

# SURVIVING YEAR 12



SAY *hello*



# INTRODUCTION

**Your last year of high school is a tough time. Nobody's going to deny that. Not your teachers, not your parents and certainly not your friends. But it's also an exciting time. You're on the brink of being a fully-fledged adult, about to be released into the world armed with everything you've learned so far.**

Although it's a given that there will be a certain amount of inevitable stress during your final year, a few handy tips can make all the difference to keeping calm and clear minded, and getting you well on your way to exam success and the degree and career you deserve.

**From study tips and memory techniques to healthy snack ideas and how to relax, this is your go-to guide for surviving your final high school year.**



## STUDY

### START FROM THE START

If you want to get to the end of the year and feel as stress free as you can (given the circumstances), you've really got to start taking good notes right from the beginning

and then you've got to organise them well. Just imagine how many notes you'll have by the end of the year, and if you haven't organised them properly, they'll basically be rendered useless. Here are some good tips for making and keeping good notes:

- Use a highlighter for key points or words. Get a few different colours, so you can colour code (e.g. you might use pink for key points, blue for secondary, and so on).
- Buy yourself a few different folders and a ton of dividers so that you can find everything easily.
- Make notes with bullet points – they help you organise your thoughts and are easy to read.

**This one's obvious, but worth a mention:**

**WRITE CLEARLY**



You'll also need to actually pay attention right from the start. Exams may seem so far away during the first semester, but you'll be so annoyed with yourself if you're sitting in the exam room and can't for the life of you remember what they taught for the first few months because you didn't think they'd test you on it.



## TIMING IS EVERYTHING

When you get home from school, the last thing you want to do is more work. But if you set aside some time every day, you'll get into the routine and it'll seem like less of a chore. You can never underestimate the power of positive habit building. Some people work best as soon as they get home because their brains are still in work mode and will continue to be productive

with ease. Others work better once they've had a break so their brains can rest and recharge before the next session. It's all about how you work best. But when you figure out which one you suits you better, make sure you set aside the time to actually do it! A little every day is much more manageable than cramming a few days' worth into one evening.

## MAKE A WORK ZONE

If you study at the same time in the same place every day, you'll find your brain switches into productive work much more easily. As soon as you sit down at the desk where you work, messages will be sent to your brain to tell it:

**// Hey, it's work time!**

Keep your work zone clear and clean. If your workspace is cluttered, your brain will be cluttered. Spend a minute tidying up the area so that you've just got what you need on the desk - your computer, folder, pen, or whatever you need for that particular subject.



## STUDY IN STUDY PERIOD

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Yeah, not all your friends may be using the time productively, and you'd much rather sit around chatting, but when you get home and have less to do, and when it's exam time and you've got awesome, well-written notes to revise from, you'll be pretty happy.

You know the old adage:

**// By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.**

It may sound cheesy, but it's true.

## DON'T DELAY COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY APPLICATIONS

Start thinking about what you want to do after high school early on. You may feel a little bit like you're fishing in the dark, picking random professions, but this is the process that most people go through. Very few people have a solid, unwavering college or university path from the word go. But the more time you've had to mentally juggle your different options, the clearer the 'right' one will become.

Once you've made up your mind, start applying early. It's a seriously time-consuming process. Sending your applications off as soon as you can means there's one less thing to worry about – because you've got enough on your plate! You can also apply to colleges and universities directly, as well as through the systems such as UCAS or VTAC.

The best advice is try and visit the colleges and unis you're keen on. Open Days are an excellent way to discover more about your preferred courses, colleges or universities. Most institutions have them a couple of times a year so keep an eye out for these dates. You'll get a real sense of the vibe and ethos by walking around, chatting to a couple of lecturers and current students and looking at the kind of work on the wall.

## TALK TO YOUR TEACHERS

Your teachers know the most about your final exams than anyone in your school. They've seen students do it over and over and over again. Take advantage of this! They'll be able to help you figure out what you need to do and how to do it.

Ask teachers for a list of key things you need to study. Also ask them about the best way to study for their particular subject. Ask them what they'd do - what they'd study, how they'd take notes and how they'd revise. You never know what useful tips you might get.

