

SCIENCE OF STUDENT SUCCESS™

Final year

DOUGLAS BARTON EDWARD SEUNG DORJEE SUN

elevate
education

To our parents, our guiding lights,
who inspired us to guide others.

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CONTENTS

BEHIND THE SCIENCE OF STUDENT SUCCESS™	6
Why?	6
How?	6
HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE?	7
What is Student Success?	7
INTRODUCTION TO YOUR JOURNEY	8
STEP 1: DECIDE TO GO!	9
TECHNIQUE 1: BELIEVE IT AND GO FOR IT!	9
EXCUSE # 1: It's just not possible	10
EXCUSE #2: I'm just not talented enough	11
EXCUSE #3: It's too late	13
TECHNIQUE 2: Stop Saying "I Can't..."	14
The Effects of the "I Can't" Syndrome:	15
Eliminate the "I Cant's"	16
STEP 2: DECIDE ON YOUR DESTINATION	17
TECHNIQUE 3: Set Yourself Goals	17
Why We Need Goals?	18
STEP 3: PACK THE ESSENTIALS	23
TECHNIQUE 4: Find the Best Places to Study	23
Turning Your Room into a Study Engine Room	24
Other Study Locations	26
Effective Use of Switching Study Locations	28
TECHNIQUE 5: Create a Support Team	28
A Study Buddy	28
Team Pursuit Study Buddies	29
Study Groups	29
Tutors	30
School Teachers	31
Family	31
TECHNIQUE 6: Studying Smart	32
It's All About Self Management Not Time Management	32
Working to Results Not Time	33
Finding Your Zone of Effectiveness	33
Semester Planning	34
Weekly Planning	35
TECHNIQUE 7: Hard Work	35
Guides to Hard Work	1
No Short Cuts	1
Sacrifices	2

TECHNIQUE 8: Use Your Holidays to Get an Advantage	3
Summer Holidays	3
During Year 12	4
Finding What Suits You	6
Remember to Relax	6
STEP 4: GETTING AROUND	7
The Path to Becoming a Study Sensei	7
TECHNIQUE 9: Learn the Basics of a Subject	9
The Right Way to Take Notes	9
TECHNIQUE 10: Mastering the Subject	11
TECHNIQUE 11: Creating and Innovating in a Subject	15
The Steps to Becoming a Study Sensei	15
STEP 5: BLITZING THE HOTSPOTS	17
TECHNIQUE 12: Maximum Pre-Exam Preparation	17
Setting Goals for Exams	18
Using Your Time Effectively	19
Final Review of Your Notes	20
Do Past Papers	22
TECHNIQUE 13: Maximise Your Performance in the Exam Room	22
The Night Before	23
The Morning Of	23
Exam Fuel – A Decent Breakfast	24
Exam Routine	24
Starting the Exam	25
TECHNIQUE 14: Post- Exam Effectiveness	25
Leaving the Exam Room	26
Getting Your Exam Back	28
STEP 6: REST AND RELAXATION	30
TECHNIQUE 15: Monitor Your Stress	30
The Peak Stress Profile	30
TECHNIQUE 16: Lifestyle Management	32
Exercise	32
Socialise	33
Maintain a Healthy Diet	33
Time Management	34
Cultivate Inner Peace	34
Making it Count!	35
TECHNIQUE 17: Mental Management	35
Don't Make it Bigger Than it is	35
Identification and Clarification	36
Rehearsal and Visualisation	36
Imagining Relaxation	37

TECHNIQUE 18: Physical Management	38
Meditation and Yoga	38
Breathing Exercises	39
Movement	39
Power Naps	39
STEP 7: HAVE FUN & ENJOY THE JOURNEY	41
TECHNIQUE 19: Putting It All Into Perspective	41

Introduction to Your Journey

The Student Journey to a Successful final year

Behind the Science of Student Success™

So what is this thing called the Science of Student Success™? It all started with a question. A student from one of our seminars came up to us and said "I need a result over 95 to get into the course I want but I am not sure if what I am doing now will be enough to achieve my goal?" We asked her if she knew anybody who had achieved a result over 95 to which she replied "Yeah, my sister and four of her friends". We then told her to speak to every single one of these people to discover the answer to her question. At that moment it hit us! If you want to find out exactly what you have to do to achieve a certain result who better to talk to than someone who has already achieved your goal. That's why with our company Elevate Education we devoted a full year pioneering research into this thing called the Science of Student Success™.

This research has allowed us to determine the key differences between students who get results between 50 – 89, 90 – 97 and those who get 98+. However more importantly through this research we have been able to determine the exact steps top students use to get top marks.

Why?

It is our firm belief that the quickest and most effective way to achieve any kind of success is to find someone who has achieved what you want to achieve and get them to show you how to do it. Sure, you can try and do it by yourself but this would require trial and error.

Such a process takes time and time is a commodity which Final Year students don't have. More importantly the process of trial and error assumes you will make mistakes and obviously Final Year students want to make as few mistakes as possible.

Why not just remove the trial and error process and find out exactly what you need to do in order to achieve the success you want? It is a basic precept of this book that if you sow the same seeds you will reap the same rewards. This book aims to show students for the very first time what the top students did to achieve their top marks. It aims to show them a path which they can travel down whilst giving them the knowledge that this same path has already led literally hundreds of other students to success.

How?

Elevate Education has interviewed over 400 students who have completed the final year. Of those 400 students, 200 placed in the top 2% of students in the State (a TER / result of 98+). This has allowed us to determine two things:

1. Exactly what top students are doing from the start of the year to the end, from the way they set their goals, their study techniques to the way they sit their exams.

2. Exactly what it is that the top students are doing which other students are not?

This research has allowed us to distil the very best study techniques and practices, and unlike other study guides, we don't just think that these techniques are good, we actually know they are. These techniques, unlike other study skills and techniques are actually proven to work. These are the techniques that the top students used to get outstanding marks.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE?

This guide will help anyone. It will help the student who is already doing well as much as it will help the student who is struggling or who wants to do well but just can't quite get the marks they want.

This book is written as a travel guide to your high school journey. Look at it as a handbook. If you ever want to know how top students used their holidays simply flip to that section to get all the advice you need. If you want to know how the top students mastered a subject or aced an exam then turn to those sections. This book is like having 400 guides or tutors who will lead you wherever you want to go, so don't be afraid to ask them for help! If you have a question just flip to the relevant section.

Any student named in this book or referred to as a top student achieved a mark which placed them in the top 2% of their State.

These examples are not used to freak you out or intimidate you; they are used because they have proven that their practices lead to outstanding results. And yes, all of these stories are **real life stories**.

We have used them to inspire you and to remind you that these are real people, ordinary people just like you, who achieved extraordinary results.

Finally remember that everyone is different and no-one has the exact same personality. It is up to you to find the tips or techniques that best suit your personality and style. There is never just one way to do things. Often the top students went down different paths yet they still came to the same destination. So find the techniques that best suit you.

What is Student Success?

Before we set off toward "student success" there are a couple of important points to clarify. What is this "student success" we refer to throughout this book?

1. Success is about fulfillment and learning. It is about the journey not just the destination. Your success is not defined solely by your single aggregated mark at the very end!

2. Student success is not only about getting 98+. Sure this text refers a lot to students who have all achieved marks of over 98+ but this is simply because we are teaching you the techniques used by the best. Sure if you stick to these guidelines you too can achieve 98+ but that alone is not what success is!

3. Success is whatever you define it to be! Success is based on what you want and what you define as being important to you!

Don't listen to anyone else. It is up to you to think about your own journey and your own destinations and decide what you want to achieve and what you deem to be success. We cannot stress this enough! Every year there is a large number of students who achieved fantastic marks but who were not happy because they were trying to live up to someone else's definition of success! You must decide what success means to you.

4. Achieving success is not any easy process. You must extend yourself – take a gamble and push yourself, for it is only in risk that you will get reward. If you set goals that are too easy, then you never push yourself and never feel the real satisfaction of success.

5. Success happens while you are smiling too! You don't have to feel pain, discomfort or sacrifice to experience success. Have you ever noticed that the most successful people often seem to achieve success effortlessly? Success happens while you are smiling too!

Introduction to Your Journey

Whether you are just about to start your Final Year or you are already well into it, we want you to see your Final Year as a journey. Although there may be times when it doesn't feel like it, in reality there is very little difference between a journey and the Final Year of school. Think we're crazy? Have a look: A journey requires a decision to go and a destination and so does your Final Year. A journey requires that you pack certain essentials or tools which you will need along the way and it also requires that you have a mode of transport or a way to get around, all of which you will need in your Final Year.

To get your money's worth on a journey or holiday you need to know how to make the most of every opportunity, how to see and do everything there is to see and do and similarly in your Final Year of school you will want to make the most of every opportunity and try and get every mark there is on offer. Finally you need to know how to enjoy your journey, just as you need to know how to enjoy your Final Year of school.

So what we want you to do is to view your Final Year, and all the ups and downs that it entails as a journey, and we want you to view this book as your travel guide. This is a travel guide written with the help of over 400 past travellers. It is based upon their well-worn path. We have distilled their best tips and techniques into a book of 7 easy to follow steps that will help you get the most out of your high school life. This guide is designed to help you get the best results, have the most fun, with the least effort. It's your guide to making the most of what should be an amazing year long journey.

So, get ready, we are about to embark on this journey, and with commitment and luck we can get anywhere.

STEP 1: DECIDE TO GO!

It goes without saying that any journey or holiday requires a first step to be taken, and more precisely a decision to actually take that first step. If you ever ask a traveller what made them set out on their journey it is not uncommon to hear the response that they just decided to do it.

Many of us will know of people who have great dreams about one day travelling and seeing the world but for most it only ever remains a dream. They would love to get up and go, but they always have a list of excuses, which holds them back. It may be that they can't afford it, or that they don't have the time. These people end up letting excuses kill their dreams.

Those people who are travelling and having the time of their lives are doing so because of one thing. They didn't let excuses kill their dream. They decided as the Nike advertising says to "Just Do It."

The journey that you are about to undertake during your Final Year of school is no different. Like any traveller you are going to need to decide to go. Unfortunately there are many students who never embark on the journey because, like those who only dream of foreign lands, they are held back by excuses. Instead of stepping outside their comfort zone and embarking on a truly outstanding journey, they settle for second best. These people remain happy to just go through the motions, and dream what it might be like to get outstanding marks. Unfortunately they are left, just like the dreaming traveller, unfulfilled and conscious of the fact that they let a great opportunity slip by.

Those students who receive the best marks do so because they decide to just do it. These students rid themselves of the excuses, they stop saying they can't, and most importantly they believe that their journey is possible. The students who achieve the top marks, decide to go.

TECHNIQUE 1: BELIEVE IT AND GO FOR IT!

Elevate Education has the great privilege and opportunity to conduct in-school seminars where we talk to students about the journey of their last year of school. Throughout this time we have many students come us to us with a few questions. Usually the conversation goes like this: "I understand everything you have said, and sure that is applicable to most people, but it doesn't apply to me, because I just can't do it." Then they will start to list all the reasons, or rather excuses, why they can't get their goal. Here are the most common excuses we have heard:

Excuse #1: It's just not possible.

Excuse #2: I'm just not talented enough.

Excuse #3: It's too late.

These people aren't alone. We've all probably been guilty of using these excuses at one time or another, but in reality how true are they?

EXCUSE # 1: It's just not possible

Anything is possible

In every group there is always a doubter who just doesn't believe it is possible. These doubters and cynics will always exist, but do you think these are the people who are achieving their goals? I don't think so. Do you think people like Christopher Columbus, Henry Ford or Walt Disney were doubters? Of course not. But just in case you think it is impossible for YOU to get a great mark check out these students' stories. If you think you have it bad these stories may persuade you otherwise.

Great success stories

This story is about Aileen. When she woke up to go to her first day of Year 12, she wasn't feeling too well, in fact she was running a fever. As the year wore on her illness became worse. She stopped going to school at the start of March and by the end of the month was admitted to hospital. All up Aileen missed the first 5 months of school. She couldn't even sit in her bed and do any work, because her sickness sapped her of any mental strength so that she couldn't even think straight let alone study. Can you imagine missing the first 5 months of school? Imagine trying to understand a subject when you haven't even attended class.

Naturally Aileen was advised by her teachers and family not to set her sights too high. There seemed to be sense in this advice after she crashed and burned in her trials. This became a turning point though. Aileen decided she would do whatever it took to get the marks she wanted. From the trials to the final year Aileen worked with heart and passion and gave it her all. She eventually got a result of 99.10. That is just phenomenal! Aileen lost 78 days out of her school year and through sheer hard work, determination and guts got a mark better than most people would dream of, let alone a sick person who has missed half a year of school! Nothing is impossible!

Another student named Lena had a setback on a scale close to Aileen. Lena, born in the Ukraine, came to Australia in Year 10. Two years later she found herself doing the final year. Imagine coming to Australia with little English and having to write essays, read difficult texts and decipher questions with only 2 years of speaking English under your belt. At the start of Year 12, Lena decided she wanted to study Law which would require a result of over 98. Many students believe that 98 is an impossible target. Imagine aiming for it with only 2 years experience at studying English. The odds were stacked against Lena, but in spite of this she worked her butt off and she ending up getting her goal. She got a result of 98.95 and was accepted into Law at Sydney University.

Success starts with the mind

Have you heard the story of Christopher Columbus? As we all know back in Chris's day everyone believed that the world was flat. Everyone that is, but good old Chris. Chris rightly believed the world was round and therefore set out on an expedition to sail around it.

Everyone thought he was a nut case. Those closest to him tried to him talk him out of his crazy plans. They tried their best to convince him he would be sailing to his death. They told him no-one else had sailed around the world and that this was sure proof that it was impossible. Do you know why no-one before Columbus had set out to sail around the world? The reason is they didn't believe it was possible. Do you know why Columbus was the first person to sail around the world? Because he DID believe it was POSSIBLE. It is the exactly the same with the Final Year of school. Every year many students sell themselves short and decide to aim for a mark which is well below

what they are capable of getting. They sell themselves short because they simply don't believe they can get the mark they want. They are left standing on the shores, believing it isn't possible, while other students are setting out on journeys, just like Columbus, to fulfil their dreams.

A great result is not impossible

Getting the mark or rank that YOU want is not impossible. It only becomes impossible the moment you give up and stop trying. In life there are two kinds of people. There are those that tell everyone things are impossible and on the other hand there are those that are doing the impossible. As a man named Harry Emerson Fosdick once said, "The world is moving so fast these days that the man who says it can't be done is generally interrupted by the person doing it." For centuries there have been people who have defied conventional wisdom and achieved the impossible. We have already talked about Columbus. He sailed around the world which was supposedly flat. Then there were the Wright Brothers who showed the world that it was possible to fly. Despite that achievement people then thought it would be impossible to fly to the moon. There used to be sayings "That's as sure as happening as me flying to the moon" to suggest an event was impossible. Even the word "lunatic" refers to someone who thought it would be possible to fly to the moon! These naysayers were proved wrong when Mr Armstrong took a great leap for mankind on the moon. Great success stories of our time like Henry Ford and Walt Disney were also told their dreams were impossible and yet they managed to triumph.

What you need to realise now is that there is a major difference between hard and impossible. Is it hard to get really good marks? Yes, of course it is! Getting good marks is like anything else worth achieving in life, it comes at a price, and that price is hard work. If it wasn't hard everyone would be getting great marks. The Final Year of school is hard and going to get harder, but that doesn't make it impossible. There is a major difference between hard and impossible.

Is it hard to climb Mount Everest? Yes. Is it impossible? No way. There are scores of people who do it each year. If, like a good mountain climber you are willing to put in the hard work of making your way up the mountain, and scaling the obstacles that get in your way, you will find there are very few things in this life that are impossible, including getting your dream mark. Not even natural talent or lack thereof, or wasted years can hold you back should you decide what you want and be prepared to put the work in.

EXCUSE #2: I'm just not talented enough

You don't need to be born a genius

For some reason most people think that in order to be successful you also have to be naturally talented. If you are naturally talented then that's all well and good but the good news for the rest of us who aren't so talented is that natural talent is not all that important to success.

Just in case you think you are not naturally talented we want to tell you a story which may change your mind. This story is about an American who at age 31 decided to open a business. This business ended in failure. He then decided to change track and go into politics, so at the age of 32 he ran in a local government election, which he ended up losing. After this failure he decided to give business another shot and ending up failing for a second time. After three pretty big failures he was only a matter of inches from going mad. The death of his sweetheart finally pushed him too far and

as a result at the age of 36 he had a nervous breakdown.

The breakdown was just an obstacle which he soon got over and at age 38 he ran in another election. He ended up losing it. In his forties he lost 3 Congressional races. The first at age 43, the second at age 46 and the third aged 48. Still he didn't quit, he kept on plugging away, and at age 55 ran in an election for the Senate, and he lost again! Now, what happens when most of us fail? We usually give up or we go back to doing something easier. Not this guy! He was made of sterner material than most so he simply kept persisting. In fact he kept raising his standards and trying harder because aged 56 he aimed to become the Vice-President of the United States and you can guess what happened....HE FAILED.

Very few people would ever call this guy naturally talented. Maybe a naturally talented loser, or naturally talented failure, but most of us would agree he was far from being gifted. But, like all good stories, this one doesn't finish there because at age 60 this man became the President of the United States of America. His name was Abraham Lincoln. That's right, don't look away in disbelief, this guy was Abraham Lincoln. One of the most successful and influential Presidents in American history. Lincoln was an icon who changed the course of history. That man was more successful than most of us can ever dream of being and yet he was definitely NOT naturally talented.

Lincoln's story is exactly the same as many other great success stories. The more you look, the more you will realise that natural talent ain't all that important. This also applies to YOU because you don't have to be naturally talented or naturally smart in order to do well in your Final Year of school. There are numerous stories of students who were about as naturally talented as Lincoln and who still achieved amazing results. For example one of the students we interviewed was as far away from being a talented Math's student as possible. Ever since Year 7 this guy had been in the lowest Math's classes in his school.

Years of bad marks and little progress had convinced everyone around him that he just didn't have what it took to be even a half-decent mathematician. By the time he reached Year 11 he was sitting in Math's class 4 out of 5 and it was then that something weird happened. He just got sick of doing badly at Math's. He decided to create a goal of moving up to the top Math's class, and he set a deadline to achieve it by the end of the year. At that time this goal looked like an impossible dream. Despite this he set out on a quest to move his marks up. He went and got a tutor, started to ask his teachers more questions, and put in a lot more work.

Obviously things didn't change straight away. It took time, but after a while the cobwebs brushed off, and the cogs began to work and he gained momentum. Instead of just seeing Math's as a never ending stream of numeric, drivelled rubbish and symbols running like diarrhea across his page, he started to actually enjoy it. Finally the moment of truth arrived when this student had to face an exam at the end of Year 11. To his absolute delight he ended up getting 98.5 out of 99 in the exam. The story doesn't stop there though because 98.5 out of 99 equalled 99.5% and this was rounded up to 100%. This student had got 100% in a Math's exam and topped the year. All this from his lowly position in Math's class 4 out of 5 and an extremely long history of bad Math's results.

One of the most important things you can get out of this book is the realisation that you don't have to be naturally talented or a genius to get the mark you want. We could write an entire book just on stories like this of students who did well and who were never considered naturally talented.

Realise right now that no school exam is an IQ test. It is not about how smart or how naturally talented you are. Stories about people like Abe Lincoln and our Math's friend prove this. The question is not, can you do well or can you get the mark you want? The question is WILL you believe and WILL you do the work that the goal requires?

EXCUSE #3: It's too late

By the time Year 12 swings around many students awaken to a rude shock. Initially they say something like this, "*#@*" which is then followed by the lines, "Where did all the time go? What am I meant to do now?" Sometimes when you have spent the last 5 years sitting outside the Principal's office you can be forgiven for thinking that you don't have enough time to turn things around. You could be forgiven for thinking that, but you would be wrong.

