

Managing Your Time



In this section you will be learning about the best way to get the most out of the time you spend studying. You don't want to waste a lot of time, and the better you are at spending your time wisely, the more time you will have to do other things that you want to do.

The Best Environment to Complete Homework and Revision

Everyone is slightly different, and different things help them study better, but there are some things that you should try and do to make your study environment easier to study in. Study environment means the place that you study - what it is like, how it is set up, the noise level and things like that. Here are some suggestions. Read through them. Then think about the place that you usually study. Does it have?

- ❖ A desk or table - you need a hard, flat surface to study on, especially if you are doing a lot of writing. It should be the right height for you (about the height of your elbows when you are sitting), and have a good chair so that you don't get a sore back.
- ❖ Try not to study lying down – you may find yourself dropping off to sleep – if you're sitting up at a desk you're more likely to stay on task.
- ❖ Quiet - you will not study well if there are other things that your brain will try and tune into. You should not study near a television, or radio, or where people usually talk a lot. If you are the type of person who can't study when it is totally quiet, put on a tape of CD of music without words. If there are words, you are more likely to start listening to the tape rather than studying!
- ❖ Avoid other distractions too - don't study where you will be able to watch people doing something you would rather be doing! Don't study when you are very hungry - have a snack before you start if you need to (make it a healthy one if you are trying to cut down on food). Don't choose a study time when you know you will be very tired – (if you usually sleep in, it is silly deciding you will get up early and study then. Study in the evening instead.)
- ❖ Places to put things - drawers or shelves. If you pile everything on your desk, you will easily get things mixed up and lose things. You should have a separate place for each subject or assignment so they don't get mixed up.
- ❖ Enough light - you need to be able to see clearly to study. If your desk is in a dark corner, or you study mainly at night, use a light. A little light for your desk is better than a big light that throws shadows over the desk.

Remember, Study isn't fun – so the 'sneaky' voice in your head will try to out-yell the 'I want to work voice' so you will try to avoid the task. That little voice will suggest that you're tired or hungry, that you need to go to the toilet, that you really need to Facebook your friend, that you forgot to feed the dog, that you need to clean up the floor of your room - anything to distract you from the discipline of thinking hard.

MAKING USE OF A STUDY TIMETABLE

You can use a timetable at home to help you organise your study and homework. That will help you make sure you have the time to get everything done. A study timetable should include:

- Time for homework (short term tasks and assignments).
- Time for revision of each day's lessons.
- Time to revise for tests and exams.
- Non school activities (such as basketball training, paid work)

But you might not know exactly when you will need time for assignments and exams. So a study timetable needs to be FLEXIBLE. That means it needs to be able to change from week to week if it needs to. Here is an example of a flexible study timetable:

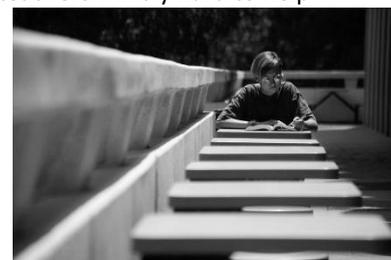
MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
4.00 - 5.30 Homework	4.00 - 6.00 Basketball training	4.00 - 5.30 Homework	4.00 - 5.30 Homework	4.00 - 5.00 Piano lesson	10.00-11.30 Assignments	3.00 - 5.00 Test revision
7.00 - 7.30 Revision	7.00 - 8.30 Homework	7.00 - 7.30 Revision	7.00 - 7.30 Revision	7.00 - 8.30 Homework	1:00 – 5:00 Work at Woolies	
7.30 – 9.00 Revise for Test	8.30 - 9.00 Revision	9-9.30 Revision or Test Revision	7.30 - 9.00 Assignments or Test study	8.30 - 9.00 Revision		

Remember, a study timetable has to work for YOU. You might have other things to do after school, television shows you like to watch some nights, work and so on. So you need to change the timetable to fit your life. If you like to watch lots of television at night, for example, you might need to do more study on the weekends, or get up in the mornings early and do it then. See how this timetable could be flexible. If you have no assignments, or tests coming up, you can have that time off. If you have an assignment, do those, if you have tests, study for them. So that time can change depending on what your needs are. Sometimes you might have more homework, and need to spend longer on that, and maybe less time on something else.

Your teachers and school will give you an idea of how much time they expect you to spend on school work at home.

If you are getting so much work you can't fit it all in during the time they say, talk to a teacher. If you have drawn up a study timetable, have worked hard to stick to it and still can't get everything done, your teachers will try hard to help you. It may be that you are doing TOO much and need to work *smart* rather than *hard*.

