

Planning how to win in Term One

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Holidays always feel long until they suddenly are not.

One minute you are sleeping in, watching a series late into the night and telling yourself you still have plenty of time. The next minute, someone is reminding you to set your alarm earlier. Term One is here.

It is not just another stretch of classes and tests. It is a reset button, a clean page and a quiet decision about who you want to be this year.

You may not say it out loud, but the beginning of Term One carries a mix of emotions. Excitement, pressure, hope, anxiety. You are stepping into a space where expectations feel fresh again. Teachers are energised. Classmates are curious. Everyone seems to be observing who has changed, who looks more confident and who appears ready.

And somewhere in the middle of all that, there is you.

First week energy

The first week of school has its own atmosphere. Classrooms feel cleaner. Noticeboards are neat. Even the rules sound firmer. Teachers outline expectations. You copy new timetables carefully and promise yourself you will stay organised this time.

There is something powerful about this early energy. You arrive on time. You take notes properly. You read instructions twice. For a moment, everything feels possible.

"Term One usually determines how students approach the rest of the year," says Daniel Ssekabira, deputy head teacher at Sunrise Ridge Secondary School. "The habits you build in the first few weeks often stay with you."

If you start strong, you are not just impressing anyone. You are building confidence in yourself.

Pressure to do better

Maybe last year did not go as planned. Your grades may have slipped. You may have struggled with a subject you thought you understood. Or perhaps distractions got the best of you.

Term One offers a second chance. But that fresh start can also bring pressure. You may feel like you have to prove something to your parents, teachers or even yourself. It is easy to turn that pres-

Social media comparison trap

During the holidays, your social media feeds were likely full of trips, achievements and glow ups. Now school is back and the comparison continues. Who has the latest phone, who looks different and who seems more confident.

It is easy to measure your life against curated snapshots.

"But school is not a competition of appearances," says Atukunda. "Confidence that lasts is built through effort, not likes."

Your progress, pace and focus should be personal. Focus on becoming better than you were last term.



sure into fear of failing again and fear of not keeping up.

"Pressure is not always a bad thing," says Dinavence Atukunda, a school counsellor at Real Shine Secondary School, Kungu. "The key is learning how to manage it so it pushes you forward instead of freezing you."

You do not need to transform overnight. You do not need to become the top student in every subject by midterm. What you need is steady effort. One assignment done properly, a topic revised earlier than usual means one distraction resisted.

New class, new dynamics

Term one can also mean a new class or even a new school. Walking into a space where friendships already seem formed is not easy.

The truth is that most students are adjusting, even if they pretend not to be.

That confident student laughing loudly might also be nervous. That quiet one in the corner might be hoping someone speaks to them.

If you are brave enough to say hello, things shift.

Friendships often start small from little moments such as sharing notes, borrowing a pen and discussing a confusing assignment. Over time, those small moments build trust.

"The people you spend time with will influence your focus and your goals," Ssekabira says. "Choose friends who challenge you to do better."

Moving with intention

At the beginning of the year, everyone talks about big promises, goals and resolutions. But sometimes what works better are intentions.

Instead of saying you will never procrastinate again, you might decide to start assignments earlier than you did last year. Instead of promising perfect grades, you might commit to asking questions when you do not understand.

"Students who set realistic goals are more consistent," says Samuel Okiror, a former head of academics at Riverside Secondary School. "Small improve-

ments made daily produce stronger results than extreme promises."

Write down what you want this term to look like. Not just academically, but personally. Do you want to speak more confidently in class? Join a club? Improve your time management? "Term one is your foundation," Okiror adds.

School is mentally demanding. It is also physically and emotionally draining. Early mornings, long lessons, homework and tests can quickly feel overwhelming.

If you do not manage your energy, burnout can creep in. Sleep matters. Eating properly and taking short breaks matter.

"Rest is part of productivity," Okiror says. "Students who sleep adequately concentrate better and retain more information."

It is also okay to admit when you are struggling. Asking for help does not mean you are weak. It means you are serious about improving.

"Balance your academics with activities that refresh you, sports, music and reading for fun," Okiror advises.

Facing the subject you fear

Every student has that one subject that scares them when they see it on the timetable. Avoiding it will not make it disappear.

"Approach difficult subjects differently," Ssekabira advises. "Sit closer to the front. Join a study group. Ask questions early instead of waiting until exams."

Often, fear comes from not understanding. Once you begin to understand, even slightly, your confidence grows.

"You do not have to love every subject. But you can decide not to let one subject define your ability," Ssekabira notes.

Reinvent yourself quietly

There is something powerful about the beginning of a term. It allows quiet reinvention.

Maybe last year you were easily distracted, too shy to participate. Maybe you submitted assignments late.

"You are allowed to change and you do not need to announce it. Show it through your actions. Arrive prepared, participate more and manage your time better. And even if others do not notice immediately, you will feel the difference," Atukunda recommends.

Expectations at home

Term One does not only come with school expectations. At home, there may be reminders about performance. Comparisons and questions about your future.

"That can feel heavy. Try to communicate your goals. Let your parents or guardians see your effort. When they understand that you are trying, conversations often shift from pressure to support," Ssekabira explains.

Remember, your academic journey is important, but it does not define your entire worth.

"Term One might feel long right now. The assignments, the routine and the structure after weeks of freedom. But it will move faster than you think," he observes.

Term One is not asking you to be extraordinary overnight. It is inviting you to begin. So pack your bag, set your alarm, step into the classroom ready to try.

You do not need to be perfect. You do not need to impress everyone.

"What you need is willingness," Atukunda says. "Willingness to try again, to adjust and to stay consistent even when it feels difficult."