There's still time

If you fit into this crowd there is always time to change. Sure you won't get the mark you want if you continue Year 12 the way you spent the last 5 years. If you are prepared to make a change now, you still have time, and if you are reading this book, then we think you have what it takes.

Just as there are heaps of stories about students who have done well without natural talent, there are a lot of stories about students who have done well despite being the bad boys and the bad girls of class.

One great example is a guy called Andrew. Half way through Year 11 Andrew was taken aside by his parents who advised him to start seriously thinking about whether he wanted to leave school or not because he would only be wasting his time doing the final year. His record from Years 7 to 11 had shown that the only thing Andrew really excelled at was not turning up at school. One sentence Andrew's mother said to him would stay with him for the next year and act as the greatest source of motivation. She said to him, "You won't even get a result over 50!" Andrew angrily replied to her, "I'll get a result over 99.00" and he then walked off while his parents looked at him like he was crazy! On that day his goal was born and he turned his study habits, his work habits and all his beliefs about school around. To his credit Andrew got a result of 99.45, proving his mother and everyone else wrong and proving in the process that there is always time to change.

Another student named Michael was in a similar boat. Up to year 12 Michael could always be seen in school hours at the "hut" in the park across from the school. It was here that he used to waste away the hours smoking. In Year 12 though, Michael suddenly disappeared from the hut. Those that remained behind thought Michael was either sick or had decided to quit school. As it would turn out Michael was actually in class for a change. At the start of Year 12, having done little work since Year 7 Michael decided to set a goal of getting into Law.

Michael managed to surprise even his closest friends with the marks he was able to achieve throughout Year 12. By the end of the year Michael had achieved his goal and got into Law and got a TER of 99.05 at the same time! Again, Michael did this even though he had wasted away 5 years of school.

It's not even too late half way through your Final Year. Remember the story of Aileen? She could only start working and studying in August, after she had recovered from illness and she still got a great mark.

So the second thing you need to realise is that as long as you are totally committed to changing your ways and doing the necessary hard work you can get the mark you want. It's not too late.

Believing in You

Its time to start believing

Stop for a minute then and think, what do all of these students we have just discussed have in common? The answer to that is, they all believed they could get the marks they wanted. They believed when other people didn't believe in them, and often they believed in themselves when they had no evidence or proof that they could actually achieve what they wanted to. In spite of this, they all believed.

What is belief? Belief is not just saying to yourself, "Well I hope that happens" or "wow it would be nice if this comes off". Belief is 100% certainty that you can achieve whatever it is you set out to achieve. This self-belief truly is the door to success. Obviously belief is not enough in itself. Sure you can believe you are going to get perfect marks, but if you don't take the actions that are needed, you can rest assured that you won't get your goal. So belief by itself is not enough, but it is a crucial first step. Success is kind of like a pyramid, and it is built on that first layer of stones called belief.

To test this idea we researched a group of final year students who got a TER/result below 90 and students who got a TER/result above 98. What we found was that the students who got a TER/result of 98+ believed in themselves significantly more than students who got a TER/result below 90. As we mentioned before, belief by itself is not enough. However believing in yourself in the first step to final year success.

We want to finish this chapter with some words from a man who says it a lot better than we can. The guy is called Napoleon Hill, a man who spent his life studying the most successful people there were. He summed up the power of success perfectly when he wrote these lines:

"If you think you are beaten, you are.
If you think you dare not, you don't.
If you like to win, but think you can't
It's almost certain that you won't.

Life's battles don't always go
To the stronger woman or man,
But sooner or later, those who win
Are those who think they can."

Napoleon Hill

TECHNIQUE 2: Stop Saying "I Can't..."

The "I Can't" Syndrome

Over the course of what is a hard and sometimes frustrating year, many students get too caught up in what is going wrong. They become jaded and start to think negatively. Usually this attitude is summed up in two words, "I can't". Often we don't even realise what we are saying, or the power these words have. We have just been conditioned to say them. For example do you ever have this happen to you? You get your Math's books out and sit down to do a bit of study. As you work through the

questions, you get stuck on this one tricky bugger, which you keep getting wrong. After a while you usually get so fed-up that you throw your book against the wall and storm out your room saying, "I can't do Math's." Sound familiar?

If that doesn't ring a bell then you might have had this happen before. You get an English essay back and you look at the mark and it is disappointing or lower than what you wanted. You say to yourself, "Doesn't matter, I can't do English" or "Doesn't matter I can't write essays." If that's not you, just take a minute and think to yourself, is there anything you say "I can't" to? In your head run through your subjects. Are there any subjects which you say you can't do, or is there anything within a subject which you say you can't do? Maybe you say to yourself that you can't manage your time, or that you can't sit down at your desk and work. Maybe you say you can't do well in exams or maybe you just can't get above a certain mark. Just think for a minute and try and recall anything you say you can't do.

The Effects of the "I Can't" Syndrome:

When someone says "I can't" 2 things happen:

- 1. You Don't Attempt.**
- 2. You Sabotage Chances of Success.**

You Don't Attempt

When you say the words "I Can't" you are expecting to fail and if you expect to fail there never seems to be much point in ever attempting. Let's pretend for a minute that you are in one of those chase scenes that you see in movies where they run along jumping from one building to another. Imagine that you were running along and you had complete certainty that if you tried to jump across you wouldn't make it and you knew that you would fall to your death. If you were convinced you would die would you jump? It is highly unlikely that you would.

It's exactly the same when you say you can't do something at school. For example if you're an "I can't do Math's" person then it is highly unlikely you will even attempt to top your class or get 90% in an exam. Instead of setting their sights as high as they can these people aim for something lower than what their true capabilities are or they aim for nothing at all, and you know what, people who aim for nothing usually have terrific success at hitting it! The point is if you think you can't, you don't attempt and instead you settle for second best.

You Sabotage Chances of Success

Having said that there are a select few people, who despite not believing, actually set out and attempt to achieve something. What happens to these people is they end up sabotaging themselves. Pretend for a minute you going into a Math's exam and as you walk in you keep saying to yourself "I can't do this, I can't do this, I am going to go crap."

Now, if you are saying these things to yourself do you think you are going to perform well? There is no way on earth that you will perform well. Again, what you are doing is expecting to fail. Unlike most other people who don't attempt, you have actually got out there to give it a go, but because you are expecting to fail you don't put in 100%. Rather than putting in your full effort you hold back and it is almost impossible to succeed when you are holding back.

There was an interview on TV, which really illustrated this point. It was an interview

with a well-known baseball player in the States. This guy used to play in the outfield and after a couple of nightmare games in which he dropped a few catches, his self-esteem and self-confidence began to plummet and after a while he created the belief that he couldn't field. The "I can't" syndrome took hold of him. He used to stand out there and pray that the ball wouldn't be hit near him, in other words he was repeating to himself, "I can't catch." Sure enough though the ball would be hit to him and because he was concentrating on dropping the ball, that's exactly what happened!

Eliminate the "I Cant's"

If you are an "I can't" person you need to take those words out of your vocabulary. This can be done by a process called re-framing.

Re-framing is simply the process of positive thinking. So, how do you do it? Pretend you are at your desk doing your Math's homework and you find yourself bogged down by problems. It is usually at this time that you would throw your book against the wall and let out the words, "I can't do Math's". Right before or after you say it, you need to automatically re-frame it by saying something like, "That's rubbish, I can do this if I work hard enough." This sounds like a pretty corny thing to do but it actually works. As long as you say the word "can't" your brain focuses on not being able to do it. However when you reframe the word "can't" to "can" like in the example above, "I can do it if I work hard enough" your brain actually begins to focus on finding ways to do it. If you make this a habit, you will find that soon enough the words "I can't" have disappeared from your vocabulary.

STEP 2: Decide on Your Destination

So, you've now got all the excuses out of the way and you decide to go for it, you tell your friends and family and then you call a cab to the airport. But wait a moment, where are you traveling to? It is not good enough to simply say that you are going; you must have a destination in mind. No-one leaves home without deciding on their destination.

Unfortunately so many students embark on their journey without ever deciding on a destination. That is they have no idea of the marks they want to achieve. In other words they just get on a random plane and wait to see where it takes them. The problem with this approach is that often the plane takes you somewhere where you don't want to go!

A traveller doesn't just know their destination though; they know precisely where they are going. They don't just hop onto a plane to Europe; they get on a plane to Paris, France. Unfortunately whilst some students do have an idea of their destination, in many cases it turns out to be too general. By analogy they get on a plane heading to Europe and find themselves 5 countries away from where they want to be. Students need to know specifically what their destination is.

What is your destination during the journey of the Final Year of school? Your destination is the marks or rank that you want to achieve and it is the university course which you want to get into. Deciding upon your destination means setting specific goals for these things. This is what the following chapter will cover.

TECHNIQUE 3: Set Yourself Goals

PAST STUDENTS AND THEIR GOALS

Lena

Lena sat the final year in 1998 and at the start of the year decided that she wanted to study Law at Sydney University. She worked out that she would need to get a rank over 98 and therefore set the goal of getting a result of 98.95. She then got a piece of paper and wrote her goal on it. She then worked out the marks she would need to get in each of her subjects in order to get her goal and wrote all these marks down on a piece of paper. She then put this paper in a bottle beside her bed, and would look at it regularly. Still Lena didn't stop there. She then got a number of A4 pages and wrote 98.95 in big writing across the page and put these all over her room so that wherever she went or sat in her room she could not avoid seeing her goal. In the end Lena achieved her goal spot on, getting 98.95. Not just that though, she actually got the exact mark in 4 out of her 5 subjects!

Celia

Celia followed a very similar system to Lena. As she started her Final Year she asked one of her sister's friends who had done really well if he had any advice for her. His advice was simply pick a goal, write it down and then look at it from time to time. She took this simple advice and acted on it. She wrote down the mark she wanted which was 98.80 put it in her bedside draw and from time to time would get it out and have a look at it. At the end of the year she fell just short of the goal but got an amazing 98.7, which for all effects and purposes was just as good.

Kwang

How many people do you think get 100 without ever aiming for that mark? Not very many. You don't get a perfect result by fluke or accident. In order to get 100 you have to aim for it. This is exactly what Kwang did, and his is an excellent case study for the power of goal setting. Kwang didn't wait until his Final Year to set his goal. He set it all the way back in Year 7. He decided right then that he wanted to get 100 in his final year. By the start of Year 12 he knew that it was possible to get 100. Other people had done it in the past so why couldn't he? He also realised that if you were going to aim, then you may as well aim high, and 100 was pretty much as high as you could go. So by the start of the final year Kwang had his sights firmly set on getting 100, and to his credit he got it.

Why We Need Goals?

Imagine what it would be like to go to watch a game of soccer or hockey only to find out that the goals had been taken out of the pitch. What would you be watching? Probably a group of players running around, kicking or hitting a ball without aim or purpose. This is exactly what the Final Year of school or life in general is like if you don't have a goal. Our research has shown that one of the key reasons students underachieve is that they don't have a clearly defined goal or target for what they want to achieve. These people are left like the soccer players on a field without goals. They spend the year running around, studying, but without aim or purpose and as a result fail to get the marks they deserve.

Goals serve two key purposes. These are:

- 1. Focus.**
- 2. Reason.**

Focus

Have you ever heard of the great French General and Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte? Before Napoleon became a General, most armies used to spread their cannons all the way along the line of attack and try to blow up the entire opposing army. This was very hard because one cannon can't do much on its own. Napoleon changed the course of war by instead of spreading his cannons out; he put all his cannons together and focused them onto one spot in the enemy's line. By firing a hundred cannons on one spot, he was able to do much more damage than he could by firing one hundred cannons on a hundred different spots. By focusing the firepower on the one spot he would blow a hole through the line and then send his cavalry through that hole to win the battle.

Napoleon did this because he understood the power of focus. He knew that your energies are far more powerful when they are concentrated than when they are spread across a range of things. That is all a goal is, it is a focus. Rather than attempting to do 20 different things with your time and spending energy on all 20 pursuits you can dedicate all that time to one thing. By channelling your time and energy on that one thing you are guaranteed to do a lot better at it.

Reason

Do you find that you are unmotivated at the moment? If you are, then it is most likely that you simply don't have a reason to do any work, and that is completely natural. After all, if we had to choose between studying and lying at the beach, most of would take the beach any day. However there are people who spend the time studying. They don't do it because they are insane, weird or because they necessarily

enjoy it. They do it because unlike everyone else they actually have a reason to do it. Let's face it; no-one does anything in life without a reason. Take for example a champion swimmer who gets up at 4.30 every morning to swim hour upon hour of laps. They don't do this because it is great fun. They do it because they have a reason or a goal, which is to one-day win a gold medal at the Olympics.

One of the people we have had the great privilege to talk to is a man named Michael Groom, the first Australian to climb the 5 highest mountains in the world. In order to achieve this, one of the things he used to do was stepping on and off milk crates for hours on end to simulate the feeling of climbing. Now, do you think this is something he did just to pass the time or have fun? No way, the only reason that he did it is because he had the compelling goal of standing on the summit of Mount Everest.

It takes a lot of hard work to do well in your Final Year. In a way it is like your own mini-Mount Everest. You can only do the hours of work that are needed if you have a compelling reason or a goal. If you don't, you will find yourself giving up halfway through the year.

Setting Your Goal

Here is an easy 6-step process to set your goals. You may want to get a piece of paper and write it out on the paper as we go.

Step 1: Identify Your Goal

This is probably the hardest step of the lot, working out exactly what you want. An easy way to do it is to work out the university course which you would like to do. This is a very effective method, since most students are doing their Final Year of school in order to get into a university course rather than just to get a random mark or rank. If you don't know what university course you would like to study then you should stop reading right now and set a goal to get some information on what university courses are on offer. Get some brochures from the university or speak to your school career adviser and see if there are any courses which may interest you. If at the moment you have a number of choices in mind but haven't picked a particular one then write all the courses down.

Once you have written the course or courses down, then find out what the highest entrance mark for that subject is. If you have a number of subjects find the highest entrance mark out of the lot. Set this as your goal, because even if you miss out on the highest mark you will keep doors open for yourself at other universities or for other courses. Then once you have worked out the highest mark, add on a little bit more, we suggest 0.5 to account for rising university entrance marks.

Step 2: Write It Down

Just in case you haven't written it down, write it down now, because a goal is not a goal unless it is written down. If your goal is not written down it is just a dream. By writing it down it you are taking the first step in making it a reality.

Step 3: Make It Specific

If you followed the actions in step 1 your goal should be specific. Do not fall into the trap that many students fall into of setting an unspecific goal. For example a lot of students set a goal of getting in the 90s. In reality that goal means nothing, because the 90s means anything from 90 to 99.99 and that is a pretty big difference. Remember that we set a goal to have focus and when we set a vague goal like this we take away our focus. Students who set a goal of getting in the 90s usually get low

nineties or high 80s and sell themselves short of the marks they could really be getting.

Another goal which a lot of students set is to do well. What on earth does that mean? "Well" could mean anything from 50 to 100. This person has no focus at all and will almost definitely underachieve. Setting a specific goal, means having an exact number like in the examples we used of Lena, Celia or Kwang. A specific goal is something like, "I want to get into Law at Melbourne University. To do this I will need a mark of 98.50". A specific goal goes down to the decimal point. It is these specifics which activate our brains. For example did you ever see this at the Olympics? Following a race when they post the results, did you ever see a score board looking like this?

1st Ian Thorpe – fast
2nd Peter Van den Hoogendband – less fast
3rd Joe Blow – less fast than these other two.

That tells us nothing at all? For all we know Thorpe may have beaten second place by an hour. These results are so vague that they tell us nothing about the race and our brains can't make sense of it. Once the specific times are put up we can make sense of it. We can tell that it was a fast race and if Thorpe won the race by 0.01 seconds we know it was close. Our brain only makes sense of specifics. If your goal is not specific then go back now and change it.

Step 4: Write Down Your Reasons

Often people never achieve their goals because they don't have a compelling reason. Often this happens when students just pick a random number for their goal, for example setting a goal of getting 96 and having absolutely no reason for it. Usually these people get half way through the year and ask themselves why they are working so hard for something that they don't even want. To have a compelling goal you need a compelling reason. These are some good examples of compelling reasons which we have got from students:

- I really want to study Commerce at university.
- I want to become a Vet and therefore need to get into Veterinary Science.
- I want to feel the self-satisfaction of pushing myself hard and showing myself what I can do when I put my mind to it.
- I want to prove to myself and to my parents what I am really capable of.

These are reasons that are not so compelling:

- It would probably be good if I did it.
- My parents want me to study it.

Try to make your reasons as detailed as possible. The more detailed they are then the more compelling your goal will be.

Step 5: Pricing Your Goal

I am sure you have all heard your parents say this before, "Nothing comes for free." Without sounding like your parents, there is a lot of truth in this. Obviously you don't get a good mark without doing anything. In order to do well you are going to have to give some things up. For example in order to do well you may need to do on average 4 hours work a night. This means you lose the ability to do other things in that time. So for example you may have to cut down on the amount of TV you watch each night, or the amount you talk on the phone. This is the price you may have to pay for your

goal. You may want to write down how much time you are committed to working each night. By committing to it now, you know that each hour you work is taking you closer to your goal.

Step 6: Identify the Obstacles to Your Goal

A goal is not a goal without obstacles. Achieving a goal without an obstacle is like climbing a flat mountain. There is no challenge and as a result no satisfaction. The path to your goal is like a hurdles race, you have to keep jumping or climbing over obstacles to get to the finish line. The problem is people often expect their journey just to be a straight sprint, they don't expect the hurdles and once they reach one they get dismayed or disillusioned and give up.

If you can be guaranteed to hit obstacles then surely the best thing to do is to work out how you can deal with them before they crop up. By doing this you will be prepared when you hit them. You won't be surprised and you will have a plan up your sleeve. Here are some examples of obstacles that students hit.

- Bad results in an exam
- Procrastination
- Stress
- Self-doubt

Take a few minutes to think about some of the obstacles that you may face, and then write them down. Having written them down then take another few minutes to brainstorm some ways in which you may deal with these problems.

Step 7: Experience Your Final Destination

If you were going to go on a holiday overseas and you needed to work to get the money to do it, one of the things that would motivate you to go and do the hours of hard work would be the very thought of being overseas. Every time you got bored or frustrated the very thought or picture of being in a foreign country standing on the Eiffel Tower or lying on a beach in Thailand would motivate and inspire you through your problems.

It is exactly the same with study. The thought of your final destination is a great motivator. Take a minute and think about the very first thing you would see or do when you achieve your goal. You may picture yourself opening up the letter or looking on the internet to find you got the result you wanted. You may picture yourself celebrating and going crazy with your friends, taking a well earned break or holiday or you may picture yourself at the university of your choice. Think about the first thing you would see when you achieved your goal and think about the first thing you would do and then write them down. Again, try and put it in as much detail as possible.

Now You Have a Goal!

Congratulations! You now have a goal for your Final Year. Research shows that only 2-5% of people ever set goals, and now you are in that elite group which actually has a goal to work towards. Once you have written it up put it somewhere where you can constantly see it. Let your goal motivate you!

But What If I Don't Achieve My Goal?

One of the biggest concerns students have when they set a goal is not achieving it.

We are often asked what happens if you set the goal, get your hopes up and fail to get what you aimed at. The answer to that is, by setting a goal, whether you achieve it or not, you will do better than if you didn't have the goal. If you set a goal of getting 99.4 to study Law at Sydney and missed out and got 96.00 you could still do Law at most other universities in Sydney, or you have a whole heap of other courses still open to you. So the first answer is even if you don't get your goal, you will probably do much better than if you didn't have the goal in the first place. As a great poet once said, "Aim for the heavens, even if you don't get it you will be amongst the stars."