Usually they will say that if you work for the time they say, and if you haven't finished, stop and get your parents to sign to say how much work you did. BUT as you get older, you need to take more responsibility for your work, and organise your time better so that you can get things done. A study timetable is a good way to do that. There is a blank timetable in your diary to allow you to prepare your own. Or you could draw up a BIG one to put on your bedroom wall. Here are the steps to follow:



1. Put in any other after school and weekend activities that you have.
2. Write down how much homework you get most nights for each subject. Add that up and see how much time you need to set aside for homework. Put that in each day.
3. Revision is when you go over what you did in each subject that day. You can read through the notes you wrote down, do a few questions, and so on. If you do that every night, you will remember it a lot better and have to do less revision when it comes time for tests. It will also help you the next time you have that subject. It doesn't take long - allow 5 to 10 minutes for each period in the day.
4. Set aside some block times of at least an hour a few times a week to work on assignments or revise for tests. Photocopy the blank study timetable so that you can change the study timetable when you need to - remember it has to be flexible!

You will need to fill in the times as well, depending on what suits you - the time you get home from school, whether you have time for study in the mornings etc. Try this study timetable for a week and see how it goes. If it doesn't work well, think about what you can change and try again. The time to practise writing and sticking to a study timetable is BEFORE you need to. Try to be good at managing your time before exams come along.

DOING ASSIGNMENTS AND PROJECTS

To do an assignment or project well means that you need to be organised about how you do it. If you leave it until the last couple of nights you will not do as good a job as if you worked on it for longer.

Especially as you get older, and in higher grades, you will get more assignments that need to be done over a long period of time. Sometimes there are even bits that if you don't remember to do early on, you won't be able to finish the assignment - e.g. a Science assignment that needs you to do an experiment that will take a couple of weeks.

Here are the things you need to think about to be organised about how you do assignments:

- When is it due? How many weeks/days have you got?
- Is there anything that needs to be done first, before other things can be done?
- Is there anything that will take a long time to do?
- Do you need to go to the library or somewhere else to do research, or do you have everything that you need at home?
- Is there anything that you need to buy to do the assignment?
- Are there any special rules about how you need to present the assignment?



HOW LONG HAVE YOU GOT?

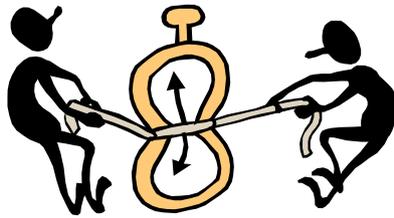
You need to know how long you have got to do the assignment and then do it “bit by bit” over the time you have. You should write a plan of what you will do each day or week so that you can get it done. Here are some examples of how you might spend your time, depending on the assignment.

- You might have two weeks to do it, and there are four questions in the assignment. You could plan to do two questions a week.
- If it is a research assignment and you have three weeks, you might plan to spend one week researching in the library and at home, one week writing up a rough copy, and one week doing the final copy.
- If you have an experiment to do and two weeks for the assignment, you might spend one week doing the experiment and one week writing it up. That way if the experiment goes wrong the first time you have the time to try it again!
- If the assignment involves working with a group, and you have four days, you might spend the first day together planning who will do what, one day working by yourselves on your part, the next day sharing your information and the last day writing it all up. There are lots of ways you can spread the work out over the time you've got. The important thing is to PLAN.

ORDER

Sometimes it is important to work out the order that the assignment needs to be done in. Here are some examples of when order might be important:

- Some questions might need to be done first, so that you can use those answers to help with the next ones.
- You might need to do some research before starting on the questions.
- You might need to do an experiment before writing it up.
- You might need to research something before you do the experiment.
- You might need to buy some things from the shops, or collect them from home before you can start the assignment.
- Some things might take a long time to do, so you need to start them first.



It is important that you think these things through when you first get the assignment so that you have the time to do everything in the right order.

SPECIAL RULES

Some assignments have special rules that you need to follow about how to present the assignment or hand it in. It is very important to follow the rules, otherwise you might lose marks.

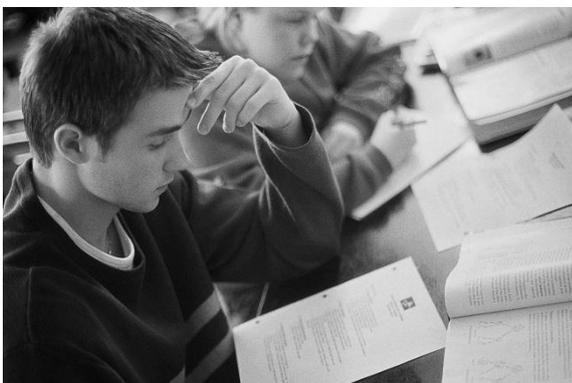
Here are some rules to look out for:

- Many assignments are given to you on an 'assignment sheet'. Read that sheet **very** carefully. Sometimes the teacher tells you **exactly** what you need to have in the final assignment to do well. When you submit the assignment, go back and check your assignment sheet, ticking off all the components as you check the list.