**There's a reason they're teaching that subject: THEY'RE REALLY GOOD AT IT!**



## REMEMBER HOW TO REMEMBER

Memory techniques are very useful. First and foremost, you must truly understand the information you're trying to learn. If you don't really understand it, then it's very hard to recall it, especially after a period of time.

Getting information to properly stick in your brain is all about converting information from your short-term memory to your long-term memory. You can try different techniques and see what

works for you. Coming up with silly rhymes or songs can work, as can using the Cornell Method of note taking and making flow charts, mind maps and diagrams. You're basically trying to build up memory triggers.

With silly rhymes and songs, basically the more outrageous the better. Rhymes and humour are great memory techniques, just associate the thing you want to remember with something that

reminds you of it: familiar locations, activities or objects. You could even use your imagination to make it exciting turning an everyday occurrence into a Hollywood style movie.

**The Cornell method is a note-taking system devised in the 1950s by Walter Pauk, an education professor at Cornell University in the US. Pauk advocated its use in his best-selling book *How to Study in College*.<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Pauk, Walter; Owens, Ross J. Q. (2010) [1962], *How to Study in College* (10 ed.), Cengage Learning, ISBN 978-1-4390-8446-5



## Here is an example of The Cornell Method:

2 ½"

6"

### Cue Column

### Note-taking Column

- 1. Record:** During the lecture, use the notetaking column to record the lecture using telegraphic sentences.
- 2. Questions:** As soon after class as possible, formulate questions based on the notes in the right-hand column. Writing questions helps to clarify meanings, reveal relationships, establish continuity, and strengthen memory. Also, the writing of questions sets up a perfect stage for exam-studying later.
- 3. Recite:** Cover the notetaking column with a sheet of paper. Then, looking at the questions or cue-words in the question and cue column only, say aloud, in your own words, the answers to the questions, facts, or ideas indicated by the cue-words.
- 4. Reflect:** Reflect on the material by asking yourself questions, for example: "What's the significance of these facts? What principle are they based on? How can I apply them? How do they fit in with what I already know? What's beyond them?"
- 5. Review:** Spend at least ten minutes every week reviewing all your previous notes. If you do, you'll retain a great deal for current use, as well as, for the exam.

### Summary

After class, use this space at the bottom of each page to summarize the notes on that page.

2"



## IN THE EXAM

Time management is so important in exams. Think about how many questions there are and how long you have to spend on each one, and stick to that time allotment. Don't waste 10 minutes dwelling on one question if it's not worth that many marks – highlight it and go back to it later. There's nothing more annoying than running out of time before you get to finish.

Download past tests from the internet and practice, practice, practice. If you do five or so practice tests over the weeks and months leading up to your exam, not only will you know the nature of the questions better, but you'll also have a much better understanding of how long to spend on each question.



## HEALTH

## LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

Keeping healthy and fit will keep those mental juices flowing. If you aren't already into a sport at school, then make an effort to do some exercise either in the morning or when you get home from school. By being active, you're helping your body perform at its best, both mentally and physically. Exercising increases

energy levels and helps you sleep better, too. And what's more, if you've got an exam, doing some exercise in the morning will make you more alert and help you to concentrate.

Choose activities that you enjoy. If you actually have fun while you're doing it, you're much more likely to

keep it up. Some fun ways to exercise are:

- Yoga
- Boxing
- Cycling
- Indoor wall climbing
- Running
- Buy an exercise video



## YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

Diet is so important in keeping your energy levels high and helping you concentrate. It's not a good idea to try to study when you're hungry - your brain won't be as productive as it should be, which could lead to you getting frustrated.

These are some great healthy snack ideas:

- Grilled chicken and haloumi salad
- Avocado on whole-wheat toast
- Bliss balls
- Handful of nuts
- Smoothie
- Couple of boiled eggs
- A banana
- Fruit salad

## GET ENOUGH SLEEP

Sleeping is so important. And this especially applies to the night before an exam. Don't stay up late studying the night before. Sleep plays a huge role in concentration, focus and alertness. But you probably already knew that. What you might not have known is that because of the healing nature of sleep, it also helps information be retained for the long term. Meaning that lack of sleep may mean you forget

the information you've so arduously studied. You should aim to get seven to eight hours of sleep each night.