STEP TWO: Decide on Your Destination

(a) University courses:	Entrance Mark:
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

(b) Highest Entrance Mark: _____

(c) Add 0.5 to account for rising entrance requirements: _____

My Goal is:

Is my goal specific?: Yes No

My Reasons are:

(a) I am prepared to commit to _____ hours work a day.

(b) I am willing to give up:

Some of the obstacles I may face are:

The first thing I will see and the first thing I will do when I achieve my goal is:

STEP 3: Pack the Essentials

Only once you have decided to go and picked your destination, should you begin to start packing the essentials. Imagine making the decision to go to London and then just running straight out of the house to the airport without even packing anything. Imagine turning up to a cold London winter in your shorts and shirt and with no money. Without the essentials you are not going to be able to make the most of your destination.

This is what so many students do every year; they just jump straight into the year without ever getting the essentials to equip them for their journey. Part of the problem is they don't even know what essentials they need because they have never spoken to anyone who has ever been to their destination or they have never consulted a guide. The second problem is arriving at your destination with the wrong essentials. Imagine turning up to the ski fields with only your boardies or bikini and a beach towel. Sure you would still be able to do some things, but because you never packed the essentials it is unlikely you will make the most of your journey.

Again, this applies equally for most students. The essentials they pack on the Final Year are the same they have been using all the way through school even though in the past these essentials may have only ever got them average or at best decent marks. Most students never really look around to see if there are any essentials which may serve them better than the ones they have.

The essentials that you will need for your journey are certain skills and tools which will help you to be at your most productive and to get the best marks. The essentials which the following chapters will look at are:

- Finding the best environment: locations where you can maximize your productivity by finding the best study locations;
- Creating a support team: it's a long journey and if you can find people that can help and support you, as you will help and support them, everyone can do better;
- Studying Smart: have you noticed how some people seem to study less and achieve more?
- Working Hard: how hard did the top students work? and
- Holidays, weekends, free time: tips for top students on how to use your holidays and free time to get the most work done and also relax.

TECHNIQUE 4: Find the Best Places to Study

One of the essentials which all students pack is a study environment. The environment you work in will have a large effect on your productivity. Many students don't set up their environment in a way which will help them to be their most productive. Students have a great range of study locations varying from the bedroom to cafes or food courts of major shopping malls! The bedroom still remains the main place of study for most students and this chapter therefore evaluates how to set up your bedroom to get the most out of your study as well as looking at other potential study locations and how to get the most out of these places.

Turning Your Room into a Study Engine Room

If you are reading this in your room, take a minute now and look around. If you are like most high school students, the place will be a pigsty or at least on the messy side. Now these are totally acceptable living conditions for most of us, indeed many of us actually find that mess is necessary, but when it comes down to it, it really isn't conducive to good study! NOW is the time to transform your bedroom into an engine room for study. An engine room that will power you through hours of study all the way to your final destination... an outstanding mark.

Step 1: Spartan Minimalism

Let's face it; our rooms are really a treasure trove of distractions. Distractions, which will continually take your mind off the task at hand... study. You need to start cleaning your room, start boxing some of these distractions and getting them out of there. This is how one top student decided to set up his room:

"I boxed and got rid of all fluffy toys (beg your pardon – boys do have the odd fluffy Snoopy), boxed and moved all sporting equipment, except for a few balls that I would throw around when I was thinking. I also kept out one golf club which I would swing when I was thinking or verbalising an argument. I moved all magazines, irrelevant books, photo albums, clothes and junk until there was only my desk, lamp, texts and materials, my bed, some bare essentials and a place where I would lay out my towel whenever I did my crunches and push ups."

It also goes without saying you need to get rid of the greatest distraction in your room... your phones. If you have a mobile phone turn it off whenever you have to study and if you have a phone in your room, unplug it or even better, get rid of it. Become a Spartan warrior ready for study. Clean up your room, until it is bare and only has the essentials for study.

Step 2: Put Up Your Study Propaganda

One of the most effective ways to keep yourself on the ball is to surround yourself with study propaganda! This is simply motivational material, which will remind you every time you sit down at your desk why you are actually there. A study done in the US showed that people who surrounded themselves with motivational pictures or quotes actually had increased productivity! So why not do the same and use this to your advantage.

There are 4 things you may want to put up around your room:

1. Deadlines – Deadlines are always a source of motivation. They really bring you to action. Imagine if your Math's teacher handed you a Math's exam and said, "Ok you don't have to do it today, there is no rush, I just want you to do it sometime before you die." How many of us would actually go out and do it right away? Not many right! The deadline of a Math's exam motivates us to take action and this is something we can always use to our advantage. So put a list of all your deadlines or your semester plan (discussed in Technique 6) near your desk, study area, or another very visible place. Constantly seeing the most important dates and deadlines you are working towards leads you in a powerful and focused direction.
2. Goals – One of the most motivational things you can surround yourself with are your goals. In an earlier chapter we said your goals are your reasons for doing all the hard work and for spending all those hours seated in your study engine room. There will be times when you are sitting there and thinking to yourself, "Damn! What the hell am I doing here?" as some time throughout the year you are going to hit some problems. However having your goals in a visible place will give you the

encouragement to keep moving along.

Remember we talked about Lena a little while ago? Lena had her goal of 98.95 displayed all over her room as motivation for the year ahead. Whenever she hit an obstacle on the way, she would look at her goal on her wall and get even more motivated to make it happen! Display your goals above your desk at eye level where you sit. To make your goals even more compelling, put up pictures of your goal as well. For example if you want to study at Sydney University you may want to put a photo of the university there, or if you want to go travelling when you finish you may also want to put up some photos up of great places around the world. This will propel you throughout the year.

3. Inspirational Quotes – Everyone gets inspired by some well chosen words whether these words come from a guy with a blue face riding a horse raving about "Sons of Scotland" or from your family and friends. Putting inspirational quotes up around your room, serves two basic purposes:

- Encourages you to be your best.
- Keeps you strong when times are down.

Many of the students we interviewed used to write out 3 or 4 inspirational quotes, write these on a coloured piece of paper and stick it up in their room. One student even went so far as to laminate these quotes and then stick them up in the shower! You can just imagine how powerful it would be to stand in the shower as the water runs down on your back looking at your quotes, motivating you to elevate beyond the realms of your imagination! Here are some of the quotes people gave us which they found particularly inspiring:

"Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence.
Talent will not: nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius
will not: unrewarded genius is almost a proverb.
Education will not: the world is full of educated derelicts.
Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent."
Calvin Coolidge.

"Circumstances?
I make my own circumstances."
Napoleon Bonaparte.

"The true measure of greatness is not getting knocked down.
It is rising each time you fall."
Brooker T Washington.

"The only way to discover the limits of the possible
is to go beyond them into the impossible."
Arthur C Clark.

4. Motivational Pictures – Just as quotes inspire us, so do great images or photos. Some people put up photos of nature, like mountains, or animals such as eagles or lions. Other people surround themselves with photos of great or inspiring people like Michael Jordan, Muhammad Ali, Nelson Mandela and so on.

Step 3: Make Your Engine Room Comfortable

If your engine room isn't comfortable it will become very difficult to work for any

extended period of time. If it isn't comfortable you will find yourself sitting for half-an-hour at most and suddenly find yourself doing other less important things.

To make your engine room comfortable you don't need to go to Office Works and blow the budget of a big corporation. You just need to pay attention to:

- A Clean Table / Work Area.
- Fresh air.
- Sunlight.
- Make sure it is well lit at night, which means you will need a desk lamp.
- A comfortable chair. Again, it doesn't have to be a deluxe leather trimmed chair, its just needs to be comfortable enough to spend an extended period sitting in, whilst maintaining decent posture.

Step 4: Music

Music can have many effects. It can inspire, help pass time, be conducive to study or distract you. For some students, music can be a very useful tool to help them study consistently. The key to listening to music is timing. Students that did listen to music would only do so when they were doing low-powered brainwork. For example running through Math's exercises in your textbook may become a little repetitious and boring after a while and the work can be done with music on in the background. On the other hand there were times when these students had high-powered brainwork such as memorising notes or doing practice exams. During these times they would want as few distractions as possible and would turn the music off. Whatever music you want to listen to is up to you. Experiment and see what music works best for each subject.

Step 5: Weird and Quirky Things for Your Engine Room

Our research also shows that students had some entirely bizarre things that they would use to help them study. It is more than likely that many or even all of these items had nothing but psychological value, but during your Final Year you take whatever help you can get, so here are a few of the weird examples we had:

- Ear plugs – One top student named Ryan use to work with industrial ear-muffs on to prevent distractions, while another student who used to work in the library would use normal earplugs so they could ignore library distractions.
- Cap of concentration – One student always used to wear a baseball cap when he would study. He would curve the visor so he could only focus on what was straight ahead of him.
- Banzai Bandanna – Another top student would study wearing a bandanna with the Japanese characters symbolising "focus" on it. After a while he totally associated focus with this bandanna and whenever he put it on he felt like he had 120% concentration and focus.

If you have a weird or quirky thing that seems to work for you don't stop because others may laugh at you. If it helps you to get the mark you want, do it!

Other Study Locations

Not everyone finds that their room is the best place to study. Some people used a different location, or even a number of locations. Below are some of the alternative places for study, what you should look for and what you should avoid.

1. Libraries

Most students find that there are two kinds of libraries. These are the good libraries and the bad libraries. Obviously avoid the "bad library". This is usually your community library. Everybody goes there with good intentions but within days the library becomes a social hub for messing around with your friends, meeting new people and of course PICKING UP! Because your community library is usually pretty small it is hard to get away from the commotion, and unless you have self-control beyond all human proportions you will also find yourself dragged into the fun.

You can find a "good library" at any university. Many students who got outstanding results used these libraries to great effect. Most university libraries are massive and because of this it is easy to find a corner to hide away and work undisturbed. University libraries are usually very quiet and open late so you can spend most of your evening there if you choose. They also have good resources which you can use such as photocopiers and a vast number of books.

If you want to pass an entire day studying without distraction the university library is a great place to go because they are self-contained. You can do hours of undisturbed study, get out and stretch your legs and walk around the spacious grounds, sit out and relax on the grassed areas or grab a bite to eat at the uni cafes. One top student named Imre found it really motivating to go to a university library because it kept him focused on where he eventually wanted his Final Year to take him.

2. Holiday Houses

If you are lucky enough to have parents or friends who own a holiday house you are absolutely set to pull all-nighters or all-weekenders of study. You just need to grab the keys, stock up on supplies, leave all distractions (phones etc) at home and you are ready to pound out hour after hour of uninterrupted work on the weekends or during the holidays.

3. School Common Rooms

One thing that many students who got top marks had in common was effective use of free time, especially their free periods at school. Many people tend to view a free period as an opportunity to bludge or go off to Maccas for a feed. The best students used this time very wisely and would retreat to the school common room to get some work done. Sometimes the common room can be a bit of a distraction so you may want to take some earplugs with you.

4. Outside or Parks

After a long period of study all you want to do is get out into the fresh air and feel the sun on your face. Doing a bit of work outside every now and again is great for your sanity. The idea of being outside is to relax so you may want to do less intense work like, reading your text. You don't want to be outside in the sun doing really intensive work or doing high-powered brain work such as essays or practice papers.

5. Cafés

Although we have talked a lot about avoiding distraction and noise, there are times when it can be a good thing. Anyone who has studied for an extended period of time will know that sooner or later you tend to drift off. When this happens it can be great to go somewhere where there is some hustle and bustle as it can revive you and keep you going. Some students who did really well used to go to a café late at night and work over a coffee. Obviously you don't want to be working in a café for a long period, but it is a great place to revive and do a bit of work at the same time.

Effective Use of Switching Study Locations

Some of the most productive students found that if they studied in the same environment all the time they began to get restless and unproductive. They would also begin to associate those feelings to the environment they were in. As a result they would change study locations on a regular basis to give themselves some variety. This could mean simply swapping rooms in the house every time you get restless, swapping places in the library or alternatively swapping locations in general, moving from the library to your room to a café.

Your Personality

The truth is with study locations or study techniques, different methods suit different people at different times. You need to know when YOU work well at a certain location. If you are working in your room and find yourself fading, and you know at these times you would work well at a different location, CHANGE. It is that simple. Experiment and find the places that suit you best.

TECHNIQUE 5: Create a Support Team

Are you going solo or with a crew? Another essential that all students should pack is a support team. Support teams are extremely helpful because sometimes working with other people gives you a greater push than you would have by working by yourself. A great example of this is the Tour de France. At the start of the race hundreds of riders ride along in a big bunch called the Peloton. Sooner or later a rider will try breaking away, but 99 times out of 100 the Peloton will start to work together and catch the lone rider. Because of this riders try to break in groups. A group of riders will work together, and only by doing so will they be able to maintain a lead and prevent the Peloton catching them.

This is exactly what the Final Year of school is like. You can try doing all the work yourself but sooner or later you will be caught. Alternatively you can put together a support team who will work together and who will create a massive lead and never be caught. This chapter looks at some of the people you may want to include in your support team.

A Study Buddy

A study buddy is a particular person who you share notes with, who keeps you motivated and who pushes you to raise your standards. You can have a study buddy for one, or even better, all of your subjects and they don't have to be a friend. In many cases it is actually better that they aren't. The kind of person you want for a study buddy is the guy or gal who is particularly good at a certain subject. This person can be useful in a number of ways. These include:

- Sharing notes, essays and exams – If your study buddy is getting better marks than you it is likely that they have a different set of notes, a different essay writing style and different exam techniques. By comparing and discussing with your study buddy you will be able to expose yourself to many things that could help you get higher marks. Your study buddy will allow you to see where your weak points are and how you can improve upon them.
- Discuss ideas – Your study buddy may also have many different ideas and

concepts. By discussing ideas with your study buddy you may gain many new insights into the subject materials.

Team Pursuit Study Buddies

Some students may even get an entire group together instead of settling for just one study buddy. One top student would get together with a group of class mates before or after school, or they would get together on the weekend and spend entire days studying together. The reason we call it Team Pursuit Study Buddies is because a competitive but team-like effect is created. Your buddies both push and propel you to raise the bar and elevate above it. This is what a student had to say about Team Pursuit Study Buddies:

“The library would host some mammoth days when we would knock off literally 8 hours at a stretch by having 2 or 3 motivated students working solidly trying to not be the first to call for a break. When we did break for lunch we would only break until one of us would break ranks to get back to work.

Kudos would go to the most hardcore, so breaks would be short, sharp, laughing affairs, generally heckling the softie who asked for the first break. Most importantly though, would be the fact that we fed off each other’s enthusiasm and commitment. Generally as we would also be working on the same subject we would discuss any problems we might have had at breaks and tease out concepts and answers.

During the Team Pursuit Study sessions we would pre-organise times for breaks and times for restarting and stick to them. In this way the total productivity of the group was maximised.”

The key factor you must remember is that the team is only as strong as the weakest link. What usually makes Team Pursuit Study Buddies so effective is that no one wants to be the weak link. Have you noticed when you know others are depending on you, you won’t let them down as readily as if it were only yourself that you were depending on?

Similarly when you choose a group of Team Pursuit Study Buddies make sure you select people you work well with. Sometimes these may not be your best friends because the impulse to chat and laugh is too great. You may want to find the most intense people you can who are going to motivate you the most.

Study Groups

A study group is a bit different to a Team Pursuit Group in that you are not trying to push each other to do long stretches of work, but rather the group is used to bounce ideas around or discuss a certain subject. Many students find that a study group is of enormous benefit for a number of reasons:

- **Understanding:** To talk about a subject and argue your points, you must first fully understand the concepts. If you don’t understand it yourself, how can you possibly get others to? One top student named Andrew used study groups as his main study tool. When he couldn’t discuss a certain point he knew he would need to go away and do more research on it. Other students have found that using a study group actually helped increase their understanding. The more they discussed the subject material, the easier it became to understand and the better it became lodged in their memories.

- **Get new angles or ideas:** Another reason that study groups are effective is that you get exposed to new ideas or angles, which you never considered before. These new ideas can often help you get a better grade.
- **Filtering your bad points:** Often, you may have an idea or point that isn't as good as you think. By discussing it with your study group you open yourself up to criticism which may force you to evaluate your ideas and create better ones. You never really know how strong a point is until it is put under pressure. Study groups are excellent for applying that pressure.
- **Planning:** Study groups are great to plan for exams. You can sit down with your group and brainstorm what some of the possible questions could be and how you would answer them.

Andrew, the student mentioned earlier used study groups as his predominant means of study. He especially used them for English where he would get together with four friends and they would each give a different interpretation on a certain event in their text or on a certain character. After discussion, each person walked away with 4 or more different interpretations of a key event from the book.

The main purpose of your study group should be to get all the members discussing and evaluating different interpretations of the material you are studying. If possible try to get students from different classes or even from different schools, since their teachers may have given them different or really good interpretations which you can use.

Some people use study groups just before exams and others use them as regularly as once every one or two weeks. The more regularly you use study groups the more effective they are.

Tutors

Do you have one subject that you can't seem to get your head around and it drives you crazy? Quite often it is this subject which brings your marks down. If you fit into this category one of the best things you can do is get a tutor. A student who was interviewed who didn't get the mark he wanted stated that if he had a second chance to do his Final Year he would get a Math's tutor, feeling that this would have boosted his mark considerably.

A tutor is great for a number of reasons:

- **Personalised Attention:** Usually you aren't doing well in a certain subject because you don't fully understand it. Teachers have big classes to cover and can't always give you personalised assistance. A tutor is great because you can ask as many questions as you want and get answers which specifically address your problem areas.
- **They force you to work!** Students rarely enjoy subjects they are not good at. For this reason they spend the minimum amount of time or in some cases no time at all working on these bad subjects. By getting a tutor you are forced to do the work!
- **Change your Attitude:** With a tutor's help and encouragement your attitude towards a subject can totally change. You move from believing you couldn't do it to believing that it may actually be possible to get a good mark. This change in attitude

is a critical step to good marks.

Unfortunately, most students tend to believe that tutors should only be used if you are a no-hoper at a particular subject. However our research has shown that top students had more tutors than people who didn't do as well. In other words students who do well do so through the help of their tutors.

School Teachers

School teachers can also be a crucial member of your support team. Usually, behind every good student there is a good teacher. For example a student named Rebecca got her Latin Teacher on board as a member of her support team. Her teacher would give her extra readings, give her helpful advice, mark her practice papers and give feedback on areas she could improve. With all of this invaluable help from her teacher, Rebecca ended up topping Latin!

Teachers are a great source for:

- Getting extra work or information.
- Guiding you to new or good sources of information.
- Marking practice papers and giving constructive feedback.

You should also use your teachers to answer any queries or problems you may have. Most students who got top marks would use their teacher as their first point of contact if they had a question. However most average students are scared to ask their teachers questions, as they are scared of others thinking they are stupid. There is no such thing as a stupid question; there are only stupid answers that arise if you don't ask questions. Make sure you never hesitate to approach your teacher when you have a question, after all that's their job!

Always get your teacher to mark your practice papers. By getting their constructive feedback, you know what changes you need to make to improve your marks. You will also begin to learn exactly what markers are looking for when they mark a paper.

If a teacher explicitly makes themselves available for questions or help always take them up on this, because this is basically having a free tutor. For example one student had a Math's teacher who told the class in Year 12 that she would be available from 8 – 9 am every Friday morning for questions, and she would spend that hour helping anyone that was there. Not surprisingly only a few students took her up on that offer but coincidentally all those students who did make the most of the opportunity went on to top the class.

Your teachers are one of the greatest resources you have and are usually more than happy to help a student who has the passion or initiative to approach them. Those that take advantage of that help are invariably always the students who go on to get the best marks.