- Read questions very carefully and make sure your assignment answers the question. For example, if you are completing a research assignment on Egyptian Culture, there's not a lot of point in handing in an assignment about Greece. This is particularly important with essay questions – many students write a long essay, without answering the question. This can be very disappointing when the mark is low as a result.

- Using a cover sheet. Some assignments give you a special sheet that you have to fill out and attach to the front of the assignment when you hand it in. Keep it somewhere safe so that you don't lose it.

- Some assignments need to be handed in at different times. You might have an assignment that takes a whole term, but a part of it has to be handed in every few weeks so that the teacher can see that you are working on it. You might have to keep all the parts when they are given back to you, and hand them all in together at the end, so keep them safe.



- There might be rules about typing or handwriting the assignment, about what colours to use, whether to use a folder or a book, and so on. Make sure that whatever you prepare is easy to read – particularly in night light (many teachers mark at night under lights). If you use a fluorescent pen, your work may almost disappear under bad light.

- You might need to do a bibliography (a list of the books you used and who wrote them.) If you have to do a bibliography, there might be rules about how to set it out. If you are unsure about the format of a bibliography, our library has a guide sheet available – just ask the Librarians.

Some of the rules might seem silly to you, and you might not think they matter. It doesn't matter what you think – what matters is what the person who is marking it thinks!

RESEARCH OPTIONS



When doing an assignment or project, you often need to do some research. The first step is usually to go to the library and look for books on the subject. But if you want to do a really good assignment and have information a bit different from everyone else in the class, here are some research ideas:

- Books on the topic
- Encyclopaedias
- Newspapers - you can look at old newspapers at most public libraries.

- The Internet – but don't trust everything you read on the internet – and look for bias, who is web-hosting the page and what is their motivation?
- Talking to people - doing interviews. You could tape the interviews or take notes.
- Don't just use your school library - there's the local library, and libraries at TAFEs and Universities.
- CD ROMs - encyclopaedias and other information CDs.
- Magazines about the topic.
- Write to companies who work in the topic area and ask if they have any information, or if you could visit them.
- Visit art galleries, museums and so on, that have displays about the topic.

There are lots of different options. Some things won't be suitable for all assignments, so pick the things that are. The key to doing well in an assignment is to make your assignment stand out. One of the best ways to do that is to use information that is slightly different from what everyone else has. The teacher gets pretty bored if everyone has used the same three books and all the assignments seem the same - make yours a little different and the teacher will remember it. Don't forget that if you have to do a bibliography, you will have to keep a list of where you get information from.

How to Tackle Revision (some call it Study)!

Everyone tells you to revise/study, but they often neglect to tell you HOW. Here are some suggestions:

Re-read what you read

Go back over crucial information several times – preferably each night, re-read all work covered during the school day- particularly go back over handouts given out.

Read through a second time

Re-read everything (especially assignment sheets) at least twice

Underline key words

As you go through, underline the key words of each section, that way, when you read it over, you will be directed back to the important sentences/information.

Use a highlight pen (make use of the computer version on the computer) to highlight key ideas or things you don't understand

When you sit down to study have a highlight pen in your hand, be ready to highlight sections that you need to remember or need help to understand. (Note - be economical with the highlighting – if you highlight everything – you have missed the point.)

Write a summary when you finish studying a section.

When reviewing for the test/exam go back and read those summaries –they will trigger your memory of the section of work. This can be a strategy to 'speed study' before an exam/test.

Write a series of questions as you go along to test yourself with later.

When you sit down to study again, get out the previous session's questions and run through them. If you don't know the answers, re-read the section and get the answers clear before you proceed. Use these questions to test yourself before an assessment.

Keep a notebook of queries to ask the teacher about the next day.

With all the buzz of the classroom, it's easy to forget the point that you didn't understand the night before. Jot it down in a notebook (or in the day's diary space) and make sure you ask the teacher to explain it to you. Don't let it slip by or you may find that you have a 'hole' in your knowledge or skill base.

Be prepared to ask questions.

Don't be nervous of the teacher's response. They will be pleased that you are keen! If you don't 'get it' – ASK! You'd be surprised how many other people in the class want to ask the same question but are too scared to ask.

