

# HOW I BECAME AN "A" STUDENT

An Article written by the **Best Graduating Student,**  
Kaduna State University (2018)

EDEDA EMMANUEL MATTHEW

Reviewed by  
M.O YAHAYA MSc.  
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## CERTIFICATION

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Ededa is a living example of focus, determination and motivation. He lives out what he advocates. No other than him is better placed to treat this matter. He is simply an enigma.

**Dr Anthony Dadah**

Senior Lecturer and Examination Officer,  
Department of Microbiology,  
Kaduna State University, Kaduna.

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The author is a true example of the attributes and lifestyle that accompanies attaining a first class degree in Microbiology. I heartily recommend it as an invaluable read.

**Mrs. M.O Yahaya**

Lecturer, Department of Microbiology,  
Kaduna State University, Kaduna.

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“How I became an ‘A’ student” is a comprehensive story told by a student, who through hard work and dedication, has proved that nothing is impossible in life. The reader will find out that in life, nobody is to blame if one does not succeed. The writer, having dedicated his life fully to God and his faith and put into practice what he was taught about life came out as the overall best graduating student.

**Assoc. Prof. Busari Lasisi**

Senior Lecturer and Head of Department,  
Department of French,  
Kaduna State University, Kaduna.

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In this article, Ededa states issues confronting students and proffers solution to these issues. He perfectly addressed issues on bad association, discipline, exam malpractice and the misconception of being a genius without hard work. Given the quality of the issues addressed in this book, I strongly recommend this book to students at all levels of education as a guide to being academically successful.

**Assoc. Prof. (Mrs). A.A. Orukotan**

Immediate Past Head of Department.

Department of Microbiology,

Kaduna State University, Kaduna.

Ededa Emmanuel Matthew emerged the best graduating student (Kaduna State University, Kaduna). His article is a piece that contains motivational quotes to younger and upcoming undergraduate students. Read it and get inspired.

**Dr S.S.D. Mohammed**

Senior Lecturer and Head of Department,

Department of Microbiology,

Kaduna State University, Kaduna.

In this dynamic, inspiring and faith-building article, Ededa provides practical steps, proven strategies and encouragement for commanding academic results worth envying. I thereby recommend it for university aspirants and undergraduate students.

**James Matthew Afogwu**

NCE, BSc(Ed) Chemistry, (ABU, Zaria)

## DEDICATION

This article is dedicated to God Almighty, my lovely family and the Department of Microbiology, Faculty of Science, Kaduna State University, Kaduna, Nigeria.



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# Principles of Academic Success

World renowned idols in various disciplines have revealed that the fundamental requirement for trailing the blaze in any field of endeavor is having a good knowledge of the success principles in that field and putting them to work. Doing well academically has more to do with the principles adopted by a student rather than his natural level of intelligence. However, there are no clear-cut principles to academic success, but adopting the under listed principles could make an academic star of any dummy.

## 1. Vision

Vision simply refers to a clear definition of an anticipated goal or achievement. Vision does two things:

### ❖ **Triggers Motion:**

*“What keeps a car moving on the high way is simply the fact that it hasn’t reached its destination”.*

In like manner, a student with a clearly defined vision is always motivated to keep working hard in pursuit of his yet to be achieved goal. These fellows are known to

possess great level of discipline which is actually a product of their imaginative anticipation of success.

❖ **Direction & A Sense of Focus:**

*An old English adage says, "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there".*

The greatest force that distinguishes the lifestyle of a successful student from others is vision. What makes him keep awake while others are asleep, what *drives* him to the library while others are chatting, what keeps him in school while others are on vacation are all a product of vision.

To emerge an "A" student, you must truly desire it. You will have to desire to emerge an "A" student to become one; else, you will always find yourself doing things that keep you from becoming one. How could a man hit a target he cannot see?

**2. Discipline:**

*"Discipline is the soul of an army. It makes small numbers formidable, procures success to the weak, and esteem all"- George Washington*



Dr David Oyedepo describes discipline as a way of imposing rules to one's self in a bid to accomplishing a set goal. Discipline is a force that can make the most of any student, the level of his dullness (if it ever exist), notwithstanding.

A disciplined fellow is one who has gained control over his feelings. He doesn't work because he feels like; he does because he ought to. As an "A" student, I could tell how often I jump out of bed at mid night when fourteen billion cells within my skull are echoing, "Please go back to bed, the sleep isn't enough yet".