Family

The legendary actor and singer Dean Martin learned his lines by reciting them to his caddy while he played golf, and then getting the caddy to check if he was correct or not. Not all of us have such a helpful golf caddy but we all have a family member who will be more than willing to help us out during the biggest year of our lives. Each

member of your family is an integral member of your support team. They are great for helping you learn your notes before exams. One top student named Emily used to have her brothers and her mother test her. She would give them her study notes and get them to ask questions and check whether or not her answers were right.

TECHNIQUE 6: Studying Smart

Aim to work smarter. During their Final Year many students find themselves in a situation where they are putting in really long hours of study but never finishing all their work. The hard work means nothing because they always seem to be falling behind. The only thing that ends up happening to these students is that they become more stressed. The problem that these students face is that they are working hard, but they are not working smart. Top students know how to use their time effectively in order to not only complete all their work but to also do the maximum amount of work in the minimum amount of time.

It's All About Self Management Not Time Management

The average student thinks that in order for them to do more work and become more efficient in their studies they have to manage time. The only problem is they don't realise they have absolutely no control over time. Time is a constant, and no matter what happens, time will always keep ticking by. Students who try to take on time, by trying to beat the clock will sooner or later lose, and what's worse, get totally stressed out in the process.

Meet George, a student who tries to manage time...

George comes home after a long day at school and knows he has a lot of homework to finish before the end of the night. He looks at his watch. It's 4:05pm. Now, George like many of us likes to start fresh when it comes to homework and thinks he is more productive if he starts studying on the hour. Without hesitation he decides to start studying at 5:00pm and watches TV to pass time. He sits down in his favourite seat and begins to watch a kid's nature show and because George is not a procrastinator, he convinces himself that the TV show is of much benefit to his overall education. The program finishes at 4:59 and he decides to turn it off and start studying now, as planned.

However on the way towards his bedroom George feels a sudden rush of hunger and wanders into the kitchen. He makes himself a little snack and then proceeds to his desk. He looks at his watch. It is now 5:07pm. He now convinces himself that starting on the half-hour would be the logical thing to do. Not knowing what to do he decides to go to the computer and check his email. Whilst on email he starts to get engaged in chatting to his friends via instant messenger. What he thought would only take 30 minutes has taken him past 6 o'clock. It's now dinnertime. He sits down and decides to have a quick dinner, as he is feeling guilty about being 2 hours behind schedule. He crams all the food in and slowly but surely the stomach pains begin. He decides to sit and watch TV for 10 minutes to aid his digestion and before he knows it he falls asleep. Another productive DAY!

Have you ever done a George? What you have to realise is the only thing that you can only manage is YOURSELF. What you have to do is learn to manage yourself around time in the most effective way. The one thing that could have made George follow through on his initial decision is self management. This is the ability to make

decisions and choices and act in accordance with them. Our research clearly showed that students who got top marks were much more disciplined than those students who did not. It's that simple. Students who achieved top marks all exercised self-management.

From our research there are four major things that students do to help themselves follow through on their decisions.

- 1. Working to Results Not Time**
- 2. Finding Your Zone of Effectiveness**
- 3. Semester Planning**
- 4. Weekly Planning**

Working to Results Not Time

Top students never sit down to do a certain time slot of work. They sit down to get a certain amount of work done. Top students work to achieve a result, not to clock up time. The amount of time they spend working is secondary to the amount of work they get done. A top student therefore may do two hours of study, not because they thought that would be a good amount of time, but because it took them 2 hours to complete the work they had designated themselves.

One of the most vital flaws in planning study is when students aim for a certain amount of time instead of a certain amount of results. For example they may plan to do 2 hours of English study however the 2 hours they spend may not amount to much at all. Instead of planning for time, students who understand the concept of self-management plan for results.

Planning for results is different in that time should not be a major consideration. What you should be doing is focusing all your energies into achieving a certain outcome. Instead of sitting at your desk for 2 hours and doing unrelated study, planning for results forces you to take actions that will be relevant and time effective.

One example was a guy called Stav. Before Stav started studying he used to write down what he wanted to achieve before the end of the day. For example he may have written down:

Take notes on section 1 in History text
Complete section 3 exercises for Math's and
Do a practice essay for English.

He found that by writing down what had to be done it was easier to maintain focus and self-discipline, as he knew exactly what had to be done.

Once Stav had finished this list he would then put a number next to each task designating the task's importance. By following this process of prioritisation he knew exactly what order he had to move through the tasks. The result was that Stav always got the most important work completed first.

Whenever you sit down, set a goal of what work you want to complete and then put these tasks in an order of importance. Know that you are working to complete that task and not to sit there for x number of hours.

Finding Your Zone of Effectiveness

Every single student has a different zone of effectiveness. In other words when they are most productive. Some students find that early mornings are the easiest to concentrate whilst others find that they work at their best after midnight. What you have to do is plan your study around your zone of effectiveness.

What you should try to do is plan your low-brain activities when you are not in your zone of effectiveness and plan your high-brain activities when you are in the zone.

An example of this was a girl named Maria. Maria's zone of effectiveness was during 9:00pm-12:00am. Maria understood that even if she started her study at 4:00pm she would not be very effective. So she would relax and watch TV until 7:00pm. From 7:00pm she still found it difficult to concentrate so she used to study subjects she found easy during this time. In her case she would do Math's questions from 7:00pm until 9:00pm on most evenings. When 9:00pm approached the house quieted down and during this time she would write her notes for all her other subjects.

Furthermore every day is different! What you will find is that each day will present you with an array of unexpected things. Your job is to adapt daily to be the most efficient you can be. Some days you will feel up and others down. Some days you may have an important event or crisis. Life is unexpected and for that reason it is beautiful. However you have to learn to adapt on a daily basis to get the most out of each day.

An example of this is a guy called Mark. Mark used to change his daily plans to reflect how he was feeling. If he felt a little tired and low on energy he would shorten his study session. However if he was feeling really pumped he would add more to his daily schedule.

Semester Planning

Many students find that knowing key dates for exams and assessments is a great motivator. The only problem is most students write down all the key dates in their school diary at the start of the year and after that never use or look at their diary on a regular basis.

A classic example of this was a guy called Mike. Mike found it very easy to write down his exam and assignment dates in his diary, however he always forgot to look at it every day. One Monday morning he arrived at school at 8:45am ready for his first period which started at 9:00am. His first class was Geography. Having arrived a little early, Michael took out his diary and glanced over the week ahead. A sudden rush of adrenaline spread across his whole body. He couldn't believe his eyes. It read "Geography assignment due". He quickly packed up this bag and ran frantically around the school looking for someone who had done the assignment.

It wasn't long before he found James, one of the brightest kids at the school. James was in another Geography class to Michael and luckily for him James had done his assignment early and had already got it back from the teacher. Michael was desperate and he wouldn't leave James alone until he gave over his assignment. It was now 8:57am. Michael had 3 minutes to do something. In this time he came up with a brilliant idea...liquid paper. He sat down for the next 3 minutes and liquid papered all the teachers ticks and comments from James's assignment. By 9:00am the liquid paper was dry and Michael was ready to hand the assignment in. Later that week Michael was asked to stay back after class by his geography teacher. Here he experienced first hand the feeling of getting ZERO.

To stop this problem from happening to you make sure you have a semester planner in a place where you see it on a regular basis. It is crucial that you can see the whole semester ahead of you. One great way to create a semester planner is to get an A3 piece of paper and draw up a table with weeks on the top and subjects on the sides (see diagram below). Mark all the key dates for exams and assessments. After you have done this, all you have to do is stick it above your study area so you see it everyday.

	2 April	9 April	16 April	23 April
Geography	Test		Assignment	
Maths		Exam	Assignment	
English				
Biology	Exam			
Art		Assessment		

ASSIGNMENT
ASSIGNMENT
ASSIGNMENT
EXAM EXAM

TEST
ASSIGNMENT
ASSIGNMENT
ASSIGNMENT

Weekly Planning

After your semester plan has been organised you should get into the habit of planning your week. Many top students would sit down on Sunday night and plan what they wanted to achieve in the week ahead. Although they would not always achieve everything in this plan, most students found that by taking the time to think about what they wanted to achieve in the week, they felt more directed and motivated. This process was usually as simple as writing down a list of things under each subject on a scrap piece of paper.

Often the best students would put aside one task that was absolutely vital for each subject. This was never homework, an assignment or something that a teacher set. It would always be something which they set for themselves, something which would make a difference to their preparation. For some students it may have just been doing a practice paper, for other students it would have been doing an extra reading which they had got from their teacher, or going to the library to do some independent research. They would then commit to doing this one activity per subject. Once all these little activities were added up these students would end up having a major advantage. Imagine how well placed you would be if you did a practice exam paper per subject each week!

TECHNIQUE 7: Hard Work

Implicit in working smart is working hard. Picture your Final Year like this; your goals and your study techniques are the bricks, which make up a house. The hard work on the other hand is the cement or mortar which pulls it all together and makes it a strong and sturdy structure. There are no short cuts in the Final Year, in most cases the mark you get corresponds to the work you put in. This chapter serves as a guide to how hard the top students are working.

How Hard Are Some Students Willing to Work?

Most of the students we interviewed stated that they believed that the key factor in getting the mark they wanted would not be intelligence but rather hard work. For them the key question was, were they prepared to put in the time it would take to get a good mark? All of these students knew that only by working hard could they have the level of preparation they would need in an exam. This one belief, that hard work was central to success led students to put in the long, hard hours of work. Read what one student said when he remembered his work ethic:

"In Year 12 I started really becoming serious about my final year. I became so serious that I was treating it like a job. I would keep a time sheet and pound out those good-for-nothing-hours like I was being paid. I wanted to beat the amount of hours I logged on every week and would feel a great sense of achievement every time I would tally up the hours in a day I had studied and saw I had broken the 10 hour mark. One day I distinctly remember how chuffed I was when I rolled up in bed noting that I had chalked up a fantastic 21 hour day."

Guides to Hard Work

Our research shows that on an average school night or an average weekend when there were no assessments a student who got top marks would be doing the following amount of work:

- Average school night – 2 to 5 hours per night. (Including homework)
- Average weekend – 3 to 6 hours per day. (Including homework)

To give you a better idea you can see what specific students did:

Name	Hrs on weekday	Hrs on weekend	TER/result
Charmaine	2-3 hours	4.5 hours	99.00
Rebecca	4 hours	8 hours	98.95
Yvette	4.5 hours	8 hours	98.6
Ryan	3 hours	4 hours	99.75

Many students also had very simple rules in place like never going to bed if their homework wasn't finished. In some cases students would exceed these hours and be up to 1 in the morning to make sure they got the work done. One student named Kristin worked according to this system because she realised that if she let her work build up she would get too far behind and not be able to catch up.

This amount of work would increase during exams. Before exams some students were doing up to 8 hours a day. Remember though, spending 8 hours at your desk does not necessarily equate to 8 hours of quality work. It is not about the hours themselves, it is about what is achieved in the hours.

No Short Cuts

Top students all realise that there are no short cuts in your Final Year. The only way to be truly prepared is by working hard and doing all the necessary work. Often students attempt to cut corners by learning only parts of the syllabus and then hope that they are asked a question on those parts that they have studied. What these students are really doing is relying on luck, and do you know what happens if you rely

on luck. Sooner or later your luck deserts you!

One student we interviewed attempted to rely on this system of short cuts. In English rather than learning all the poems they were being examined on, he decided to learn only three. This seemed a pretty rational approach since in the past no exam had ever asked a question on a specific poem. As fate would have it, when exams came around he opened his paper to find out that this would be the very first year they asked a question on a specific poem! To make matters worse he hadn't even read the poem. He didn't have a clue what it was about and couldn't even bullcrap his way through the exam. He ended up searching through the paper to find something he might be able to answer and ended up eventually answering on a play he had studied in Year 10! That's what happens to students who cut corners... it comes back to bite them!

The best students all realise that if you are going to do well in an exam you have to be able to answer any question you are asked. No matter how hard, tricky or obscure the question is you need to be able to put an intelligent answer together. Indeed, many of the best students are actually hoping or praying to get a buggger of a question, because they know that most other students won't be able to handle it. The only way students can answer these types of questions is by being totally prepared. So well prepared that nothing catches them off guard.

For example one student named Andrew read his English text 20 times. He knew it in such detail that he was able to put together the answer of a lifetime in his final exam whilst other students walked out talking about what an impossible question it was. There are NO short cuts. To do the BEST, you have to be the BEST prepared, and the only way to be the BEST is to work hard.

Sacrifices

As we talked about briefly in the chapter on goals, when you work hard you also make sacrifices. After all there are other things which you could be doing rather than studying, but by choosing to study, you forgo those other activities. What exactly are the top students sacrificing?

The answer is not all that much. Obviously if you are doing four hours work a night you aren't going to be watching all that much TV. But in the big scheme of things is that much of a sacrifice? As we will discuss, none of the top students who remained sane by the end of the year gave up their social life either.

The sacrifices that the top students make are usually occasional. When they know that they have a lot of work to do, or they have exams coming up they will cut back on going out. This only becomes a sacrifice when other students are out, but this short-term loss is what leads to long-term gain. Usually it may only mean missing one party in order to get fully prepared or catch up.

A very good example of this was a student named Michael. There were some nights when Michael wouldn't be out with his friends. These nights were not very often though. Whenever his work piled up or he was preparing for an exam he would sacrifice one night out in order to make sure he was happy with the amount of work he had done. Michael's friends paid him out quite a bit about the fact that he may have missed a party, but in the end Michael ended beating all his friends by a fair margin. It was those occasional sacrifices that Michael made which helped him to get the mark he needed.

This issue of going out and socialising during your Final Year will be dealt with in more depth in the chapter on stress management.

"The heights by great people reached and kept;
were not gained by sudden flight.
But they while their companions slept;
were toiling upward through the night".

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

TECHNIQUE 8: Use Your Holidays to Get an Advantage

One of the most common questions we get from Year 11 students is, "What am I meant to do during the holidays?" This is especially true of the summer holidays between Year 11 and Year 12. During this break, part of you wants to get a major jump on the opposition and learn the entire syllabus. On the other hand there is another part of you which just wants to relax, play, have fun and do all those things that you're not going to be able to do in Year 12. There is no set, prescribed way in which you should spend the holidays.

Almost every student we interviewed did something different. Some did no study, some did a bit and some did a lot. This chapter looks at some of the options available to you and how many people chose these options.

Summer Holidays

From our research students chose between 4 main approaches for dealing with their summer holidays. These are:

- 1. Chill Out**
- 2. Required Work**
- 3. Readings**
- 4. Work Ahead**

1. Chill Out

A few of the students we interviewed chose to just chill-out during the summer holidays and not even look at a book or a piece of work until they got back to school. For example Kristin went overseas for 6 weeks and intentionally left all her work behind.

2. Required Work

Many of the students we interviewed had assignments over the summer break which were due in the first week back. Many students chose to relax for the majority of the holidays and just took out a bit of time here and there to do these assignments. Some students on the other hand left 1 or 2 weeks at the end of the holidays to do their assignments and spent the first few weeks having as much fun as possible.

3. Readings

The majority of top students fitted into this boat. Most students chose to use their spare time during their holidays to read their English texts. Absolutely no-one finds themselves out partying every minute of the holidays. Everyone has days during the holidays where there is nothing to do and no one has the energy or money to do

anything exciting. It was in these moments that many students would pick up their English texts and start to read them. Some students knew they were slow readers and wouldn't have enough time to read their texts during term, whilst other students knew that as soon as the term began they would become bogged down in other work and not have a chance to read their texts in detail. One student who didn't get the mark he wanted read half of his English text during the holidays and intended to finish it after the term started. Once he plunged into all the study during the term he completely forgot about finishing the text, and as a result went into his exam knowing only half the text and relying on his class notes to suffice for the half he never read! Most top students avoid this problem by reading all their texts during the holidays.

4. Work Ahead

Only a minority of students chose to work ahead during the holidays, but those that did usually topped their subjects. For example one student named Ryan started to work ahead for all of his subjects. He would spend 2-3 hours on random days following the syllabus and making notes. He had a lot of days off, but every second or third day he would sit down and spend a few hours making notes. For example he would make notes in the morning and then spend the rest of the afternoon at the beach. By spending just a few hours here and there he was able to gain a massive head start on the other people. Since he was working random days and half days, he still had plenty of time to relax!

Another student read all his texts, but rather than stopping there as most other students did, he then sat down and began to actually analyse what he had read, formulate his own arguments, and began to read literary criticisms of the texts. By the start of the year he was extremely familiar with the texts and found that he was able to maximise his time in class by asking the teacher in depth, or more sophisticated questions, which he then used to complement his own arguments. So whilst other students were just learning the texts this guy was really mastering them, giving him a major advantage. Like Ryan this guy didn't spend all his time working. He actually enjoyed reading the texts, and found that whenever he had a bit of spare time at home he would use it to read and develop arguments.

Obviously there is a major advantage to be gained by working ahead, especially if you are only working random days or just a few hours here and there. By just doing a few hours every week on top of reading your texts you will find you have a massive advantage.

During Year 12

For most students the end of the summer holidays marks the beginning of Year 12 and the beginning of the real deal. Things become a lot more serious and a lot more focused and as a result students tend to do a lot more work in their Year 12 holidays than they did in the summer holidays. Of course there are still a small number of students who make the best out of the few weeks they have off. Here are some of the approaches we have encountered.

- 1. Chill Out**
- 2. Catch Up**
- 3. Consistent Even Beaten Track**
- 4. Flexi-Study**
- 5. Holiday Work Horse**

- 1. Chill Out**

There are a small number of top students who chose to spend the holidays kicking back and doing nothing. Often these are the students who have totally maxxed out during the term and need a break to re-charge their batteries. This group find that by leaving their books behind and chasing the sun or snow for a week or two they can come back and churn out more work than when they left.

2. Catch Up

Those that have slacked off, or have been left behind by the pace of the year often use the holidays to catch up. If they have no work to catch up on then they chill out. If there is work to catch up, they will either get this over and done early in the piece and then relax for the rest of the holidays or they will spread it out across the holidays doing a bit here and a bit there.

3. Consistent Even Beaten Track Approach

A large percentage of students fit into this category. These students find that it is beneficial to maintain an even rhythm through the holidays and as a result they will aim to do between 2-3 hours of study a day. By studying in small bursts they get to spend a fair deal of time relaxing and re-charging their batteries, whilst also churning through a fair amount of work. In this way they still maintain an edge. If you doubt your ability to sit at your desk for hours on end during the holiday or know that sooner or later your friends will lure you away from your desk this may be the best option for you. You get through a fair amount of work, get re-charged and don't feel guilty for having time off.

4. Flexi-Study Approach

Another large percentage of students fit into this category. Under the flexi-study approach students may take off anywhere from 3-5 days in which they totally relax. They may do as one student did and go away for a few days on a shopping expedition, or spend the days mucking about with friends, watching movies or whatever. These days are used to re-charge and gain a bit of distance from their work.

Having taken a few days off when they get back into their study they can easily plough through the work, studying in some cases between 5 to 8 hours a day. This is another really good approach which gives you a bit of time to chill out and then to totally re-immense yourself in your study. Good for those people who can avoid the temptations of going out. If you can't avoid the temptations you may find yourself taking a few days off and then only working half days, and feeling guilty for it.

5. Holiday Work Horse

Finally there are a group of students who just can't get enough study and can't leave it behind. This group looks at the holidays as being 7 weekends strung together and they go wild, trying to get as much done as they can, and trying to create as big a lead over other students as possible. One student who got an outstanding mark was the ultimate workhorse and during the holidays would put together days of study ranging from 6 to 11 hours. He said the trick to doing this was to be able to gauge how you feel. He said if you are drifting off or beginning to wane then it is a sign you need to take a rest. In these cases he would take a break for anywhere from an hour to 2 hours to go the gym, go to a café with a friend or just watch a video. On other days he would max out and do 8 hours during the day and then take the night off to go to the movies with a friend, go out on a date or just party the night away.