Challenge the text

If you're reading something ask questions in your head as you go along – particularly in English or Humanities subjects. Ask:

- Why is the author using this language/format/point of view?
- How do I feel about this topic? What values are being expressed? Do I agree with them?
- How does this information add to my understanding of the character/plot/setting/theme/values?
- How do I feel about this topic?
- Is this similar/different to my own experience/people I know/experiences I have had?
- Is there anyone I can ask about this (Mum/Dad/Grandpa/Nana)?
- Why is this diagram used? Does it help my understanding of the point? How does it do that?
- Where can I find more information about this topic?
- Have I read anything in the news/ seen anything on telly, about this topic?
- How does it fit into the information I already know?

In class, be prepared to listen. This will make study much easier.

That means, REALLY LISTEN! FOCUS! BE PRESENT! Not just sit there and wonder if your mobile is on silent, whether your friend is mad with you for what you said/did at recess, thinking about the way your teacher's hair sticks out over his ears, wondering what the class next door is watching/doing/talking about. Think about the topic! Listen to the little voice in your head and when it changes the topic from the class discussion, be disciplined and get it back to the lesson content.

Put your hand up and question what the teacher is saying.

Add to the discussion! Participate.

If you have an opinion, express it. If you don't have an opinion, consider why not! If you don't it's possible that you are not really listening – if you don't care you won't get involved.

Set study goals for yourself – short term or long term goals – do better with my next assignment, improve my spelling, revise essay format, learn/re-learn paragraph structure.

Use your diary – write down the tasks and make sure you check your diary to remind yourself – it's very easy to forget when the teacher says 'and finish the task for homework' as you walk out the door.

Listen for a teacher to say "this is really important" or "this will be in the test" because that's a big hint about what to study!

When given advice about something to work on – LISTEN TO IT! If your teacher says 'spelling is a real weakness for you' or 'you really didn't get the water cycle' – take that on board and DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT! Ask the teacher for advice about how to fix the problem – perhaps extra exercises, practice or study would help. Sometimes you just need to learn the rules (as in punctuation/grammar/spelling or chemical equations). Maybe you know the rules and just need to get quicker at applying them! Use these hints to guide your study plan – that way you work on the things you need to improve the most!

Most courses have a course outline – read it often. The course outline is your "road map" to success – make sure you have planned your route. This way, you can check for "road blocks" – particular content you KNOW you will find difficult or challenging – or 'detours' – sections of the work you might be absent for (away with the team on a tour) or will coincide with other activities (the Final, or your Music exams).

Every subject has a list of objectives (outcomes) in the course – make sure you KNOW what you are meant to be learning.

- each night when studying, tick off the objective/s/outcomes you covered in class today
- when you complete an assignment, carefully ensure you have covered the objectives/outcomes of the task
- when preparing for a test go back over the objectives/outcomes covered that term and ensure that you are meeting all of them in your study



SELF DISCIPLINE

It can be hard work making yourself completing homework and revising for tests, especially if you find school work hard. One very good way to help you study well is to reward yourself after doing it. You can choose all sorts of things - it depends what you like doing. You can write up a contract for yourself that you can try and stick to and see if it helps.

You need to think about:

- What sort of rewards will help you study (e.g. It is no use choosing food rewards if you are meant to be on a special diet, or TV rewards if you are not allowed to watch TV at that time)
- When you will reward yourself (e.g. after a certain amount of time studying, or after getting a certain amount of pages done.)
- Whether you will give yourself a better reward for working even harder than your contract says (e.g. If you decide to reward yourself with a 10 minute break every hour, you might let yourself have a whole half hour and give a friend a phone call/play some ball if you manage a whole hour and a half in one sitting -this sort of things helps you get gradually better at studying).

Here are some ideas for rewards. Some are good for after short periods of study, others might be good ways to reward yourself after finishing something really big like yearly exams:

- Food rewards
- Free time rewards - a break for a while
- Exercise rewards - going for a swim or a walk
- Phone rewards - call a friend and chat
- TV rewards - watching your favourite show
- Computer game rewards
- Have a swim
- Read a favourite book for half an hour
- Buying something
- Going to the movies
- Choosing what you want for dinner/cooking dinner
- Listening to a CD
- Sleep in on the weekend
- Playing with pets
- Pretty much anything that you enjoy doing

TOO MUCH WORK

Sometimes, no matter how carefully you plan a study timetable, and no matter how good you are at studying properly, there is just too much work for you to get done. Or sometimes, no matter how hard you try, the work is just too difficult.

If this happens, the WORST thing that you can do is pretend everything is okay. If you just ignore it, the work will not go away.

What you need to do, is talk to your teacher. If it is a problem in all your subject, talk to your pastoral carer. They will be able to work out something to help you. This might be:

- ❖ A certain length of TIME to work. For example, you might be told to work for a half an hour a night on each subject's homework. If you don't finish it in that time, you stop anyway. You might have to get a parent to sign your homework to say that you worked hard for that time.
- ❖ Different work that you can do. For example, if you don't understand the class work, you might be given some different work that will help you understand it better to do instead.