An important component of discipline is time management.

*Scholars reveal that "what you spend your time doing,  
You become"*

I have heard most fellows erroneously say, "*I fail academically because I am not born intelligent*". That is not true. It will amaze you how a third class student would be brainy enough to give a detailed historical background of his favourite football club, but still fail woefully in a simple test requiring him to name a pioneer in his field. He failed the test not because he is

a dummy; he failed because he didn't give much attention to studies as he did for his hobby.

### **3. Sacrifice:**

*“There are no shortcuts to any place worth going.*

*The level of exploit you command, is a function of the price you are willing to pay”- Beverly Sills*

Sacrifice simply means, going beyond your usual capacity, in a bid to accomplishing a higher goal. Discipline could imply studying more and sleeping less, but sacrifice could imply, not sleeping at all. During exams period, I have on several occasions worked for over 24 hours without an eye blink. To me, that is what making straight A's consistently could demand.

One of those old Sages said:

*“Success is a matter of luck, ask any failure. But ask any first class student in school, and he will let you know that it is his first class investment in studies that resulted in his first class rating in class”*

Discipline and sacrifice are two potent forces that set the pace for an academic result worth envying. All academic giants in both ancient and contemporary time emerged from the platform of sacrifice.

At this point, I will love to pause briefly to shine the spotlight on the importance of “Time out”. The cliché “all work and no play make Jack a dull boy” may appear overrated, but it is true. As important as hard work is, it is important we create time to engage in some recreational activities to let the brain relax. However, this should be kept at minimum as possible.

#### **4. Maximizing Opportunities:**

You will never emerge an “A” student if you give all attention to exams and disregard other forms of assessments (tests, practical, assignment, presentation and attendance to lectures). Good students always strive to make the most of continuous assessments to maximize the possibility of making an “A” grade. I could attribute most of my “A” grades to the back-breaking commitment I give to C.As. Because you can’t predict what may happen during exams, it is wisdom to make the most of these other forms of assessment. In one of the courses I offered in my second year, I was fortunate to have scored a 100% in the C.A Test (i.e. 40 marks). Uninterestingly, I was seriously ill during the exam and could not write well. However, what makes this tale memorable was the fact that I was fully aware

of my poor performance in the exam but was equally so sure of making an “A” grade (only 30 marks required). And of course, I made an “A”.

Another key to ensuring an excellent grade is adopting a consistent punctual and incessant attendance to lectures. I could go down the list to mention the names of these lecturers whose test and exam questions are clearly based on concepts discussed in class. Making an “A” in such courses without attendance to lectures could be likened to the impossible attempt of plucking a star from the sky.

Asking questions in areas of difficulty could save a student the trouble of spending large blocks of time searching for solution. It is important we understand that asking questions is not actually a sign of weakness as most students erroneously perceive. One of the cheapest ways to gaining understanding of difficult concepts is by asking questions where necessary. Psychologist revealed that information received as answers to asked questions are stored as long term memory in the human brain, and thus important for ensuring academic excellence.

## 5. Putting God First:

There is no doubt, many have adopted these strategies and even more, but still end up achieving only average grades and not commanding outstanding result. Ensuring a quality work with God is the only way to gaining certainty to the productivity of the above principles.

There is so much to say on the benefits of spirituality on academic success, but for the purpose of simplicity, I will just barely scratch the surface. In my little work with God, I have discovered both scripturally and experientially that a genuine intimacy with the spirit of God has two great academic benefits:

### ❖ **Strength For Strenuous Hard Work:**

*That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through*

*His Spirit in the inner man- Eph 3:16<sup>[NKJV]</sup>*

By yielding earnestly to the spirit of God, we get to this realm where the spirit quickens us with such degree of might that enables us to overcome the natural desire for excessive relaxation. It is at this point you find men working effortlessly, without struggle. This reality is practically demonstrated in the life of John Alexander

Dowie who has in some occasions worked 43 hours straight, Ben Carson (MD) who studies from 6am to 11pm daily, Dr. David Oyedepo who work a minimum of 18 hours per day. I for one can't overemphasize the level of grace I have received from God in engaging in some degree of strenuous hard work that gets even me amazed.