The advantages of this approach are obvious. You churn through so much work that you end up putting yourself in pole position. This approach also presents some very real and serious dangers, the most obvious of which are overworking yourself and

burning out. It would be a disaster if you returned to school burnt-out, unable and unmotivated to do anything once the work builds up and exams close in on you. You should only take this approach if you really know how to gauge your own body and have the discipline to break, rest and relax when you need to.

Finding What Suits You

These are the diverse ways in which some top students spent their time. There is no one way to do it and there is no right or wrong approach. It all depends on the kind of person you are and the pressures you like to work under. The trick is simply finding what suits you and evaluating whether that approach is taking you closer towards your goal or not.

Remember to Relax

If you choose to use the holidays to work ahead remember not to go flat out because you don't want to burn out. If you choose this option don't work long hours or a number of days straight. Try to take a few days off and then spend one on, or break the days into halves where you do a few hours of work and then spend the rest of the time relaxing.

STEP 4: Getting Around

Once a traveller has packed their bags they are ready to go. The only question is how are they going to get around? Are they going to fly, drive, or maybe take a train, a bus or a boat? If a traveler didn't do their research they might end up choosing the longest and least efficient means of getting to their destination. For example a traveller may choose to go to the US by boat and although this would be a really nice way to do it, it wouldn't be a particularly wise or efficient means of transport if they wanted to get there as quickly as possible. Clearly the best way to get there would be by plane, but because the traveller failed to examine the options open to them they ended up taking the least effective method of getting around.

The way the student gets around during their journey is through study, and just like the traveller, there are countless ways to do it. Just like the traveller, not all of these options will be the most effective or efficient methods for getting to your destination. You need to find the most effective study techniques which will help get you to your destination.

The best students get around, or study, through three principal means and these are learning, mastering and creating. This is what we call the path of the Study Sensei. In the following chapters you will learn the three key steps to becoming a Study Sensei.

The Path to Becoming a Study Sensei

From Beginner to Bruce Lee

Have you ever watched a martial arts movie with someone like Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan or Jet Li in it? Think for a minute about the path these guys took in order to get where they are. All of them started off, not knowing anything about martial arts. They started off, like many of us, as the lowly beginner, white belt standing in class without the slightest clue on what to do. They started by learning the techniques. Although awkward at first, they began to get used to them as time passed. After a while, they had practiced the techniques so much that they began to have them down pat. They started to consolidate on what they had learnt and began to master each technique one by one. They became more and more confident each day and before they knew it the journey towards the black belt had begun. Finally on one special day they were awarded a black belt, and realised they had finally mastered the once difficult form.

Still, they didn't stop there. Once the form had been mastered these guys developed a few of their own personalised moves. They created their own way of doing things and started to create their own form. By the time they were creating, they were the best of the best.

You're probably sitting there thinking what on earth are they talking about, what does martial arts have to do with study? However you will be surprised to know that the rise in martial arts mirrors the rise of most top students. All top students go from learning, to mastering, to creating.

Your Path to Study Sensei

There are 3 clear steps in the rise of students that closely mirror the rise in martial arts:

- 1. Learning the Form**
- 2. Mastering the Form**
- 3. Creating Your Own Form**

1. Learning the Form:

This is like the martial arts white belt. They can do a few of the techniques, but they can't do them very well. Like the white belt in martial arts you start at the beginning. Most students who get semi-decent marks belong to this category. This group takes notes on the subject, and as a result knows a thing or two for their exams. They can create an essay answer but the essays are pretty average and indistinguishable from the thousands of other people also sitting the same exams.

2. Mastering the Form:

Someone who is mastering the form in martial arts doesn't just know the techniques; they know them in great detail and can use them fluidly and confidently. A lower percentage of students fit into this category. They don't just know the material; they know the material in great detail. When these students answer a question in an exam, they answer it with great detail and end up getting much better marks than those who simply learned the form. Mastery includes committing your notes to memory and knowing how all the information fits together. Usually the top ten percentile of the State are what you would call masters.

3. Creating Your Own Form:

In martial arts these are the Jackie Chans or the Bruce Lees. People who are remembered for not only mastering the form, but bringing their own flair to it by adding something unique and original. Those students that create their own form are the ones that top their subjects. They have not only mastered the subject and know it in great detail; they have also created their own interpretations or arguments for each subject. Their essays stand out from the crowd because they are unique and original. These students go beyond the call of duty by learning more than required and creating their own interpretations. These students are the best of the best and usually fit into the top 2 percentile of the state.

One top student who went through this process was a guy named Faber. Like most other students, Faber started by learning the form. He made up his pile of notes taken from class and from his text.

However Faber had an eye for detail which led him to master the form. He read one particular English text 20 times. After a while he knew the book so well he could read it in a matter of hours! His notes on the text were broken down into three page progressions. He knew everything that happened from events, writing style, even down to what a character was feeling every three pages of the book! He knew the book in such detail that he well and truly mastered it.

Having mastered it Faber then created his own form. He began to analyse not only why other people thought things happened but also why he thought certain things happened. He wasn't just arguing what his teacher had written up on the board or what he had read in some study guide, he was writing what he actually thought himself. This is why Faber managed to place himself in the top 1% of students in the State. He had become a Study Sensei.

The next 3 chapters look at each stage of this process and show you exactly what you need to do to rise to from a study white belt to become a Study Sensei.

TECHNIQUE 9: Learn the Basics of a Subject

The process of learning focuses mainly on note taking. For it is during this stage of reading, understanding and summarising that the student begins to learn all the basics of the subject. The ability to take notes effectively is central to the process of learning. Your notes have to be gathered, created and compiled in a manner which will allow you to take in as much information as possible. This chapter looks at where your notes should be coming from, how to make them, and how to lay them out.

The Right Way to Take Notes

Students face two key dilemmas when they create notes:

1. Too many notes – Some students go way overboard in their note making and end up taking notes on irrelevant things, which are never examined. In doing so they waste time putting together information that is not necessary and usually become confused during the process.
2. Not enough notes – Some students just don't go into the required depth in their notes or fail to cover whole areas that are going to be examined.

What you need is the "just right" set of notes. So what determines the "just right" set of notes? Lucky enough for all students there is a guide, which tells you exactly what should be in your notes! However many students don't know about it or neglect to use it.

The guide we are talking about is the subject syllabus. A syllabus is issued for every subject in the final year and we highly recommend you go and get a copy for every subject you do. The syllabus tells you everything you need to know and everything you can be examined on, and if you use this as a map for your note making you can't possibly go wrong.

Creating Your Framework: Using Your Syllabus

Once you've got your syllabus you can map out exactly what you need to take notes on. All you have to do is look at the syllabus and find the sections marked "students learn". The examiners can only ask you questions from this area. You now know the exact areas you need to take your notes on.

If you work off your syllabus you can also see where you are lacking in your notes. You can also avoid making the mistake of being under prepared by simply following along your syllabus and making sure that you have a good set of notes for every section in the syllabus.

The tools of effective note making

As many students move through school they develop the habit of writing their notes in an exercise book. If you are still using this habit by the time you reach Year 12 you are going to find that it will hold you back. Because your notes come from different sources and are compiled or created at different times, it becomes very difficult to keep your notes together in organised sections.

What you are going to need is an A4 folder and loose-leaf paper. This means that notes, which are taken at any time, can easily be organised and stored together. Many students take an A4 pad to school to take notes on in class and when they come home they simply put the pages in the relevant sections. Alternatively other students take notes in a book which they then bring home and rewrite onto A4 paper which is slotted into the folder. By keeping a folder you can also easily insert your exams and assignments so everything is right at your finger tips and you don't have to spend hours looking all over the place for them. We recommend that you get a folder for every subject.

Where to Make Your Notes From

There are 4 key sources for your notes:

- **Class Discussions** – Most top students found class discussions to be one of the most important times for taking notes. They would jot down notes on whatever the teacher said or put on the board and points raised by other students.
- **Homework** – Some students just answer their homework exercises with one-line answers and never look over these again. To be the most efficient and effective with your time, answer your homework questions in note format and add it to your collection of notes. By making your homework time your note making time and combining two tasks into one you can kill two birds with one stone.
- **Summarising Texts** – Most of your notes will probably come from revising your school texts.
- **Outside Sources** – The students who do the best not only summarise from the text, they also add more detailed notes from outside sources. This will be discussed in Technique 11.

Laying out your notes

When you lay your notes out you should pay attention to the follow points:

- **Space** – Try and be as spatially aware as possible. Leave as much white space on the paper as you can. When people take notes they tend to take them as if they are writing an essay rather than simply condensing the information into a few words. Would you believe that approximately 80% of the words you write will have no effect on remembering the information or re-calling it? Therefore try and keep your points brief. If the whole page is taken up by writing, which is crammed together, it becomes much like reading the original textbook the notes were taken from. By keeping everything well spaced your eye can easily glance over the page and see the key information.
- **Colour** – Your eyes are always drawn to colour, and as an aid it can be used to help remember key information. For example you may want to write headings in different colour pens or underline them in red pen. You may also want to highlight the most important points of information, or highlight key words that are particularly important.

One student named Imre used four different coloured highlighters. He would colour code the information in order of importance. The information, which was of a "must

know" nature, would be highlighted in blue.

Our research indicated that the students who got top marks spent more time on making notes than students who did not do as well. Your notes form the foundation of your knowledge for the entire year. The BETTER your notes, the BETTER your marks!

TECHNIQUE 10: Mastering the Subject

It's one thing to know your way around your subject material, but to know it in great detail and commit it to memory is another story all together. If you want to excel you have to elevate above the learning stage and start to master the form. Mastery includes 4 steps:

- 1. Going the Extra Mile**
- 2. Committing Notes to Memory**
- 3. Knowing How all the Information Fits Together**
- 4. Being Able to Rapidly Tailor and Reproduce Information**

Going the Extra Mile

Mastery involves a lot of hard work. It involves doing the things that most students don't like to do. Students who want to do well go the extra mile to get the marks they want.

One such student was a girl called Tali. Her goal was to come in the top 10 in her school in Math's. The competition was tough and Tali knew she had to do extra work in order for her to achieve her goal. Most of the class would do practice Math's papers just before exams; however Tali went the extra mile. She did a practice Math's paper almost every night during the year. Very few nights would go by without her attempting a paper. Although this was pretty full on it enabled her to master Math's and achieve her goal. You don't have to be as full on as Tali, but imagine how much of an advantage you would get out of doing one practice paper each week. Most students leave it until the night before an exam to try and run through a practice paper. If you did just one a week, by the time all those weeks are added up you would have a massive advantage over everyone else.

Committing Notes to Memory

Most students only begin to memorise their notes during the lead into exams. This is an inadequate system! Study Senseis will commit all their notes to memory throughout the year. By the time of exams their notes are committed to memory so well that that it seems as if they have their text book in front of them during the whole exam!

Many study masters would aim to store the information from their notes in their long-term memory. They understand that this process is not a quick and easy thing, but rather a process that takes time and discipline. They would take the following steps:

1. Write notes.
2. Review notes within minutes of completing them.
3. Review the same notes after 24 hours.
4. Review the same notes twice a week.

Most of these stages only take an extra 5 minutes but most average students never

bother to take this time. This is what we mean when we say that mastery takes a bit more hard work. In the scheme of things though an extra 5 minutes really isn't very much, especially when you consider the rewards later down the track. Students who cram tend to forget everything a week later. They usually find themselves learning the same material more than once. The short term cramming option may work for some, however if you are having to learn notes over and over again your time may not be used in the most effective way. The main advantage of committing notes to your long-term memory is that you don't have to constantly learn your notes, which will save you a lot of time before major exams which can then be spent on more important activities such as doing practice papers.

Vicki was a prime example of a student who committed all her notes to her long-term memory. After each day at school, Vicki would come home and start writing her notes. After completing them, she would always read over them at least twice to make sure she understood what she just wrote. She would not only review the notes she just wrote, however each week she would sit down and go over her whole notes collection from the beginning. Doing this every week and at times twice a week enabled Vicki to become extremely familiar with her subject material. Vicki knew her notes so well that while all her friends were cramming before exams she was taking it easy. It is no wonder then that Vicki placed in the top 0.5% of the State.

Knowing How All the Information Fits Together

When Bruce Lee began his journey to master Kung Fu, he first memorised all the different moves. However this alone would not enable him to master the form. Instead, after memorising the individual moves, Bruce Lee had to understand how all the moves fit together to form unique and powerful combinations. Mastering the form does not stop at memorising your notes. It goes beyond this to include knowing how your notes are interrelated.

Usually when students take notes they lay them out in bullet point format. These bullet points stream down the page and go on and on for up to 100 pages. Students then memorise the notes as they wrote them, and in most cases do a pretty good job at remembering all the points. The problem is that in many cases they will have no idea at all how all the information fits together. As a result when they sit down to write an essay it may appear very disjointed or they will attempt to put in all the information in the order it appeared in their notes, whether it is relevant or not. Unfortunately they end up regurgitating information rather than answering the question. In either case these people get poor marks.

In order to avoid this many students use a technique called Mind Mapping®. Mind Maps® are a method of organizing thoughts and concepts, and stimulating creative ideas, originally developed by Tony Buzan. A Mind Map®, like a road map, allows you to see how everything fits together and what leads to what. By drawing a Mind Map® you can fit 100 pages of notes onto one page!

Developing Your Mind Map®

In Tony Buzan's book "Use Your Head" he recommends 7 steps in creating effective Mind Maps®. These include:

1. Start with a coloured image of the main idea in the centre. As an image stimulates creative thought. Place your paper in landscape position (ie horizontally).
2. Try to include images throughout your Mind Map®.
3. Words should be printed. For review purposes printed words are easier to read

and understand than messy or non-printed words.

4. Limit one word per line.

5. Use colours throughout the Mind Map®. By making it visually appealing, it can enhance the right cortical process in your brain.

6. The mind map should be left as free as possible.

Application of Mind Mapping®

Mind Maps® can be used for all subjects that require you to write notes. After you have written your collection of notes you can devise a Mind Map® to summarise the whole course in one page in order to test yourself on how all your notes fit together.

1. Start by writing the subject name or topic name in the centre of the page.

2. Think of all the main sections or most important ideas and use these as the first branches going off the centre.

3. If a branch has a point of secondary importance draw this off the branch.

For Example:

You can go into as much detail as you want to in your Mind Map®. You will find that Mind Maps® will force you to think of the main points and categorise them in terms of importance.

Being Able to Rapidly Tailor and Reproduce Information

In an exam all your marks come from being able to put the information you know onto paper. You don't get marks for simply memorising information. Because of this it is crucial that you master the process of sitting exams and tailoring the information you know to an exam question. Given the fact that this is so crucial it is an absolute mystery why so few students ever practice it. Too many students walk into an exam room having only ever done a few practice papers.

Sitting an exam requires a number of skills. These include being able to:

- Think quickly
- Identify what the marker wants
- Take your information apart
- Tailor the information to the question
- Produce an answer which makes sense and reads well

All of these skills can be developed and mastered but you must take the time. The best way to develop these skills is by constantly doing practice papers. To prove this, our research showed that students who performed well in the final year did more practice papers than students who bombed out!

The sheer volume of past papers that the top students go through is amazing. While an average student may do 1 or 2 practice papers during the entire year, students we interviewed who got 98+ were doing on average 4-6 practice papers per subject for each exam.

For a subject like Math's where you don't need to be learning notes it is all about practice papers. Preferably you should be doing practice papers all the way through

the year. By the end of the year most students who got in the top percentile for Math's had done between 20-30 past Math's papers. One student named Talia would actually do a Math's practice paper every single day of the year!!! Often you may not be able to do all the paper because you haven't covered all the material in class. In this case break the paper into the sections which you can do. **Doing practice exams is absolutely crucial to doing well!**

Where to find past papers

Past papers can be found in most libraries. You may want to speak to past students and see if you can get their past papers. There are also quite a few books on the market at the moment which are full of past papers. Speak to students at other schools and get their exam papers from them. This is a great resource since most people have friends at another school. One word of warning though. After the changes made in the "New final year" in 2001, many of the past papers are now redundant and no longer reflect the current syllabus. In this case some past papers may be confusing or down right misleading. We recommend that you always consult a teacher before working on a past paper.

If you can't find any past papers you should approach a teacher and get them to set you mock questions. Also use this approach when you have only covered part of a subject and would otherwise be unable to answer an actual exam paper. Get your teacher to mock up a question covering the work you have done so far.

Always try and hand your practice papers into teachers. Try and get them to mark the papers and give you some feedback to check your progress. We have already spoken about the benefits of getting teachers to mark your practice papers. Teachers' feedback is absolutely crucial to your ability to develop and improve your answers.

How to do your practice papers

Try to do your practice paper under exam conditions. This means give yourself the correct amount of reading time to actually plot out or structure your answer, then give yourself the time allotted for that paper. This will help you to train your brain to think quickly. Try not to go over time. Exam conditions also mean that you should be in a quiet place without music or distractions and you should stay seated for the duration.

Sometimes students don't actually write full answers or full essays but rather write out an essay plan and then go on to the next question. Although it is a lot quicker, we don't particularly recommend it. Often what happens is you think you know enough information to put together an essay, or you think you are able to argue it competently but when you start to actually write it you find out you don't have enough information or your explanations are somewhat confusing. Try to always make time so that you are writing out full essays to train yourself in the whole essay writing process.

Some students choose to do practice papers - open book, which means they have their supporting books, texts and notes on their desk with them, so if they get stuck, confused or don't have enough information they can consult their books and add the information straight into the answer. The students who adopted this method all stated that it actually helped them because they found it easier to remember information if they applied it straight away. If you want to get outstanding marks you should be looking to do at least 1 practice paper for each subject every week.

TECHNIQUE 11: Creating and Innovating in a Subject

Once you have mastered the form you are ready to take the next step, creating your own form. Originators of their own form are true... **STUDY SENSEIS!** They research and develop their own perspectives and support and deliver their arguments with confidence, clarity and originality. It is no coincidence that they also get the best marks.

The Steps to Becoming a Study Sensei

There are basically two easy steps to becoming a Study Sensei.

These are:

1. Independent Research

Those students who got the best marks were all independent researchers. These students didn't just read and summarise the textbook. They went beyond this by finding outside sources and used these to add further points, arguments, ideas and quotes to their notes. In fact, our research indicated that there was a significant difference in the amount of extra reading top students did compared with those students who didn't do as well.

Remember a marker is reading literally hundreds of essays answering the same question. After a while these essays all begin to sound exactly the same, because most students across the State are using the **SAME** texts, the **SAME** study guides and therefore all arguing the **SAME** points and the **SAME** ideas.

Each Study Sensei clearly understands the need for uniqueness and because of this they seek ideas and arguments beyond their texts and their study guides. The Study Sensei may use their texts or study guide as a pointer, but will never rest there. They go further, beyond the call of duty.

A great example of this is a student named Yvette who topped History at her school. After she mastered the syllabus she would take the next step and begin her independent research. She would go off to a university library and look up books on the subject. She knew that reading every book on the subject was unrealistic and would take a lot of time from her other subjects. To solve this problem, Yvette always knew what she was looking for and would use the index to find the particular point she wanted. This made the process quick and easy. Once a book was found she would look in the contents or index to see if there was any relevant information. Usually she would be looking for one of three things, these being, different ideas or interpretations, more in depth facts and quotes. She would read the relevant information (usually 5-10 pages) and then take the key points or quotes she needed from it. These points would later be referenced in her essay in an exam.

Ryan, one of the very top students in the State, would do the same thing for English and History. For both subjects he would go to a university library and find critiques on what he was studying. For English he would find a number of relevant literary critiques. This gave him the ability to present a number of different arguments rather than being limited to just one. For History he would independently research the opinions of key Historians. If he saw a Historian quoted or mentioned in a textbook, he would go to a university library and try and find that Historian's book. He then looked up the relevant sections and took notes and quotes on the Historian's argument and ideas. He would then go and try to find an opposing argument by

another key Historian and take notes and quotes from that as well.