- ❖ Get help with assignments. Your teacher might help you get started on an assignment by showing you books that help, rewriting the assignment so that you can understand it better, or let you work in a group with other students so you can all help each other.
- ❖ Extra tutoring time for you, and maybe a group of other students, at lunch times or after school.
- ❖ Find a mentor to work with you/provide some tutoring.

There are lots of ideas your teachers might have to help you. But they won't know that you need help if you don't tell them. It is not a bad thing to ask for help. It does not make you look stupid. It is a very clever thing to do, and makes it look like you are working very hard and thinking things through. The silly thing to do is not to ask for help and not get the work done.

STUDY GROUPS

A great way to study is to do it with a group of other people. You can help each other because:

- Some of you will be better at some things, and other people will be good at other things. You can all help each other.
- You can motivate each other to keep studying - it is more fun to study with other people, so if you are enjoying it, you will be more likely to keep doing it. You can also plan rewards together like all going to the movies together when the exam is over.
- You can share ideas, and research resources - then you all have a bigger pool of information to use.
- You can take turns doing fun things like getting ice-cream for everyone to eat during a break.
- You can talk about the topic - talking through ideas is one of the best ways to help you understand them. But you need to take care that you do meet to STUDY, not to SOCIALISE - you should have rules about only talking about the topic except at break time and things like that. If you are good friends, it might be a good idea to get together at other times to have fun together so that study time can be just for studying.



If you want to try forming a study group you need to think through things like:

- How often do you want to get together, and when? (E.g. Saturday mornings for two and a half hours, including a half hour break).
- How many people? (2 - 4 is probably best).
- What rules will you have to help you keep studying?
- What will you study? (E.g. you might form a study group for the month before exams and study a different subject each week, or you might meet all year just to work on Maths).
- Where will you meet? (E.g. someone's house, the library, etc - will it be the same each time, or will you move around?)

It is important to get your parents to help with these plans – they need to know that you are working together and can then support your group study timetable.

IMPROVING YOUR MEMORY

Some people seem to have a really good memory without even trying. Other people really struggle to remember things. Whatever you think your memory is like, it is true that **ANYONE CAN IMPROVE THEIR MEMORY WITH PRACTISE**

It is important to improve your memory if you are going to do well at school. You need to remember the things you need if you are going to be organised. You need to remember the things you learn if you are going to study well. In this section you will learn some different techniques for improving your memory.

Everyone is different.

- ❖ Some people remember things best when they READ them.
- ❖ Some people remember things best when they WRITE them.
- ❖ Some people remember things best when they SAY them.
- ❖ Some people remember things best when they LISTEN to them
- ❖ Some people can use a mixture of ways to remember things.

Read through and try all these methods and find out what works for you. It is important to know how you remember things best so that you can use that method for studying, being organised, and learning things in class.

For example, if you are the type of person that remembers things best when you write them down, but your teacher tends to explain things to the class while they listen, you might need to start writing notes about what the teacher says as he or she says it. Or if you are the type of person who remembers things best when you listen to them, reading your textbook is probably not the best way to study for your exam - read it out loud onto tape, and listen to it instead.

ASSOCIATION

Association tricks are one of the most common and effective ways to improve your memory. They are fun and easy to learn. Here's how they work:

Your memory is like a big filing cabinet – whenever you learn something new, you pop it in there somewhere. The hard part is later remembering where you put it

Some people just shove it in anywhere like a really messy drawer. Then when they need the information it takes them a long time to find it because they have to go through everything. Other people file new pieces of information away neatly with all the other pieces about the same topic, or with something that will remind them of the information.

So the trick to improving your memory is to link pieces of information together, so that you know where to look for them. When you link pieces of information together you are *associating* them.

How does that work in practise? Let's pretend you have to remember this list of Australian Animals: Koala Lyrebird Wallaby Echidna Platypus Remember, the idea is to link that information with something else - something that you are more likely to remember. HINT - silly pictures in your head are easy to remember! So, try linking the animals with something to eat that starts with the same letter that they do: Koala - Kit Kat Lyrebird - Lollipop Wallaby - Watermelon Echidna - Eggs Platypus - Pineapple Now imagine a silly picture in your head of the animals at a party, each eating the food that is ASSOCIATED with the animal. If you had to remember them in a test, you could just think of the picture. You might remember the animals straight away, or you might remember the food. If you can just remember the food, think of the first letter of the food and that will help

you remember the animal that starts with the same letter. Other ideas: - You could have the animals wearing something that starts with the same letter. E.g. a Platypus wearing a Pullover - You could give the animals names that start with the same letter, or rhyme with them. E.g. Kylie Koala Remember, the sillier the picture, the more likely you are to remember it!