If you're having problems sleeping, some great sleeping aids are:

- Chamomile tea before bed
- Meditation before bed
- Do not look at the phone, computer or iPad for at least an hour before bed - the artificial light tells your brain that it's daytime and wakes it up.
- Get enough exercise throughout the day
- Go to sleep at the same time every night
- No caffeine after midday



## DON'T FORGET TO RELAX

Spending time with friends, enjoying a sport or watching your favourite TV program can actually help you work better. Your brain can't function at 100% capacity all the time, and you need to give it time to rest to avoid information overload. A bit of can increase how productive you are in your next downtime study session.



## RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Sometimes stress gets the better of people. If your stress levels are high, you won't be able to perform at your best. And after a while, you'll become rundown. There are so many great ways to relax.

Here are a few ideas:

- Chat to a friend, relative or teacher
- Meditation
- Yoga
- Sports
- Deep breathing
- Going for a walk
- Have a massage
- Swimming



## RESULTS

**Getting the results you want and acing your way into college or uni is obviously the ideal outcome. But even if you don't get the results that you were looking for, despite your best efforts, it's not the end of the world. You just need to keep it in perspective, and look at other options. There are many ways to be successful in life.**

**Sarah Henderson, a writer for The Guardian, shares her story:**

"I went on to do well at university – I have a bachelor's degree and an honours degree from a reputable university considered to be among the best at teaching my chosen field. I have a nice job, and will one day tackle post grad. But six years ago, I pretty much blew the HSC. I never even bothered to look at my marks but I assure you that aside from the band 5 for art (my teacher couldn't contain her excitement), I doubt I scraped a band 4 for anything else. I didn't get the marks for any course on offer, and yet I'm still standing. My world didn't end. They didn't come to take me away."

"Luckily for me, my parents knew that university would always be there. They assured me that rejection would not ruin my future, and that it could in fact be one of the best things to happen to a young person. They also told me that there was more than one path to university, a detail which had never been pointed out to me by high school staff. Universities offer multiple alternative ways to attend, many of them recognising that the HSC (or state equivalent) isn't flawless and that there are students who briefly fell between the cracks but go on to flourish at university and life."<sup>2</sup>

At the end of the day, if you don't get the marks you expected, there are still many ways to get where you want to be. You've just got to explore the alternatives, perhaps get some real-world experience and then figure out your best plan of action.

2 [www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com)

# CAREER

## FOLLOW YOUR PASSION



Choosing what you want to do in life is such a hard decision. You've got information coming from all directions: teachers, parents and friends. And how are you meant to choose a career when chances are you've never even studied that exact topic.

But at the end of the day, you've just got to go with your gut. What do you really love? Where do your passions lie? If you choose something purely because your parents told you so, or because you think you should, you may very well hate it and regret the decision four months into your first year of uni or college.

## KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Who do you know who has the job you want or are thinking about? Do you know any older siblings, family members or friends who studied what you want to study? Ask these people questions like:

- What sort of skills do you need?
- What was it like to study that subject?
- What are the challenging parts?
- What are the fun parts?
- What do I need to know?

Look for a business in the local area that does what you want to do. Call them up and ask if there are any internship opportunities. You'll learn so much by being on the job and speaking to people who have the career you want.



# CONCLUSION



**Year 12 is inevitably going to be stressful. After all, there's a lot on the line. But if you commit yourself wholeheartedly from the start, the rest of the year will flow much easier.**

There's not one study and career path for everybody.

We're all different. And that's exactly why there are as many subjects as there are, as many different types of courses and degrees, and as many routes to get where you want to be.

It's all about finding what works for you, putting in the hours, and not losing

sight of why you're doing it all. There is a light at the end of the tunnel, and that will lead you to a whole new exciting chapter in your life. Regardless of whether you take the straight path or find another way – success in life is all relative, it's what it means to you.

**SAY** *hello*

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