When it came to exam time, Ryan would be evaluating arguments of key Historians instead of merely regurgitating the textbook like the majority of candidates. It is quite obvious why Ryan's essays stood out and why he got the best marks.

As stated in the chapter on learning the form you must be careful not to waste your time by collecting notes on irrelevant areas that can never be examined. You always need to be checking your research against the syllabus. Make sure whatever you are researching can be examined. If it can be you are on your way to creating your own form.

2. Create Your Own Argument or Look for a Unique Angle

(a) Creating Your Own Argument:

Once you have gone away and done your independent research to see what other authorities on the subject say you can begin to build your own opinion. The best way to do this is by finding a few opposing opinions and asking yourself, "Which one do I think is better?" You need to create an argument explaining why that opinion is better and back that argument up with facts.

For example in every History exam Ryan would give the opinions of two Historians and then explain why he thought a certain argument was correct. This showed the marker that not only did Ryan know the subject in more detail than most other students, but that he had also evaluated and created his own independent argument on why a certain view was more likely to be correct.

Another student named Charmaine summed it up very nicely: "It was much easier to remember and articulate my own opinions than someone else's." This mentality was one of the reasons she managed to top English at her school.

(b) Finding a Unique Angle:

Many students also take the time to try and find a unique angle that no-one else will be arguing. For every argument there is always a unique spin on things. Often it may mean going against conventional wisdom, but if you have the evidence to explain your opinions and are able to articulate them well, a marker may reward you.

The Added Advantage of Creating Your Own Form

Students who create their own form are not restricted by any question an examiner may ask. They not only know the subject in detail but they also have personal opinions and views which they can use should they be thrown a tricky question. This is something, that an average student who has merely learnt the form will find difficult due to their limited understanding. **If you create your own form you can answer anything!**

STEP 5: Blitzing the Hotspots

The most important moments for any traveller occur when they reach a hotspot. A hotspot is a place that the whole journey has been about. It is that place that you have spent all your time working towards and all your time thinking about. It is a highlight or your very reason for being there. For a traveller this hotspot could be Paris, standing on the Great Wall of China or standing at the base of the Pyramids and so on. Naturally you want to make the most of your limited time in a hotspot and for this reason you need to blitz. A traveller never knows if they will ever be back in that place a second time, and because of this they have to make the most of their visit this time around.

For a student, your hotspot is an exam. That is what the year is all about. You spend all your time learning and preparing for exams and it is in the exam that you get the marks which will determine whether or not you reach your final destination. Like the traveller a student needs to know how to blitz this hotspot, how to make the most of it and get every last mark that is up for grabs, because unlike the traveller, few students are going to want to come back for a second time.

In order to blitz your hotspot or exams you are going to need to know what to do before the exams in order to be fully prepared. Obviously you are going to need to know what to do on the day of the exam and what to do in the exam room. Finally and in many ways most importantly you are going to need to know what to do after exams, because in this time, you can really shape your marks and the outcome of your journey.

TECHNIQUE 12: Maximum Pre-Exam Preparation

Being ready for an exam is one of the most persistent problems students face. Your aim should be to know EVERYTHING you need to know, in the DETAIL you need to know it, PRIOR to the exam. This chapter introduces you to a series of simple practices, which will help you to get rid of those last minute cramming nights and put you in prime position for your exams.

All students dream about being ready in time for their exams but for most this remains just a dream. What you will learn is that it isn't particularly hard to be ready in time for your exams. In fact you can be in pole position by following 4 simple steps:

1. Set your goals for exams – most students never have a specific goal for the assessments other than to do well, and as a result they are never as focused as they could be.
2. Use your time effectively – most students start preparing too late and as a result run out of time.
3. Learn your notes – most students employ ineffective methods to learn their notes and don't have systems in place to re-call them effectively in their exams.
4. Practice laps – the ultimate way to make sure you are prepared is to take a few practice laps around the circuit. Most students either don't fully understand the importance of doing this, or run out of time and never actually have the chance to do it.

Setting Goals for Exams

Remember that one of the reasons you should be setting goals is to be as focused as possible. Whilst many students may have a long-term goal for the mark they want to achieve at the end of the year or the university course they want to get into they never set short-term goals for exams. Instead they just aim to do well. As discussed earlier the problem with this is that these students are not really focused and not pushing themselves as hard as they could. They are not aiming for anything in particular and as a result these students usually don't get assessment marks as high as those students who set short-term goals. By setting yourself a short - term goal for assessments you make sure you are always zoning in on something and working at full steam.

During assessments most students either set marks or places as their short-term goal. For example one student named Andrew worked out that for each of his subjects he would need to get an average of 93% or higher in all of his exams in order to achieve his goal. Other students set a goal of getting over 90% in each of their exams. You can see how a student aiming to get 90% in each assessment will be working at greater capacity and with more focus than a student who is simply looking at doing their best in an assessment.

The other method students used was trying to get a certain place. For example one student named Charmaine used short-term goals constantly throughout Year 12. Her short-term goals were; to be placed in the top 4 of all her subjects and top her English class. Even more full on was Ryan who aimed at topping each of his classes in every assessment, which he quite often pulled off. Again it is easy to see how aiming to come 1st in an assessment would leave you more inspired and more motivated than you would be if you were just trying to do well.

Work that needs to be done

Once these students have set themselves a goal for their assessments, they also set a goal for the work that needs to be done. That is, they ask what work needs to be done in order to fulfill their goal. For example if you have set a short - term goal to get a mark of 90% in English you may work out that you need to do the following work:

- Read 3 literary critiques on Hamlet
- Makes notes on characters, themes, style
- Develop a unique angle
- Learn quotes
- Do 4 practice essays

Having determined this, their immediate goal becomes getting that work completed so that they will be fully prepared and ready for the assessment.

Use an Assessment Planner

The best way to create and display your plan so it can be easily followed is to use an assessment planner:

- In the 1st column write down your subject
- In the 2nd column write down your short-term goal for the approaching assessments
- In the 3rd column write down all the steps you must take to achieve your goal

Elevate Short-term Goal Planner

Student Elevation Copyright © elevate education 2001

MATHS 90% **ENGLISH 90%**

Find out areas for exam.
Do all text book exercises.
Do 5 practice papers.
Read 3 literary critiques on Hamlet.
Write notes on characters, themes, style.
Develop unique angle.
Memorize notes and quotes.
Do 5 practice papers.

You should create an assessment planner for every assessment block. For your convenience you can download assessment planners whenever you need them from the student resources section on the Elevate Education web site at www.elevateeducation.com

Using Your Time Effectively

Using your time effectively in the lead up to an exam revolves on knowing when to actually begin your preparation. Most students underestimate the amount of time they are going to need and therefore never leave enough time for themselves.

Most of the top students we interviewed would start preparing anywhere from 2-4 weeks before an exam. By doing this they always managed to be prepared a few days before their exams. One student named Vicki used to be so well prepared that in the final few days before exams she was able to sit back and relax, just look over her notes and focus on the task ahead of her.

Being prepared doesn't just mean being prepared for a few subjects. It means being prepared for all your subjects. For example a lot of students find themselves in the situation where their assessments have just begun and although they have prepared for their first exam they haven't yet started their preparation for their final exam, planning instead to study for it during the exam period. What happens though is the assessment period is so hectic and stressful they find themselves without enough time to study for their final exam or they have no motivation left and end up to doing really badly.

One top student named Kristin used a system, which we recommend to everyone. Kristin actually took most students' preparation process and reversed it. She would study for her last exam first and she would study for her first exam last. This system had a number of advantages to it:

- By preparing for her first exam last, it was fresh in her memory, unlike many people who prepared for it 3 weeks in advance and then find they have forgotten most of the details by the time of exams.
- By preparing for the last exam first, she knew in the worst case scenario, should she not have any opportunity to study for it again during the assessments, that she had totally revised the course.

Final Review of Your Notes

By the time you get to the exams a great portion of your notes should be committed to your memory through the revision of your notes as discussed in Technique 10. However, these preparation weeks should be used to make sure that the final details are well and truly drilled into your head.

Step 1: Reading over Your Notes

Most of the information should now be in your head. This stage is not a learning stage but rather a review and refresh stage where you look over your notes a few times to re-acquaint yourself with the information. It should take a few days at the most. A good process of review can include:

- Read over it once or twice
- Read over and highlight the most important pieces of information which are absolutely crucial to being memorised
- Attempt to memorise the notes point by point. Each time you finish a page go back and attempt to verbalise the entire page
- Read the notes when in bed or when travelling to or from school
- Get parents or family to test you by asking questions. This process should lock in most of the information

Step 2: Creating Triggers

Often in an exam students attempt to recall their notes point by point. This wastes a lot of time. Top students organise their notes and memories in a manner which will allow them to recall information quickly and rather than recalling one point, they will recall a whole chunk of related information. To do this they create what we call "triggers". A trigger is a keyword, which both allows you to memorise large chunks of information and to re-call it.

Our brain works so that most information is stored in the form of a key-word or a trigger. It is like using Microsoft Word, where you load up a whole bunch of information using one file name. A trigger works like that file name. It is simply a key word which makes your memory recall all the information associated with that point. For example, if you were given the words "The Simpsons" your brain would associate many concepts to those words. For example you may think: Cartoon, TV program, Bart, Lisa, Homer, Marge, Maggie and literally hundreds more things. It was those key words "The Simpsons" which helped all that information come back to you. All those concepts were already stored in your brain. All you needed were the key words to trigger your memory.

Trigger: Memory Recall:

Cartoon, TV program etc.

Simpsons Characters, ie, Bart, Homer etc

Your favourite episodes.

In order to create their triggers, some of the best students would summarise their notes again, but this time they only put the headings and sub-headings into their notes. These sub-headings then became the triggers. In other words they cut the key information bullet points out from their original notes. For example a summarised page may look something like this:

Original Notes Summarised Triggers

Heading Heading

- Sub heading ■ Sub heading
- Key Information ■ Sub heading
- Key Information ■ Sub heading
- Sub heading
- Key Information
- Key Information
- Sub heading
- Key Information
- Key Information

Your sub-headings act as triggers. Whenever you recall a subheading it should trigger all the key information or all the bullet points which went under that sub-heading. So now rather than having to memorise 100 pages of notes you can memorise 5 or so pages of sub-headings.

Trigger Memory Recall

Key Bullet Point 1

Sub-heading Key Bullet Point 2

Key Bullet Point 3

If a student wants to test how well they have memorised their notes they will sit down and attempt to write out each trigger and the key information which goes along with each trigger. Once they have written it all out they can then compare it to their original notes to see how much they have remembered.

Step 3: Using Acronyms to Memorise Information or Triggers

In order to totally remember triggers or notes in general, many students use acronyms. That is, they take all the first letters and use them to make a poem or a sentence which will help them remember.

For example: if a student had the following sub-headings:

- Pip meets Miss Havisham.
- Introduction to Miss Havisham
- Introduction to Stella.
- Dickens' writing style.

The first letters of these sub-headings are P, I, I, D. The student could remember the triggers through this new word PIID or they could make up a sentence which will help them remember. The wackier, weirder, or funnier these sentences, the more easily you will be able to remember them. For example a sentence you could make up might be something like, Peter's Iced Igloo Dogs or Perhaps I Imagined Differently. When you walk into exams all you have to do is remember the acronyms, take the first letters and recall the triggers.

Step 4: Learn Your Mind-Maps®

If a student has successfully done steps 1 and 2 all most all of the information from your notes should be committed to memory. The catch is though, you may get into an exam and remember all the information but have no idea how it all fits together. If this was to happen you would have a few problems putting together a decent essay and all your hard work memorising your notes would have been in vain.

In Technique 10 (Mastering a Subject) we talked about using Mind Maps® as a way to consolidate information and remember how it fits together. A crucial step in exam preparation is learning these Mind Maps®. By memorising your Mind Maps® you will always know how the information fits together.

Do Past Papers

In almost any professional endeavour whether it is acting, music or sports you will find that groups or individuals always go through practice sessions before they compete. They try to do at least a few practices in exam conditions as a matter of last minute fine-tuning.

For example actors in a musical may have a "Dress Rehearsal". A band may have a sound check to make sure everything is OK whilst a sporting team will play a few pre-season warm up games before the actual season commences. For any one involved in these fields, these last minute practice sessions are crucial. For some reason very few students spend much time on practice papers. Many students tend to spend all their time memorising their notes and then at 1:00 am on the morning of the exam they sit down to work out one plan or do one question for a practice paper. This is totally inadequate.

The majority of your time before an exam should be spent doing practice papers. The more practice papers you do, the better the odds become of you also doing well in the exam. For more information on how to do practice papers see Technique 10.

TECHNIQUE 13: Maximise Your Performance in the Exam Room

For any athlete the pinnacle sporting moment is the Olympics. All those years of sacrifice, blood, sweat and tears lead to a few minutes or in some cases a few seconds of competition. Every time you enter an exam room it is like entering the field of play for any athlete. It is the exam room which makes and breaks you, and as a result it is critical that you know how to perform at your best whenever exam time comes around. This chapter examines some effective ways to make sure you enter the exam room with complete certainty that you will be leaving it with your own gold medal.

In order to put yourself in the right state to perform in an exam it is important to look at 5 factors:

1. The Night Before: The state you are in the night before will have an effect on the state you are in on exam day.
2. The Morning Of: If you are stressed and freaking out before you even leave the house imagine what things are going to be like when you hit the exam floor.
3. Exam Fuel: You wouldn't go to a sporting event without the right fuel for your body so don't do it in exams.
4. Exam Room Routine: Develop a routine that will put you into a state of automatic focus.
5. Starting the Exam: Where you start will have an effect on where you finish so maximise your use of the first 10 minutes.

The Night Before

How the night before an exam is used is an important factor which most students seem to overlook. Think about it for a minute. You don't see Ian Thorpe in the pool swimming laps at 3.30 in the morning before an Olympic Final do you? Of course not! So why is it that most students are up cramming till crazy hours in the morning?

Some students find themselves up past 12.00am even when they are fully prepared because everyone else is up cramming they feel they have to as well! This is insane! You should never find yourself in the position of cramming.

Our research actually tested this idea and found that students who do extremely well cram significantly less than students who do not do as well. So if you're not cramming what should you be doing the night before?

Relaxing

You want to stay as calm and relaxed as possible the night before your exam. In part this will make sure that you get some sleep. Try and sit back and watch a bit of TV. Go through some of the stress management techniques which are found in the later chapters of this book. Maybe try and take a hot bath.

Focus

Spend some time just mentally preparing for what you want to achieve the next day. This may mean lying in the hot bath visualising how well you will do in the exam room. One student named Dave would read through his notes or maybe just jot down a few essay plans for practice papers. This was just light work which helped him focus his mind on the results he wanted to achieve the next day.

Sleep

Almost all of the top students we interviewed tried to get an early nights' sleep. The last thing you want is to be waking up tired and lethargic. Get enough sleep so you wake up fresh and energised.

Often the night before a big exam you may go to bed and not be able to sleep. If this is the case try and do some of the stress management steps discussed later. As a general rule most top students were aiming for at least 8 hours sleep the night before an exam.

The Morning Of

When you wake up you have 2 tasks at hand. The first is staying relaxed and the other one is staying focused. Try and avoid sleeping in too much because you don't want to be feeling drowsy. In order to feel fresh some students got up a little bit earlier than normal. Once they were up some students developed a morning routine in order to stay relaxed. One student would take a long shower where they would do some breathing exercises and think of the task at hand. For example she would often visualise herself working successfully through the exam and walking out of the exam room with a massive smile on her face. Once she was out of the shower she would get dressed and put together everything she would need for the exam. Some students chose to spend a bit of time just glancing over their Mind Maps® or summaries or going over some of the quotes they have prepared for that day's exams. Others chose to listen to classical or relaxing music on a walkman to avoid distractions before the exam.

Exam Fuel – A Decent Breakfast

Sometimes when you wake up and have those butterflies in your stomach it seems almost impossible, even sickening, to try and get some food down. Despite this, I think we all know a decent breakfast is essential.

Try and avoid fatty or fried breakfasts, too much caffeine and chocolate. If you are one of those people who feels as if they can't eat anything, force yourself to eat a Banana or some fruit. There is nothing worse than getting halfway through an exam and feeling flat or fatigued because you haven't eaten. A decent meal will help you focus and increase your concentration levels, so try to eat something!

Exam Routine

Try and develop an exam routine. This will help to make you feel like you are in control of everything that happens to you instead of feeling like you are being carried along a river to a waterfall! Here are some useful steps collected by students which form a study routine.

You may want to adopt a few or maybe even all of these things for your own routine:

Avoiding Stress Merchants and Speculators

Once you have arrived at school nothing has the potential to break your pattern of focus and calm like stress merchants and speculators. Stress merchants are the people who will tell you how badly prepared they are, how little work they have done and how they expect to do badly. Speculators are the people who are trying to take a punt on what will be in the exam. Usually they are just trying to reassure themselves and will say to you, "Do you know..." and then bring up the most obscure or irrelevant point. Usually you have no idea of what they are talking about and you begin to doubt your study. Don't worry too much about these people, as their speculations are almost always incorrect!

Do your best to avoid these people. Find a quiet corner and listen to a walkman, or focus on what you are going to do when you get in the room, breathe deeply and stay calm. Come out of your hiding spot just before your exam.

Getting ready

Try and get all the really fiddly things out of the way as quickly as possible, but don't rush. With these out of the way you can concentrate on focusing and staying calm. Lay out all your materials in places where you can find them so you don't stress out thinking you forgot something once the exam has started. So put your rulers, pens, calculators and whatever out. Fill out all the details on your exam papers also. If you have taken a bottle of water in with you put it somewhere within easy reach.

Getting focused

It usually takes students about 10 minutes to gain their composure and focus in the exam room. The problem is that first 10 minutes is probably the most crucial, since that is the time in which you are planning the very direction of your answers and the rest of the exam. You cannot afford to waste this time. One of the key characteristics of top students is that they can put themselves into a focused state quickly. Having got the fiddly details out of the way they utilise those last few minutes to mentally focus on their plan of attack. A good way to do this is to focus on your exam paper and rehearse what you are going to do when they say, "You are now ready to begin."

Starting the Exam

As was stated earlier, how you use the first 10 minutes will directly affect the outcome of your exam. This first 10 minutes is absolutely crucial. Having used the last few minutes before the exam to have gained your focus and calm, the exam has now begun and you need to be doing 3 things:

Look at the structure of the question and ration your time

Always look to see how many marks have been allocated to each part of a question. The amount of time you should spend answering each part should accord directly with the marks on offer. By doing this you make sure you dedicate your time to where you will get most of your marks rather than spending most of your time on a question where few marks are available. The following is an example of time rationing:

Total Marks Available in Exam = 90

Total Time Available for Exam = 2 hours

- Question 1 is worth 25 marks
- Question 2 is worth 15 marks
- Question 3 is worth 30 marks
- Question 4 is worth 20 marks

This means that 1 mark = $120/90$ or $4/3$ minutes

Therefore time should be rationed as follows:

- Question 1 = 33 minutes
- Question 2 = 20 minutes
- Question 3 = 40 minutes
- Question 4 = 27 minutes

Once you have rationed your time stick to it like a castaway sticks to their rationed food supplies! Don't go beyond the time allocated. There will always be a temptation to do this. You always have a bit more information to add, but don't be misled into spending the extra time putting it in. Most of your answer would have already been written and you stand to gain very few marks by adding anything else. However, the time you use is being taken away from another section where the marks are greater and even though your intentions were good they will end up costing you. **STICK TO YOUR RATIONS.**

Read the question carefully and then re-read

There is nothing worse than finding out once you have left the exam that you misread a question or did not follow the instructions. Never dive in head first. Read the question carefully and then re-read it.