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

Some people remember things best when they say things, or hear them. If you are that sort of person, here are some ideas to try.

- ❖ Listen carefully in class rather than concentrating on writing everything down. Listen, and then write, rather than doing them both at once.
- ❖ If you get assignments written on pieces of paper, get the teacher, or someone else to explain it to you as well.
- ❖ Use audio tapes or CDs/MP3s. You can record yourself, or someone else reading the things you need to learn aloud. You can get some books on tape - check at your local library. You might even be able to tape some important classes. (But check with your teacher first to make sure it's ok with him/her) Then you can listen to the recordings rather than just reading over the notes.
- ❖ Make up songs about the things you need to learn and sing them! You can use tunes from real songs, and just make up your own words. The music will act like an association trick and give you an extra boost to remembering the information.
- ❖ Making up poems works the same way.
- ❖ Try reciting the information as you march or dance around - the rhythm is another association trick. Start by reading the information out loud as you march or dance, then gradually try and do more and more of it without looking at the paper.
- ❖ Talk over the information you learn. For your regular daily revision, try talking over what you learned in every class that day with a family member or friend.
- ❖ Form a study group with some friends to talk about the things you learn.
- ❖ Talk yourself through the things you have learned while you do other tasks like household chores or having a shower.
- ❖ If there is no one else to talk to, explain the things you have learned to a pet or a stuffed toy
- ❖ Choose "spoken" options where they appear on assignments - like giving a talk or debating rather than writing an essay.

PREPARING FOR TESTS AND EXAMS

Studying for tests and exams can be a different from doing assignments and homework. Tests and exams can be quite different from subject to subject as well.

Exam Rules

In all exams and tests, you need to practice having the right attitude, and doing the right thing. A lot of people get very stressed about big exams like the TEE. But if you practice doing the right thing in exams right from the start, then you will not be as stressed.

Here are some things that you need to remember about how to behave in tests and exams.

- Always take everything you need with you (your teacher will always tell you what to take)
- Never talk, except to the supervisor or teacher
- If you need to ask a question, put your hand up, and ask the teacher quietly when they come over.
- Never cheat or copy.

- When you have finished, check over your work quietly if there is still time left. There is a real skill in organizing your time in exams. More information is available on this topic if you are interested.
- Follow the instructions that might be different for each test or exam.
- Follow the directions by the teacher about the exam.

You need to practice proper test and exam behaviour all the time, not just in big exams. Your teacher can take marks off you, (or even not mark the paper at all) if you don't follow the rules. Then all your hard work will be wasted.

ESSAYS AND OTHER WRITTEN EXAMS

Essay exams can be the hardest to do because you have to write so much about each question. English, history, art, drama, music, economics, geography, and sometimes other subjects use essay style, or written answer exams and tests.

Here are some hints for studying for essay style exams:

- ❖ Practise writing a lot at the one time. The best way to do this is by practising essays themselves (see below), but you can also practise by writing things like letters or stories. Get your hands used to writing quickly for that long.
- ❖ Practise writing QUICKLY and NEATLY. You shouldn't print - it will take too long and you won't write enough - practise by always writing rather than printing whenever you write anything. If you need to, practice writing neatly using special writing sheets where you copy out information (even better-use information about the thing you are meant to be learning). It doesn't matter how much you know or how much you write if your teacher/examiner can't read it.
- ❖ Write lots of practise essays. Collect sample questions - old exam papers, or ask your teacher to write some for you - and practise writing answers to them. Then practise writing answers in a set period of time. This is good at helping you learn the information, but also, lots of times questions are repeated, or very similar to old exam papers.
- ❖ If you find it hard to write full essays all the time to study, write point form answers to lots of essay questions and long answers to just one or two. When you are better at it, you can go back to those point form plans and write the full essay.
- ❖ Learn to write essay plans. Essay plans are like a few quick notes to help you work out what you are going to say before you start writing. They are a good way to stay on track and avoid going off on a tangent. You will also see very quickly if you are answering the question and if you have sufficient depth.
- ❖ Learn to use a proper essay style. Your essays should have an introduction, a body and a conclusion. It is important that your style is "formal". (If you are not sure about this, ask your teacher for more information on style in essays.)
- ❖ It is important to spell correctly and use correct grammar when writing essays. Learn to spell words you will probably need and remember simple things like full stops and capitals. This is very important.

STUDY STRESS

Over recent years, people have been 'suffering from stress', have 'stressed out', and have pursued courses on 'stress management'. Stress, as the saying goes, seems to be the psychological 'flavour of the month' or year.

