth ([iOS](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/google-earth/id293622097?mt=8" \t "_blank) / [Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.google.earth&hl=en" \t "_blank))

Google Earth is an interactive app that enables students to explore the globe with a few swipes of their finger. With simple navigation and clickable details, this app allows students to easily view and learn more about any area on Earth.

**Free apps for students to practice a world language:**

### DuoLingo ([iOS](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/duolingo-learn-spanish-french-and-more/id570060128?mt=8" \t "_blank) / [Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.duolingo&hl=en" \t "_blank))

DuoLingo, named Apple’s Best iPhone App of 2013, is one of the most popular language-learning apps. DuoLingo’s lessons are great for brushing up on vocabulary and listening skills, while the recording exercises help students develop stronger speaking skills. DuoLingo currently supports 23 languages, including Spanish, French, German, Italian, English, and Portuguese.

### Google Translate ([iOS](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/google-translate/id414706506?mt=8" \t "_blank) / [Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.google.android.apps.translate&hl=en" \t "_blank))

Google Translate is a popular app with a variety of text, microphone, and camera translation features. In addition to basic text translations, students can use this powerful app to translate bilingual conversations in real-time. Students can also instantly translate text in images with the built-in camera. With the addition of offline capabilities, this app is a smart choice for students with future travel plans.

**Free apps for students to learn coding:**

### Swift Playgrounds ([iOS](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/swift-playgrounds/id908519492?mt=8" \t "_blank))

Swift Playgrounds is an iPad-only app that teaches students the programming language Swift, which is used by Apple to create apps. This colorful, user-friendly app includes clear instructions, a glossary of common coding terms, and a variety of fun and engaging levels to play. Swift Playgrounds contains no third-party advertising, and all levels are completely free.

**Free apps for students to build brain power:**

### Stop, Breathe & Think ([iOS](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/stop-breathe-think/id778848692?mt=8" \t "_blank) / [Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.stopbreathethink.app&hl=en" \t "_blank))

Stop, Breathe & Think is a mindfulness app that can help students de-stress with a series of short meditation guides. The app provides information to help students get started regardless of experience level. It also includes a mood and meditation tracker so students can easily follow their progress. Stop, Breathe & Think integrates with Apple’s native Health app, which means students can sync their meditation data with other health information like exercise and nutrition.

### Elevate ([iOS](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/elevate-brain-training-and-games/id875063456?mt=8" \t "_blank) / [Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.wonder&hl=en" \t "_blank))

Elevate, named Apple’s Best iPhone App of 2014, is a brain-training app designed to help improve attention, memory, and more. Students can train with Elevate using a variety of personalized games that target skills in writing, listening, speaking, reading, and math.

### TED ([iOS](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/ted/id376183339?mt=8" \t "_blank) / [Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.ted.android&hl=en" \t "_blank))

The TED app provides access to the entire library of official TED Talks. Students can browse featured talks, view curated playlists, or discover talks on virtually any topic of interest. Whether students are looking for inspiration or for a good laugh, there’s a TED Talk for just about any occasion. With the motto “Ideas Worth Spreading,” TED is an essential app for all age levels.

### QuizUp ([iOS](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/quizup/id718421443?mt=8" \t "_blank) / [Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.quizup.core&hl=en" \t "_blank))

This addictive, multi-player trivia game allows students to challenge friends while learning fun facts on a variety of topics.