Plan your essay

Never dive into the essay without planning it first. Essays that are not planned are usually all over the place, confusing or they waffle. This can easily be avoided by taking at least 5 minutes to plan your essay. Often this feels bad because other people are writing and you feel like you are being left behind, but half way through the essay you will be thankful that you took the time.

TECHNIQUE 14: Post- Exam Effectiveness

Your exams have finished. This is often a crazy time for many students. Those

students who stand triumphant like a victorious boxer often get wrapped up in their success, become complacent and lose track of the big picture. Other students feel as if they have just been knocked out and rather than trying to get back on their feet they decide it is time to find a corner to curl up in and hide from the world. Finally all students want to go out and party. Sure, we totally advocate partying, but after a while it is time to get your mind back on the job and look ahead to your next set of exams. This chapter looks at how you can deal with the carnage left over after exams.

The Moments of Truth

After every exam there are 2 moments of truth. These are:

1. Leaving the exam room: You may have a pretty good idea in these few minutes of how well you did.
2. Getting your exam back: If you weren't sure how you went, you are now!

It is in these moments that many students tend to lose the plot and send their Final Year into a Kamikaze nose-dive. No matter how badly you feel at either stage, you must know that even if lady-luck completely thumbed her nose at you, your situation is far from over. Every exam mess-up is salvageable. You just need to know how to save it.

Leaving the Exam Room

Avoid Post-Mortem Merchants

Just as you need to avoid the speculators and stress merchants on the way into the exam, you need to avoid the post-mortem merchants on the way out. The goal of every post-mortem merchant is to make you feel bad. They will ask you how you answered a certain question and without hesitation, point out to you where you were wrong. You then walk away feeling like you screwed up.

We suggest getting straight out and getting a bit of distance from the exam. After ten or so minutes most people have ceased talking about the exam and you will be cool to resume normal socialising. If you do have the bad luck to bump into a post-mortem merchant then just remember, what's done is done; you can't go back and change your answers, so put it behind you and forget about it.

There are times when it can be really important to avoid the post-mortem merchants, especially if you have another exam backing onto the exam you just completed. You don't want to go into the next exam feeling stressed and worried about mistakes you may have made in the previous exam. In these cases make a run for it and get a bit of fresh air and a relaxer.

You've got that sinking feeling

Hopefully you will never have the feeling, where you walk out of an exam and don't know whether you should laugh or cry, because everything just went wrong for you. But hey, think for a second. If it was someone else you would probably laugh right? Its slack but you know you would, so first of all rather than getting all down and beating yourself up, try and have a laugh about it.

If that doesn't work don't lose hope. Some students bomb out in their exam and walk out of the room thinking about giving up. They think to themselves, "Well I screwed that, so I probably don't have any chance of getting my goal." What do you think

usually happens next in these cases? They give up. No matter how badly things go for you never give up. Try and get some perspective. We know this is hard but it is important.

Usually things don't go as badly as you think. In many cases you will walk out the exam with that sinking feeling, get your paper back a week later and be pleasantly surprised. Often in those first post-exam moments students tend to be a bit too hard on themselves. You don't know for sure how you went so quit feeling bad and wait till you get your paper back!

There are those cases though, where you walk out and you know beyond a sliver of doubt that you just crashed and burned. Even if this is true, you need to know **RIGHT NOW** that **THINGS AREN'T OVER**.

Most students screw up at least one exam. One student named Imre bombed out in the trials in his Classical Greek exam. He had a goal of topping the subject but when came close to the bottom of his class, this dream looked dead. Many students would have given up in that moment, but Imre had the perseverance not to let it get him down. He kept hope alive and persisted in hard work and despite this screw up he ended up getting 95% in Classical Greek and came 2nd in the State for that subject. This is a classic story showing that no matter what happens, you can turn any result around. Just because one, or even a few exams go badly doesn't mean the dream is over. So **NEVER, EVER** give up hope.

Post Exam Surge

There is also a well known phenomenon where after an exam the student experiences a huge drain of motivation. Often this is when the student, after having crammed and prepared intensely prior to the exam now feels confident and knowledgeable about that subject. This is a big mistake. You must stay on top of your game especially when you are well prepared and up to date with your studies. A further point is that after an exam you have a great deal of your knowledge stored mentally but the majority of this knowledge will be lost if you don't revise within 24 hours. A great number of top students have stated that by studying or lightly revising after an exam – instead of going out and watching a movie or packing your books up until the next exam, they were able to retain a huge proportion of that studied and crammed information so that they required only a light revision of that section prior to the exams. If however you choose not to actively revise what you have learnt for the exam you will find that all that last minute study will be lost and you will be re-learning for the finals.

"A stitch in time saves nine" is a famous saying that explains this philosophy, where you are able to stitch a hole with only one stitch but if you don't take that opportunity you will need another nine stitches to close the gap after the contents have torn the hole larger. So too with your study, where you are able to lightly revise when you are on top of the subject such as after an exam – do it! This will save the extra nine hours of study you will need to patch it up and re learn this information later in the year when you have forgotten all you have learnt!

If you find that you really have zero motivation, the best way to get around this issue is to employ someone to motivate and push you into a solid couple of hours of revision. An example is a tutor, if you set up a tutorial session after your exam for 2 hours, then you will be compelled to get over this post exam apathy and convert it into a post exam surge. This provides a really good boost of motivation where you can pound that content into your head and remember it! Another option is to find an equally motivated study buddy to motivate you to sit down and go through the exam

paper and the contents again.

Getting Your Exam Back

Blessings in Disguise

The only feeling worse than leaving the exam room thinking you have done badly is getting your exam back and KNOWING that you have done badly! If you didn't feel like quitting before, then you may feel like it now. As we said before even if you have messed up it doesn't mean your hopes are dashed and it doesn't mean you have missed out on the mark you want. You may not realise it at the moment you get that exam back, but this is actually a blessing in disguise and could be the best thing that happens to you in your Final Year.

If you could choose between doing badly in an assessment worth 5% or doing badly in the final exam worth 50% which one would you choose? You'd take the assessment right? Of course you would! Messing up in an assessment is a blessing in disguise because it gives you a learning opportunity. You should never make the same mistake twice. You should learn from your first error, and if you do, you won't make the same error when it really counts.

Learning from Your Mistakes

When we interviewed Imre, he spoke to us about what a blessing his trials mess up turned out to be. Rather than beating himself up and quitting, Imre decided to learn from his mistake. Having previously been considering burning the paper he now decided to take it to his teacher and get him to explain where he lost his marks and how he could do better next time. The teacher was impressed by Imre's commitment and perseverance and therefore sat down with him and walked him step by step through the paper, showing him where he lost his marks and telling him EXACTLY what kind of answers a marker was looking for. What a break! Imre walked away knowing what very few other students knew... what the markers wanted. For his final exam he did exactly what his teacher told him and ended up acing it.

If you get a bad result you need to do exactly what Imre did. You need to learn from your mistake. The key steps to doing this are reflected in Imre's story but just in case you didn't catch them this is what you need to do:

1. Think about it! – Calm yourself down, don't be too emotional and begin to think. Think to yourself that this is an opportunity. Don't destroy the paper as you may want to do, but use it to your advantage.
2. Find out where you went wrong – Have a look through your paper and try and find out where you lost your marks. These are the areas you will need to remedy. Sometimes it will be really clear where you lost your marks, like in a Math's exam. At other times you may not be so sure, take for example an English essay. If this is the case take your paper to the teacher who marked it and do what Imre did. Get your teacher to sit down with you and explain to you where you lost your marks.
3. Get the knowledge – If you made a mistake, odds are you didn't have the knowledge you needed. What you need to do is get that knowledge. If you lost your marks on a particular part in a Math's exam then you may want to go back and work through the exercises for that part in your textbook. Don't stop until you have it down pat and fully understand what you are doing. If you find that you didn't have enough facts in a certain area for an essay, you may want to go back to your text or do some independent research to develop some better knowledge.

4. Seek expert advice – This is a very important step because sometimes we need the help of an expert to take us beyond our current position. ALWAYS seek the advice of an expert. The best person to consult is your teacher. Take your exam to them and get them to explain not only why you didn't do well, but get them to explain to you HOW to do better. Get your teacher to explain what they are looking for and how you can do it. If you have been heading in the wrong direction get them to point you in the right direction. Ask them for some sources which may help you. Listen to what your teacher says and make notes. Write everything down so you don't make the same mistake again. You may also need constant expert advice if you aren't doing well or you feel like you are a long way behind the pace. This may mean finding a tutor to help you for the rest of the year.

5. Make your changes straight away – You don't just want to write down your teacher's advice and hope it is absorbed into your head through some magic process of osmosis. Actually go away and make the changes your teacher advised. Start to implement them straight away. This means re-doing your essay or exam paper and taking it back to your teacher and getting them to mark it again. It also means doing 2 or 3 more practice essays or questions (in most cases your teacher won't mind drafting a few questions for you) and take them back to your teacher and get them to mark these also. If you implement the changes straight away and the teacher says you're on the right track, then the messed up exam will probably be the best thing that ever happened to you. Not only will you not make the same mistake again but you will probably get higher marks than you would have if the exam had never been messed up.

What to do when you do well in an exam

It sounds ironic but one of the greatest risks you run in your Final Year is getting good marks in an exam. The reason is that when many students get a good mark they become complacent, and believe that they no longer need to put as much effort into that subject. Next exam they don't put as much effort in and end up getting a worse mark. The second danger of being complacent is that you begin to settle for good marks. The problem is when you settle for good you miss out on the opportunity of getting outstanding marks. You always want to be improving your marks, so when you get an exam back, sure you can feel happy or satisfied, but you also want to be asking the question, "How do I improve?" When you get a paper back with good marks try going through this process used by many top students:

1. First go through the teacher's comments and find out what they had to say.
2. Then go and see them and ask to speak to them about your paper.
3. First of all, ask them what you did well in the exam so that you can identify your strengths. This way you know what to do to get good marks so that you can do it again.
4. Then ask them what wasn't so good, where you lost your marks. Write these things down so you can improve.
5. Then ask them what you would have needed to do to get a mark which would have been a few marks higher than yours.

STEP 6: Rest and Relaxation

Along the path of any journey a traveller will come face to face with stress. It could be that they are on the go so much, trying to pack so much into their journey that they end up getting burnt out. At the start of their journey they wanted to see everything they could, but now, every church looks the same and it is a struggle to get out of bed in the morning. Stress ended up getting to the traveller and changed the way they felt about their journey.

Believe it or not, even on a supposedly "stress free" holiday stress still finds a way of popping up. It may be when you need directions but no-one speaks your language, it may be when you are looking for a place to stay but every hostel is full or finally when you lose your passport or have a bag stolen. Attached to all of these moments is stress, and unless the traveller knows how to deal with it, the journey ceases to be fun and instead becomes a frustrating chore.

This is exactly the same for the student. Your Final Year should be one of the best years of your life, but if you do not know how to handle stress or how to relax, the year will cease to be fun, and even worse, you may end up doing poorly. A student needs to know not only how to identify stress but how to instantaneously defeat it.

This chapter will introduce you to:

- Ways to monitor your stress and pick the early warning signs of stress;
- Lifestyle Management so that in everyday life you manage stress and maximise your happiness and results;
- Mental Management techniques; and
- Physical Management techniques.

TECHNIQUE 15: Monitor Your Stress

I am sure most of us have heard some horror stories about how stressful the Final Year can be. The number of students who are breaking down each year is constantly increasing. As bizarre as this may sound, most students who do well in their Final Year also have fun at the same time. A good mark should never come at the expense of your sanity, and for this reason stress management is crucial to your success.

By the same token though, if you are going to succeed you are going to need some stress, because this is what pushes us to excel. The real battle is being able to balance stress, to keep it at levels, which help us rather than hinder us. This chapter looks at some methods for learning to balance your stress levels.

The Peak Stress Profile

Everyone has what we call a Peak Stress Profile. The diagram below gives you a look at a stress profile. Each stress profile has three zones in it. The first is called the "Zone of Nothing". You know you are in this zone because you are doing sweet nothing. Obviously it is extremely hard to get good marks whilst you are located here.

On the opposite end of the profile is what we call the "Zone Of Breakdown". When you hit the zone of breakdown you are too stressed. It is here that students burnout,

breakdown, become ill or suffer from depression or anxiety. We will have a look at the tell tale signs of being in the zone of breakdown a bit later.

Finally, in the middle, is the crest of the profile. This is your Peak Stress Profile. This is the "just right" level of stress. This is where you are motivated, focused and productive. Those students who get top marks and stay sane during their Final Year are spending their time at this point of their stress profile.

STRESS

Low Stress

Boredom

High Stress

Anxiousness

Unhappiness

Peak Stress Profile

Where are you on your stress profile?

Each person's stress profile is different. There are some things which may stress out one person and which wouldn't bother another. For example some people freak out when they see a spider, yet another person can stay totally calm and even hold the spider and touch it without feeling squeamish. Obviously these two people have two different stress profiles. What freaked out one person didn't even worry the other. Because it differs from person to person we can't tell you where your exact peak stress profile is. However we can tell you how to find it. Basically you need to look out for certain markers. If you notice any of these in yourself then it will indicate you are not at your peak stress profile.

Below your stress profile: The Zone of Nothing

The following are signs that you are below your peak stress profile and in the zone of nothing. They include being:

- Unmotivated.
- Bored.
- Apathetic.
- Lethargic.
- Lazy.

If you are feeling any of these indicators, you need to create a reason to be motivated and a reason to do some work, in other words you need to start working out some goals. If you already have a goal then it probably means your reasons for achieving your goals are not strong enough.

Above your peak stress profile: The Zone of Breakdown

Generally when we think about someone who is stressed we usually think of someone pulling their hair out and complaining. The problem is that the person was suffering from stress long before they got to this stage. One of the most important skills you will need during your Final Year is to start seeing the signs of stress before they develop and explode. There are clear signs that you are over your peak stress profile and have entered the zone of breakdown. These signs include:

- Nervousness.
- Flustered.
- Difficulty to focus.
- Inability to think straight.
- Moody and tired.
- Emotional and irritable.

- Tense.
- Clammy and cold.
- Loss of appetite.
- Shakes.
- Increased sweating.
- Sleeplessness.
- Butterflies.
- Nausea.

Take special notice of these characteristics because these are like sirens that stress is beginning to take hold of you. If you begin to feel any of these indicators then the odds are you have gone over your peak stress profile. If this is the case you need to deal with it now before it dominates you. The following three chapters give a number of different ways to bring your stress levels down from the zone of break down to your peak stress profile.

We have dubbed these methods the 3 pillars of stress management. They are:

1. Lifestyle Management
2. Mental Management
3. Physical Management

Let's start by going through the lifestyle management techniques.

TECHNIQUE 16: Lifestyle Management

The easiest way to main your peak stress profile is to have a minimum stress lifestyle. This can be achieved by implementing a few of these techniques on a consistent basis. The reason most students breakdown is that they either don't apply any of these techniques or they apply them so irregularly that they are completely ineffective.

There are 5 key lifestyle management techniques. These are:

1. Exercise
2. Socialise
3. Maintain a Healthy Diet
4. Time Management
5. Cultivate Inner Peace

Exercise

You have probably had your teachers, family and friends tell you a million times that you need to exercise regularly during your Final Year, but the odds are that you will still ignore it! Once the work starts piling up students tend to cut back on the amount they exercise. The reason they do it is they believe that taking an hour to exercise equates to losing an hour of study, which they believe will disadvantage them. This couldn't be further from the truth.

The more you exercise the greater your study productivity will be for two reasons:

- **Physical Vibrancy** – If you are physically vibrant you can sit longer at your desk and you also have higher levels of memory retention and focus. If you go long periods without exercise your productivity can decline.
- **Chemical Balance** – Whenever you exercise your body releases endorphins. This is the body's happy gas. One of the best forms of release from stress is exercise. By exercising regularly you ensure that your body is continually releasing endorphins so

that you remain happy. In most cases the happier we are the less stressed we are.

By exercising regularly we ensure that we are physically vibrant and chemically balanced. This means we are more productive, focused, happy and of course, a lot less stressed.

Most top students find some form of exercise to commit to during the Final Year. This may take the form of going for a nightly walk when you reach the point where you feel like you can't work any more. If you are involved in some kind of sport you should definitely maintain this. This will ensure you exercise regularly as well as giving you a good mental diversion from studying. One top student named Imre was doing 7 athletics training sessions a week at one point during his Final Year. Another student who placed in the top 1% of the State used to jog, play Water Polo and go the gym every week. Another student spent at least 6 hours a week in dance classes! They all got top marks, and one of the reasons they did was that they found the time to exercise.

You may want to take a minute now and think about a sport or exercise that you are committed to doing regularly throughout your Final Year and write it down in your anti-stress plan.

I am committed to doing the following exercise or sport regularly:

Socialise

Whatever you are told, doing well at school does not mean giving up your social life. Obviously it doesn't mean going out every night, but it is very important to maintain your social life. Your friends are your ultimate stress relief, so spend time with them.

All of the top students who stayed mentally balanced maintained their social lives. It was quite common for people to use Friday night as a night for unwinding. On these nights they would not do any work and would just go and chill out with their friends. On the other hand, breakdown students would often go long periods without going out. For example one of the students we interviewed believed that she had to basically give up seeing her friends throughout the year to get the mark she wanted. At one stage she even refused to speak to them on the phone! Naturally half way through the year she was totally stressed out and on the verge of breaking down.

The key to socialising is to be disciplined. There will be times when you need to reduce the amount you see your friends and there will be some weekends when it may be in your interest to stay home and miss a party in order to get work done. All top students understood that they needed to cut back on socialising during hectic periods. So be disciplined and cut down on socialising when you need to but otherwise maintain a healthy and balanced social life.

Maintain a Healthy Diet

When the stress begins to pile on many students tend to forget about maintaining anything which even resembles a healthy diet. For example we once heard of a student who was so stressed that she used to either skip her meals or she would eat her dinner sitting at her desk while she studied! Many students fall into this trap of skipping meals in order to max out their study. Remember your brain needs energy to think and where do you think that energy comes from? From food of course, so

don't miss meals, all it will end up doing is decreasing your productivity and leaving you tired, lethargic and stressed.

During stressful periods students also tend to turn to caffeine related drugs to get them through long hauls of study. For example some students' habits range from drinking coffee to keep their eyes open, to drinking energy drinks. Other students go off the deep end by using caffeine - related drugs such as No Doze to keep them awake at their desk. There are three key points to consider here.

The occasional coffee is ok, but if you are using caffeine or energy drinks as a stimulant you are in effect tearing down your defences against stress. Too much caffeine or sugar tampers with your blood sugar levels, and once these become out of wack you become more prone to stress. Finally but most obviously if your body wants to go to sleep and you are taking drugs to stay awake you may as well just open the gates and invite the hordes of stress in. Depriving your body of sleep and creating chemical imbalance is a sure – fire way to move your stress levels into the zone of breakdown.

Time Management

We have dedicated an entire chapter to time management or rather self-management, but it is worth re-iterating here. The reason most students become stressed is that they're not prepared for an exam. Breakdown students are notorious crammers. This is where most of your stress will come during your Final Year. So if you can manage to implement a decent regime of self-management throughout the year you have already won half the battle.

Cultivate Inner Peace

It is crucial that you regularly take time out from the hustle and bustle to distance yourself from study. You need to take some time to cultivate inner peace. Ok, so this may sound hippyish, treehuggerish or corny, but its effects are really powerful. We have found that many students put aside at least one hour each week or a fortnight to cultivate inner peace. This is simply a gift from you, to you. It is a reward for the all the hard work you are putting in, and it is a chance to relax and recharge. Cultivating inner peace is time for you personally. It does not include partying or shopping!