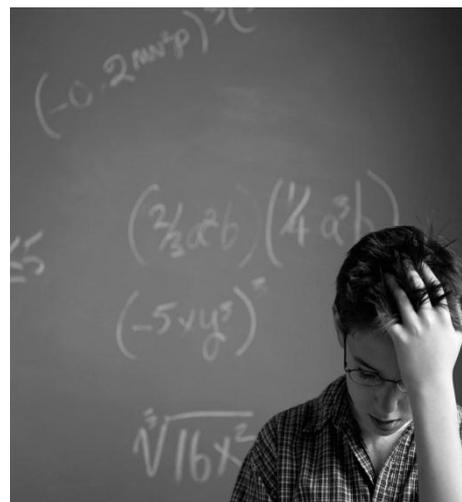
Looking at stress objectively, it can be fairly stated that if you are not stressed in some form, you are probably dead. While that might seem morbid, it does imply that some forms of stress can be positive.

Would you not feel excited or positive stress, at receiving a mark of ninety five per cent on a difficult exam? Thus, stress can affect students both positively and negatively. When circumstances push the demand levels to the extremes, we call the condition study stress.

Tom was the second eldest of four boys in a single parent family. His mother worked very long hours to ensure that her children had all the benefits of education, plus music lessons, and sport. All four children felt they owed their mother a lot and wanted to excel in what they did.

During the high school years, Tom worked very long hours at his studies and worked around the house caring for his siblings to help his mother. He was able to sustain this heavy workload without too much strain, but when he entered university, the pressure became more intense. Reading time was tripled and his assignments involved much more work. He cut down on his sleep to five or six hours to achieve more study time and drank about seven cups of coffee a day to stay alert. He frequently missed meals. Weekends were spent behind his desk working through a mountain of books. He became more remote and close friends rarely saw him out of class time. His mother became concerned when an aunt visited and remarked at how drawn and worn-out Tom looked.

While Tom thought his mother was just being overly concerned, he did agree to see a counsellor to discuss how things were going. When Tom described her workload and how he was coping with it, he tried to be strong, but his eyes became glassy and soon teary. After choking down some tears, he admitted that he was worn to a frazzle and felt that his life had become a relentless battle against the clock and the curriculum. He was pursuing high marks, but he felt as if failure was chasing him and biting at his ankles. He feared he might fail and disappoint his mother and set a bad example for his siblings. A discussion ensued on ways in which he might cope better with the workload and return to a more effective and enjoyable lifestyle.



One of the problems which Tom described was that he faced the growing mountain of work alone. Similarly, most of the work you will be asked to do will be solitary study, but there will be opportunities to work together with other classmates. In some subjects, you may be assigned to work in a student syndicate or study skills group. Generally, these are both productive and enjoyable experiences. However, co-operative learning need not be limited to study groups.

Why not work with a classmate in your most difficult subject? Michael, a student studying physics, found coping with his course to be difficult. During a casual conversation with a classmate, they both realised that they were struggling to keep pace. However, they found their discussion of some of the class topics to be very helpful. As a result of this casual meeting, they decided to meet each Thursday throughout the semester to discuss class topics over lunch. Their meetings were so productive that they continued into the pre-exam period and met more frequently for revision sessions. Each prepared one page summaries of specified topics and gave a copy of the summaries to the other.

By sharing the revision load, they both profited in two ways: they experienced less revision stress; and they gained more thorough knowledge of the study materials by exchanging ideas. As the saying goes, two heads are better than one.

Sharing the study load can be achieved in several different ways. The first step, of course, is to find one or two classmates with whom you can divide up some of the study tasks. Look for people who seem to share a keen interest in performing well. In addition to looking for individuals who are diligent and determined, you want to find people who are fun to work with. A bit of laughter and good cheer can make the dreariest of tasks more tolerable. When you have found one or two willing colleagues, consider the tasks mentioned below and see if they can be shared.

- ❖ Library research—divides up the references to be found and photocopy summaries for the team members.
- ❖ Lecture notes—when time is tight, split duties and have one person attend the lecture while the others do related jobs.
- ❖ Reference reading for classes and labs—delegate readings to group members and photocopy summaries for distribution.
- ❖ Closed reserve library readings—one person do the readings and distribute notes to others.
- ❖ Weekly meetings—to discuss the salient issues raised in the lecture over the preceding week.
- ❖ Combined revision—meets in the pre-exam period to work through distributed summaries of highly examinable concepts and topics. Thus, there are many opportunities for co-operative sharing of resources in your study pursuits. You will gain qualitatively from the many minds approach and quantitatively from considerable savings in time and energy.

Diet

'What we eat is what we are' is a familiar saying which probably stretches the truth somewhat. However, the role of diet in stress management is very important.

