

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-

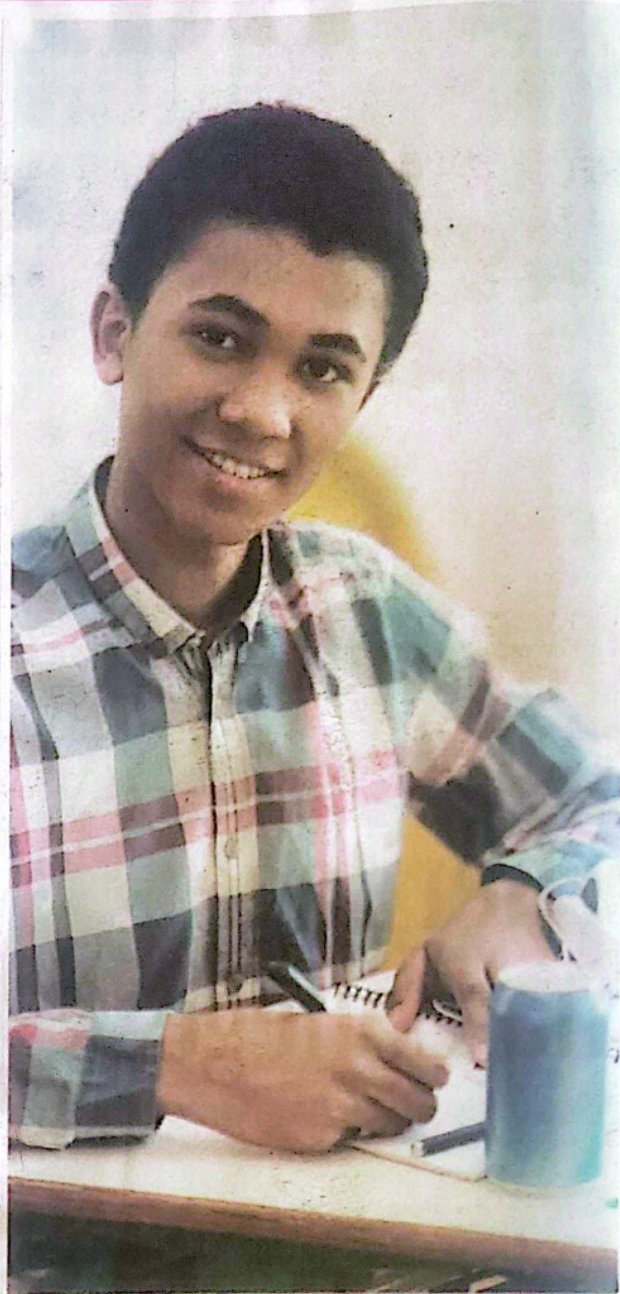
Social media comparison trap

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-