Some of the great examples we have heard are as follows:

- One student used to get a massage every 2 weeks or so.
- One student used to go to the Chinese Gardens where they would just sit in the serenity and relax.
- Other students had rocks that they would sit on which overlooked valleys, beaches, mountains, or serene countryside which helped them to relax.
- Some students would go for a walk along the beach at sunset.
- Some would go to church and pray.
- Others would play a musical instrument.

Even though this is just a few hours out of your routine you will be surprised by how much it lets you get some balance and perspective in your life as well as affording you a great chance to relax and re-charge. You may want to take a minute now and think of an activity that you are committed to doing every 1 or 2 weeks to cultivate inner peace.

Making it Count!

If you manage to implement a few of these lifestyle techniques you will greatly reduce the stress you feel throughout the year. These techniques will help you to maintain your peak stress profile for the best part of the year. Remember students that breakdown, burnout or succumb to stress usually do none of these things. If you aren't doing any of these then commit to some of these lifestyle management steps. There is no reason not to since they are all fun and easy.

I am committed to doing the following activity every week to cultivate inner-peace:

TECHNIQUE 17: Mental Management

Even if you use all 5 lifestyle techniques described in the last chapter there will be times during the year when your stress levels will exceed your peak stress profile. This usually happens at times when there is increased pressure; say for example, during your exams, exam lead up, or those periods when it seems you have mountains of work which don't appear to be getting any smaller.

During these times when you feel like you are being overwhelmed by stress, you can take a second and go through some of these mental practices to instantaneously reduce the stress. The techniques include:

1. Don't Make it Bigger Than It Is.
2. Identification and clarification.
3. Rehearsal and Visualisation.
4. Imagining Relaxation.

Don't Make it Bigger Than it is

One of the key reasons students breakdown from stress or pressure is that they think marks are the be all and end all. In most cases a student will have a very clear goal to get into a certain university course and they believe that the only way to get in is by getting a good final result. In other words they believe should they mess up an exam, that door will be closed to them forever. This sounds pretty ridiculous but you would be amazed by the amount of students who think like this.

For example one student who had a goal to study Law at Sydney Uni nearly drove herself over the brink because she believed that if she didn't get the marks required she would never again have the opportunity to study Law.

The truth of the matter is that the final year, VCE, etc is not the only way to get to wherever it is you want to go. That doesn't mean don't try hard, it simply means that if things don't go as well as you hoped for, the world is not going to suddenly end. One of the great beauties of life is that there is always more than one way to do something.

For example one student who did breakdown during his Final Year failed to realise this. After succumbing to stress, breaking down and becoming ill he went to see his School Counsellor. The School Counsellor realised straight away that this student had blown the Final Year out of all proportion. The Counsellor sat down with the student and walked him through other options. These options were simply different roads leading to the same place if he did not get the marks he wanted. This particular

student wanted to study Medicine and the Counsellor told him that his other options included:

- Starting another course, such as Arts, getting good marks at uni and then transferring in to the degree of his choice.
- He could finish his first degree and then do Medicine as a graduate degree which would be easier to get into.
- Studying interstate where the entrance marks were lower.
- Studying internationally where it wouldn't matter what his marks were.
- He could be a full fee paying student at uni and do the degree of his choice.
- And in the worst case scenario he could repeat Year 12.

Most of the students we interviewed never saw the Final Year as a be all and end all because they knew there were other options or other ways to achieve what they wanted. They all stated that this was very important in maintaining lower stress levels.

Identification and Clarification

How often do you see people complaining about how stressed they are? You see it all the time right? They have all the time in the world to complain about being stressed but they never seem to have the time to actually solve their problem. People would be a lot less stressed if instead of carrying on about it they just asked themselves this simple question; why am I stressed?

As simple as it sounds you can only solve a problem once you know what the problem is, so sit down for a minute and just try and identify what is stressing you out. As soon as you know, you can do something about it! The student who wanted to do Medicine from the example above followed this exact process. After burning out and becoming ill he went to see the School Counsellor in order to identify his problem. Once the Counsellor had identified that his problem stemmed from the fact that he placed too much emphasis on the Final Year they were able to come up with solutions, namely looking at other ways for this student to achieve his goal. As soon as he saw that there were other options, he knew no matter what, he would eventually succeed and he began to relax and get back into his study.

This would have never occurred if he hadn't sat down to think for a few minutes why he was so stressed.

Rehearsal and Visualisation

Have you ever had this happen to you? You had this guy or girl who you really wanted to call for the first time but you were really nervous and stressed because you didn't want them to react badly to the fact that you were calling them. Even more importantly you didn't want to run out of things to say and have that really awkward silence that we all dread. To get around this you probably rehearsed all the things you would say. For example you probably created a reason to call them so they wouldn't think it was weird. You may have also mentally rehearsed a few things to say if the conversation went silent. You may have even visualised yourself in this really good conversation with them! When you did that, whether you knew it consciously or not, you were relying on the techniques of rehearsal and visualisation in order to get over that first phone-call stress and nerves.

Would you believe that those students who stress out about exams are usually doing this exact process but in reverse. Rather than positively rehearsing or visualising, they are actually going through a negative form of the process. Subconsciously these people are usually visualising themselves sitting there in the exam, confused, unable to write an answer and doing really badly. So if you stress about exams you are already using this technique! You just aren't using it the right way!

If you do stress about exams you may just want to take a little time out, whether you are at home before an exam or even outside the exam room and go through a simple rehearsal and visualisation process. You may want to mentally rehearse what you are going to do in the exam room, or even better you may want to reverse those negative pictures so that you visualise yourself sitting in the exam room with a look of focus and concentration on your face. Watch yourself as you ease your way through the exam, writing the best answer a marker has ever read.

Visualise the look on the marker's face as they are delighted by the pure intelligence of your response! Hear the sound of the quiet exam room and the sound of your pen rushing across your paper like lightning and the pages turning as if they have been caught in a tornado. Feel how it feels to know that you are just kicking butt. Visualise yourself getting the paper back with a big 20/20 written on it, hear your teacher congratulate you and feel how it feels to know that you just aced that exam.

After spending a few minutes visualising this, do you think you would be feeling stressed out? No way, you would feel about as pumped as Lleyton Hewitt walking onto a tennis court in a Davis Cup match! Come on!

The process of visualisation is really powerful, and it is used extensively by athletes in competition. If you watched the Olympics you may have seen some of the weird antics that the athletes go through before they compete. One of the most well known is Maurice Greene who used to do that strange thing with his tongue whilst he visualised each step of the race. Another good example was Kyle Van-der-Kyup who used to visualise himself successfully manoeuvring his way over each hurdle. Another person we have spoken about a few times in this book is the Mountaineer - Michael Groom. He also used visualisation at times. He would picture himself on top of the summit of Everest. He found that this would give him the inspiration and determination to push him to succeed.

Rehearsal and visualisation techniques are an amazingly powerful way to lower your stress levels and give yourself a confidence booster. Remember if you are stressing out about exams you are already doing this without realising it! Why not use it in a positive way to kick some serious butt!

Imagining Relaxation

Some students found it really useful to take time out now and then from their study, especially when they found they were beginning to get a bit stressed, to just lie on their bed and go through some imagining relaxation techniques. Others would use these techniques right before an exam. A really good example is one student who used to really stress before exams. Obviously you wouldn't want to walk into the biggest exams of your life stressing out, so about 15 minutes before everyone would go into the exam room she would find a quiet corner where she could be alone and go through this technique. She would sit down and cross her hands as if she was praying. She would then visualise herself sitting inside a church. The church would always be really spacious, but she was the only person ever in it. As a result the

church was just amazingly quiet. You could hear a pin drop in there it was so quiet. She would then sit there for 10 minutes and just pretend she was sitting and praying in that church. As she did, she would feel the stress ebb out of her body and be replaced by a feeling of tranquility and peace. This student wasn't even religious! She was not praying to God to help her get a good mark, she was just pretending to be in the church because to her it was the most quiet and peaceful place in the world, and by imagining herself there she was always able to relax.

This is a really easy technique. All you need to do is think of somewhere that really relaxes you and then spend 10 minutes or so just pretending you are there.

TECHNIQUE 18: Physical Management

Finally one of the best ways to get rid of stress is physical activity. Have you ever noticed that when you get stressed you begin to do certain things with your body? For example the muscles throughout your body all begin to tense up. Your body may become hunched rather than straight and tall. Your breathing becomes a lot shallower and you get less air to your lungs. You may also begin to sweat, clench your jaw or hands or grit your teeth. I am sure we can all identify with a few of these things. This is in essence the physical state of being stressed.

By doing something different with our bodies we actually break the pattern or state of stress. So if you ever have moments where you are studying at home and begin to get a little too tense or a little too stressed, or begin to freak out outside the exam room you can go through some of the physical management techniques to change your state from stressed to relaxed. In doing so you can move your stress levels back from the zone of breakdown to your peak stress profile.

The physical management techniques include:

1. Meditation and Yoga.
2. Breathing Exercises
3. Movement.
4. Power Naps

Meditation and Yoga

Both Meditation and Yoga have become big fads for those living stressful lives. Both of these are great forms of relaxation. Some students would lie on their beds and spend 20-30 minutes trying to take their mind off their work and concentrate on nothing at all. The more flexible could even adopt positions such as the lotus position, and then clear their minds and meditate on nothingness.

A simple exercise that one student used whenever he felt like he had sat at his desk too long, was to lie down on his bed and slowly concentrate on tensing and then relaxing every muscle in his body. He would start at his feet, tensing the muscles as much as he could and then slowly relaxing the muscles until they were totally relaxed. He would then move up to the muscles in his legs. He would then tense his leg muscles until they were totally tense and then relax them slowly.

He would then work his way up his body tensing and relaxing all his muscles one by one until he finished by tensing and relaxing the muscles in his face. After this 10-minute relaxation from studying, he found that when he returned to his desk all the stress had left his body.

Breathing Exercises

Now, we know that YOU never do this, but have you ever seen someone who is really stressed reach for a cigarette, light it up, take a big deep breath and then breathe out in a sigh of relief? Sure we see it all the time. What do you think is relaxing them? The Nicotine? I don't think so! It's the breathing, even though they may be breathing in squalid air, it is that one deep breath that relaxes the person.

Usually when we are stressed we begin to take shallow breaths. The result is that you end up taking in less and less air to your lungs, which means that there is not much oxygen getting to your brain. One of the easiest ways to de-stress is to do breathing exercises. You can use these exercises whenever you are stressed, or as we talked about previously the best place to use breathing exercises is just before an exam.

You see, very few of us actually breathe properly. If you have ever watched someone try and take a deep breath usually their shoulders and chest go upwards. This is a sign that they are not breathing properly. Take a minute and see how you breathe. Now, put your hand on your stomach, when you breathe in your stomach should move out, and when you exhale your stomach should move back in. If your stomach is not moving then you aren't breathing properly.

Now, here's how you do the exercises. You need to breathe in through your nose for one count, hold it for four counts and then exhale through your mouth for two counts. So for example you may breathe in for a count of five (remember through your nose) and then hold it for a count of 20 and then exhale for a count of 10 (through your mouth). The longer the counts are the more oxygen you breathe in. The optimum amount of times you should run through this exercise is 10, although that may not always be possible in an exam room.

At the start it may feel a little bit weird and you may get a kind of head spin, but that is only because we have such bad breathing habits that our body is unaccustomed to getting that much oxygen. If you do the exercise properly you will feel relaxed almost straight away. The greater levels of oxygen will also increase your concentration, focus and mental cognition, which is important in an exam. If you really want to de-stress try and do this every night after you have studied and before you go to bed. You will feel great!

Movement

One of the best ways to break the physical state of stress is through movement. It is very hard to clench your muscles, stoop and breathe shallowly whilst you move. You should try and move as quickly and rapidly as possible. When you feel stressed you may like to go straight out for a run, do some Tai-Chi or do push ups or sit ups. The most fun way to move and dissipate stress is by dancing. Go to your room, turn your stereo up and dance and sing like a maniac. Your parents will probably think that you have gone insane, but this is one of the best and easiest ways to break the physical state of stress!

Power Naps

Often when you are studying you make the decision to start memorising but find you have zero motivation. Other times you are studying and you are so physically tired

your eyes are rolling and your head drooping – this often occurs when you have had a big dinner or lunch and when it is warm in your room. Your bed looks so inviting and you can't think straight. At this point STOP. Any study in this frame of mind will be useless as it will be flying out your ear! You must take a power nap to get back on track and this involves the following sequence:

Set your alarm for 20 minutes (you can have less than this but generally it depends on how quickly you fall asleep). Lie down on the floor or put your head on your desk, it is NOT recommended that you sleep on your bed or anywhere too comfortable as the chances of you waking up get slimmer and slimmer the more comfortable you are. Naturally it is better to be laid out and to stretch however this is only possible if you have grass or carpet that you feel comfortable on.

- Power nap until your alarm goes off
- Wake up and wash your face
- Do breathing exercises for a minute
- You can also make a hot cup of tea or coffee
- You are ready to go!

STEP 7: Have Fun & Enjoy the Journey

There is a story that always gives hope and a perspective about just how long life is.

There was once a mountain climber who was stranded on a huge mountain with craggy cliff faces and sheer drops to both sides. The mountain climber is trapped and the blustering winds and pelting snow makes it impossible to see ahead or behind. And as an avalanche rumbles by and stones start tumbling under foot the mountain climber thinks: "I am surely going to die, my family will never find me – I am lost, this mountain will be my lonely grave".

Looking down at the mountain's broad and strong back, the mountain climber's whole world IS the mountain. All the rock ledges and the treacherous twists and turns in the path carved out of the mountain, the ridges and the gullies in the mountain's side. Everything the mountain climber sees is the mountain.

But somehow the weather clears and the path leads the mountain climber to a hut at the foot of the mountains. It is at the base of the mountain while drying out over a hot cup of soup that the mountain climber can see the sun shining down on the mountain and all the brother and sister mountains in the distance. The mountain climber can see how stretching far into the distance is a mountain range where the mountain seems so small compared to hundreds of other mountains.

You see when we are lost in a problem, like the mountain climber on the mountain, all we see is the mountain. It is only when we are looking at the mountains from a distance, looking at the mountain range and all the peaks in the distance that we realise that in life, the years in high school will seem like just another bump in your path. The hard part is having that perspective now.

But take it from all people interviewed, every single one of them now realises how this personal journey or this mountain fits into the panorama view of the landscape of life. The most important thing about your time is that you have fun, take happy snaps and put it all into perspective – what lasts longer than the marks are the friendships, memories, experiences and the journey learning about yourself.

TECHNIQUE 19: Putting It All Into Perspective

A speech:

"I have no specialised field of interest or expertise, which puts me at a disadvantage talking to you today. I'm a novelist. My work is human nature. Real life is all I know. Don't ever confuse the two, your life and your work. The second is only part of the first.

Don't ever forget what a friend once wrote to Senator Paul Tsongas when the Senator decided not to run for re-election because he had been diagnosed with cancer: No man ever said on his deathbed, "I wish I had spent more time at the office."

Don't ever forget the words my father sent me on a postcard last year: "If you win the rat race, you're still a rat." Or what John Lennon wrote before he was gunned down in the driveway of the Dakota: "Life is what happens while you are busy making other plans."

You will walk out of here this afternoon with only one thing that no one else has. There will be hundreds of people out there with your same degree; there will be thousands of people doing what you want to do for a living. But you will be the only person alive who has sole custody of your life. Your particular life. Your entire life. Not just your life at a desk, or your life on a bus, or in a car, or at the computer. Not just the life of your mind, but the life of your heart. Not just your bank account but your soul. People don't talk about the soul very much any more. It's so much easier to write a resume than to craft a spirit.

But a resume is a cold comfort on a winter night, or when you're sad, or broke, or lonely, or when you've gotten back the test results and they're not so good.

Here is my resume:

I am a good mother to three children. I have tried never to let my profession stand in the way of being a good parent.

I no longer consider myself the centre of the universe.
I show up. I listen. I try to laugh.

I am a good friend to my husband. I have tried to make marriage vows mean what they say.

I am a good friend to my friends, and they to me. Without them, there would be nothing to say to you today, because I would be a cardboard cutout. But I call them on the phone, and I meet them for lunch.

I would be rotten, or at best mediocre at my job, if those other things were not true. You cannot be really first rate at your work if your work is all you are.

So here's what I wanted to tell you today:

Get a life. A real life, not a manic pursuit of the next promotion, the bigger paycheck, the larger house.

Do you think you'd care so very much about those things if you blew an aneurism one afternoon, or found a lump in your breast?

Get a life in which you notice the smell of salt water pushing itself on a breeze over Seaside Heights, a life in which you stop and watch how a red tailed hawk circles over the water or the way a baby scowls with concentration when she tries to pick up a Cheerio with her thumb and first finger.

Get a life in which you are not alone. Find people you love, and who love you. And remember that love is not leisure, it is work. Pick up the phone. Send an e-mail. Write a letter.

Get a life in which you are generous. And realize that life is the best thing ever, and that you have no business taking it for granted. Care so deeply about its goodness that you want to spread it around. Take money you would have spent on beers and give it to charity. Work in a soup kitchen. Be a big brother or sister.

All of you want to do well. But if you do not do good too, then doing well will never be enough.

It is so easy to waste our lives, our days, our hours, our minutes. It is so easy to take for granted the colour of our kids' eyes, the way the melody in a symphony rises and falls and disappears and rises again.

It is so easy to exist instead of to live.

I learned to live many years ago. Something really, really bad happened to me, something that changed my life in ways that, if I had my druthers, it would never have been changed at all. And what I learned from it is what, today, seems to be the hardest lesson of all:

I learned to love the journey, not the destination. I learned that it is not a dress rehearsal, and that today is the only guarantee you get.

I learned to look at all the good in the world and try to give some of it back because I believed in it, completely and utterly. And I tried to do that, in part, by telling others what I had learned.

By telling them this: Consider the lilies of the field. Look at the fuzz on a baby's ear. Read in the backyard with the sun on your face. Learn to be happy."

This was the commencement speech by the writer, Anna Quindlen, to the graduates at an American university in 2002. It is important because you too are about to graduate and all that stands in front of you now is a stressful and busy period of your life.

It so important to keep things in perspective because there will always be bad times. Guaranteed. But it is these bad times that will teach you to "love the journey, not the destination", just as we have tried to explain in this book. You must remember that as a mountain climber on a mountain, there will be times where things will be rough and difficult but eventually you will be looking at all these peaks and valleys from a distance at the foothills of that mountain. You will realise that mountain was only one in a huge range and that when the memories are left, all you will remember is the fun and the warm afterglow of an amazing period of your life. Do well and study hard, but enjoy the journey not just the destination. Learn to be happy and good luck.

Keep Learning!

Congratulations!

You have now learnt the fundamentals to the Science of Student Success™. As our way of saying thank you Elevate Education would like to give you deeper thoughts and insights into how to use the Science of Student Success™ to ensure you achieve the result you want.

To register in a **FREE** upcoming Science of Student Success™ Seminar call:

(02)8250 1020

Please visit our website:

www.elevateeducation.com

Ordinary Students Achieving Extraordinary Results



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Australian high school students are experiencing more intense competition and greater pressures than ever before as they compete for limited tertiary places.

Never before have students so young had to cope with such expectations and it was to help Australian high school students deal with these sudden changes that Elevate Education developed the Science of Student Success™. This is the first book of its kind and an essential handbook for any student navigating the difficult high school journey.

Elevate Education has interviewed over 400 students who have completed the final year and of those 400 students, 200 received a TER/ result of 98+ (placing in the top 2% of the State). From this research we have discovered exactly what top students do during the final year.

Our philosophy is that the quickest and most effective way to achieve success is to find someone who has achieved the success you want and learn from their journey. The Science of Student Success™ is a handbook to a student's journey where you will have 400 guides and you will find a treasure trove of priceless information and real life inspirational experiences of previous high school students.

Good luck on your journey!