❖ **Quickening the Intellect:**

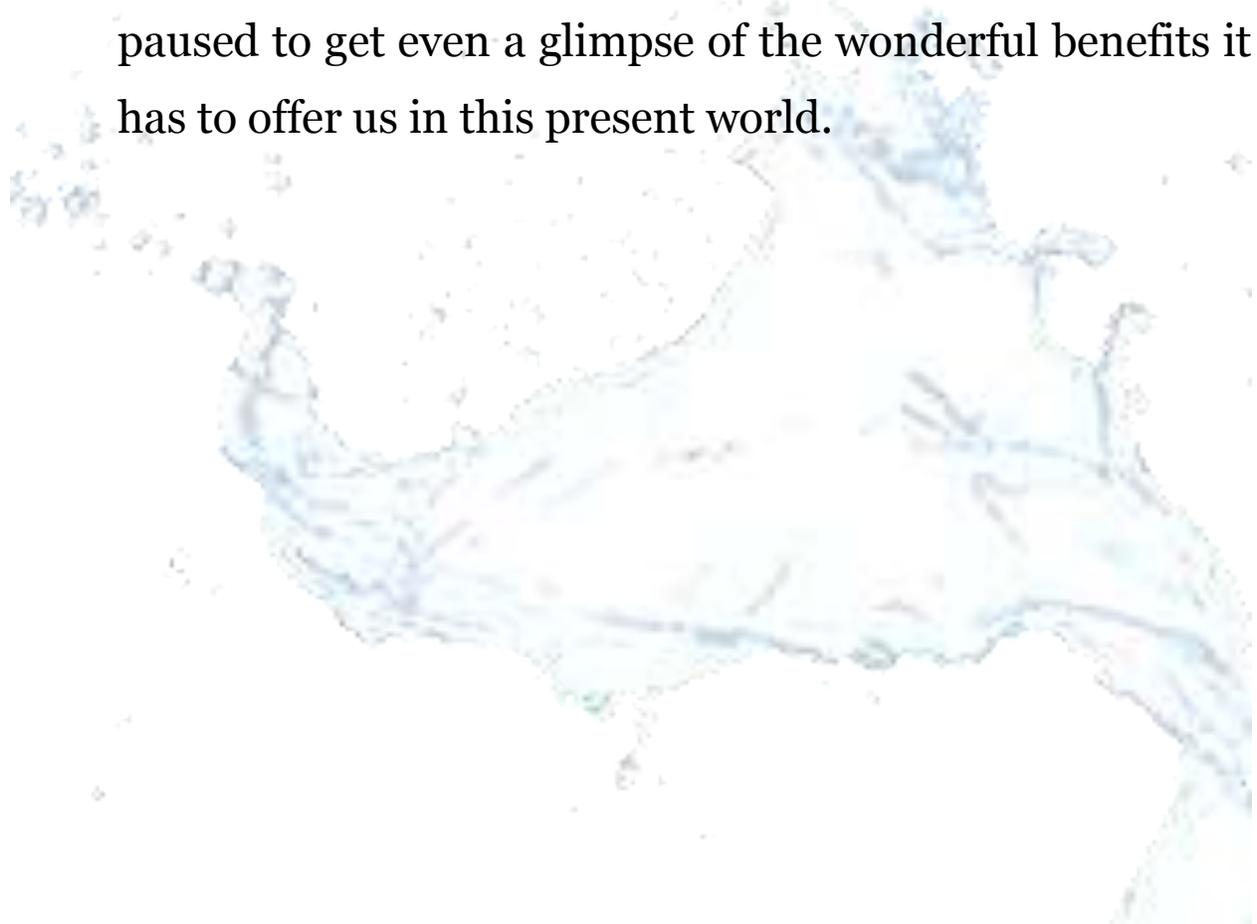
*Because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel... -Dan 5:12<sup>[RSV]</sup>*

The spirit of God at work in a man can cause him to go a thousand mile beyond his natural intellectual capacity. Please, subscribe to the infilling of the spirit of Christ. It will quicken your intellect beyond human comprehension.

James C. Maxwell, a great Scottish Mathematical Physicist, is one of these fellows who have practically demonstrated how spirituality can influence the intellectual strength of a man. Stories are often told of how his intimacy with the spirit of God caused his intellect to supernaturally blossom.

*Physical exercise has some value, but spiritual exercise is valuable in every way, because it promises life both for the present and for the future. -1 Tim 4:8 [GNT]*

It is saddening that any number of people attribute spirituality to some boring exercise targeted at just making heaven, and nothing more. They have never paused to get even a glimpse of the wonderful benefits it has to offer us in this present world.