As in the case of Barbara presented above, copious 'cups of coffee during the long night-time study sessions would certainly have a negative effect upon her sleep. But coffee is one potential concern when stress, studying, and diet are considered. Here are some pointers as to how you can manage your diet and minimise stress:

- ❖ Eat well-balanced meals at regular intervals – eating junk with friends should be a once-in-a-while treat!
- ❖ Take care with caffeine—more than three cups a day (or two of caffeinated drinks) may cause stress responses.
- ❖ Medications can be overdone—consult your doctor if you have any questions about the strength and/or duration of the prescribed medication.
- ❖ At times of high stress, such as at exam time, students can frequently eat too much or skip meals. Be particularly careful about your diet at these times. If eating problems have been a concern for you, then see a helping professional. Problems such as anorexia and bulimia have become increasingly common, especially amongst young people. If your concern is more diet-centred, then our nurse, a nutritionist, dietitian or your doctor may be able to help with information and suggestions.

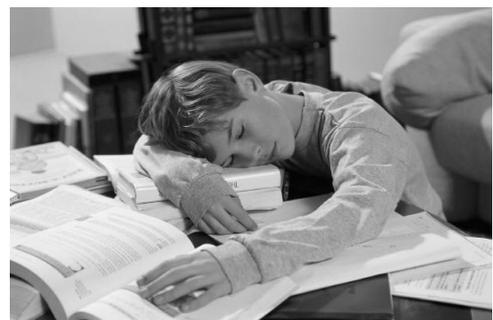


only
diet
food
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Sleep

Most students feel that their sleep time is constantly under assault. For many, as the study load increases, sleep time decreases. But of course there is a limit to how much we can cut into our sleep time.

How much sleep do you need to function both comfortably and competently? The answer depends upon you. Statistically, seven and three-quarter hours is the average amount of sleep which



research subjects have reported they need. However, the variation is considerable, ranging from three to eleven hours.

No matter how much sleep you may need at night, if that rest time gets reduced by your heavy work load, try supplementing your night-time sleep with several short catnaps during the day. Most busy people have discovered this secret and depend upon getting several brief rest periods during each day. I generally take a ten to fifteen minute nap after lunch (not during a school day) and perhaps another short nap either before or after dinner. That means the five or six hours of night-time sleep is increased during the day, at periods in the day when a brief rest is particularly helpful.

If getting to sleep is a problem, try counting from 100 back-wards when you inhale (one number per breath in) and say 'R-e-1-a-x-x-x' as you breathe out. Visualise the numbers being drawn in your mind as you say them to yourself. You will probably not get beyond 75 in the series before you have encouraged yourself to sleep.

Physical exercise

One of the best ways of getting rid of tension is to work it out of your body with regular exercise. You do not need to work your body into a profuse sweat. In fact, just walking at a brisk pace for thirty consecutive minutes three to five times a week has been found to be a very beneficial and therapeutic form of exercise.

If you can arrange for some variety and fun in the exercise program, so much the better- maybe swimming or tai chi would work for you. Ask the nurse or PE staff if you'd like some ideas. Whatever form of exercise you do, be certain to warm up thoroughly beforehand and allow sufficient cooling down exercise afterwards. You can supplement any gym-based exercise program by looking for opportunities each day to climb stairs and walk or ride a bike instead of travelling by car, bus, or train. Your goal is to promote good physical fitness in your body and at the same time burn off any stress or psychological tensions.



In summary, managing your time and dealing with stress are very important goals for serious students. Be sure to plan your time and to get to the high priority jobs each day. Know your time robbers and take preventive action.

For the stress effects, review your diet, sleep and exercise patterns and make any adjustments which you or a stress management consultant might suggest.

Practical exercises

1 Buy an exercise book and rule off fourteen pages with columns for Tasks, Priority, Time and Done. Plan your days daily and list the tasks, priorities and time estimates for completion for a two-week period. Assess your personal efficiency at the end of that daily planning period.

2 Construct a semester plan wall chart and record all mark-earning assignments. Use dotted arrow lead-up times to indicate weekly goals during the preparation period. When you complete each task or goal, give yourself a star and a reward.

3 Establish a career ideas file. Cut out articles on interesting careers and follow up any serious possibilities with further reading and interviews with people who perform the same type of job. Flick through your file when motivation is sagging.

4 If your diet and sleep are of concern, keep a diary of your meals and snacks and, as well, a note of your sleep times.

5 Discuss your fitness level with a nurse, doctor or one of the PE teachers. Develop a weekly program for improving your fitness and have a follow-up assessment in six months.

Discuss your diary notes with the nurse, your doctor or another relevant helping professional.