# The 3 Big Questions

## 1. Innate Genius – *The misconception*

*“Hard work beats talent when talent doesn’t work hard. Talent is a blessing, but it can also be a curse. It becomes a curse when it makes you think you don’t need to work as hard as you ought to.”- Anonymous*

I have heard this wrong saying among many circles of students, “An innate genius needn’t study hard.” Most students gain pride in performing excellently in a course they never worked hard in, and to them, that makes them an innate genius. I may not doubt that. Personally, when I first made straight A’s in my 100 level, first semester, I wasn’t studying hard; so, I could confidently say there is nothing glorious or worthy of pride in performing excellently in a relaxed state. However, the moment I got the result, it immediately dawned on me that it might take just little work to get to the top, but it would take harder work to remain there. Due to my violent nature of study, a lot of students have referred my hard working lifestyle to be a strategy for managing weak academic strength.

In my opinion, I believe many have failed to realize that hard work is not necessarily a virtue designed to manage weakness, rather, it is meant to maximize strength. Yes, you are an innate genius, but you must always realize that there is always a level of intelligence quotient (IQ) you are yet to achieve, and this is only attainable by a consistent study life.

## **2. Association – A fortune or a misfortune**

*“If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants”- Isaac Newton.*

In my few years on campus, I have seen students climb through to the upper rungs of the academic ladder, on the contrary, I have seen even more, “celebratedly” slipping down the rungs. What made the difference in these two instances is simply the nature of association these students embrace. The great desire to satisfy youthful exuberance have caused many students to hang around other students who go round the clock chit chatting, spending large blocks of time in academic idleness.

If you would give most university students an opportunity to go in retrospect to correct a misfortune



in their first year, I believe, most would want to fix the “Bad-friendship” problem that caused them the greatest academic misfortune.

In my second year, some fine fellows whose academic status was in sad shape, developed a very close friendship with me, needless to say they experienced the greatest turn of event in their academic performance (I say this with all sense of humility and to God’s glory). One of the interesting principles of academic excellence is that by helping others get better academically, you are in concert ensuring your place in it. Psychologist and Neuroscientist have in recent studies proved that a student understand and remember information better by teaching others what he has grasped from his studies.

Every giant in every field of human endeavor emerged one by following the ones ahead of them. I followed Christiana Bamiteko (Best student in her set) with every keenness. I could literally write down her grades from first year. I committed them to memory in a bid to give greater attention to the courses she had lower grades (B’s/C’s). This is one of the secrets that helped me make straight A’s over the years.

### **3. Examination Malpractice – The motivation drainer and the veil of self-confidence.**

*“Malpractice, this big headed monster will facilitate the enthronement of a mediocre, half-baked, incompetent and corrupt workforce ranging from quack doctors and pharmacist, and will lead to massive fraud in banks, the collapse of buildings and the miscarriage of justice”- Chinedu Ugwu*

The idea of failure does not begin and end right here in school. You may get involved in several cases of malpractice and not get caught. You may in fact obtain the best grade, but the certainty of stumbling upon this failure is sure in later days of practice.

A mentality built on an undying dependence on malpractice would render a student unmotivated. It weakens one’s motivation for study and fuels the death of self-confidence.

Could you imagine having a determination to perform excellently in a tedious course without giving room for compromise? If you dare to, what comes to mind is an unquestionable determination and passion for study. I believe, this mentality to perform excellently in all courses without compromising has always been the

greatest source of my motivation for study. That has been the oil in my reading lamp.

In my second year, we were administered an impromptu test in a computer course. On this day, I was having a brain fog, resulting from the series of all-night studies I had embarked upon throughout the week. Being a logical question, requiring critical thinking, I couldn't figure out the solution due to the foggy brain, even though I had solved similar questions previously. At that instance, the seemingly good news is that the answer to the question was right in a book *smiling* at the top of my desk. Of course, I was tempted to compromise; needless to say most students around me were comfortably cheating. I was so determined never to compromise that I had to submit the dumbest sheet at the end of the exercise. However, this single act of integrity committed God's hand to my pursuit for an "A" and spurred a dangerous sense of study motivation within my being. Amazingly, at the end of the session, I was one of the only two students that made an "A" grade in the course of over 200 registered candidates. You never realize how far your intelligence and passion can take you until you dare to tear off the veil of

malpractice. Embrace the garment of self-confidence, take pleasure in it, and it will amaze you how far your intellect can go independently.

