

Minimise Study Time
Maximise Scores



Exam/Study Tip # 36: Creating Effective Exam Study Timetables (Part 1)

Here are a few suggestions regarding how to approach the huge task of preparing for the exams.

Note:

- These suggestions may not suit or apply to every student. Extract those ideas and concepts that are relevant to you and design your own study timetables.
- The suggested timetable applies to students sitting **six** HSC exams.

1. Determine how much time (in hours) you'll need to prepare for your exams.

How much time will be required will depend on the following:

- The difficulty and level (Year 11 vs Year 12) of each subject.
- Whether you are preparing for mid-years, trials or final HSC exams.
- How often materials have been reviewed.
- Whether you've been working through examination-style questions across the year.
- Whether you have a detailed, comprehensive set of notes from which to learn.
- The learning and revision techniques being used.

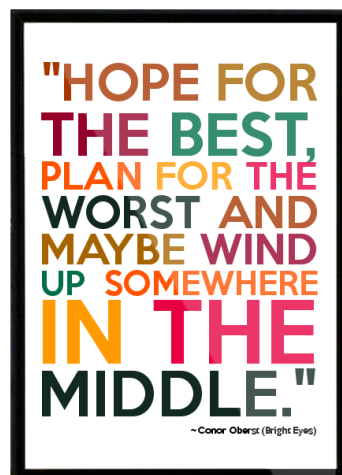
If you put in a solid study effort when preparing for a particular subject trial exam **and** you achieved a mark greater than 75% in that same subject, allocate 40 hours to prepare for the HSC exam. Therefore, if you scored at least 75% in all 6 HSC subject trial exams, you will need 240 hours to prepare for the HSC exams.

Otherwise, put aside 50 – 60 hours per subject to complete exam preparations.

2. Determine how much time, in hours, could be spent on exam preparations each week IF there were no after school commitments.

If there are **NO** after school commitments, students will be able to spend at least 25.5 hours per week preparing for their exams. This will **not be possible** in the early stages, however, sufficient opportunities will be available to catch up after the majority of school assessments have been completed.

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Weekdays: 3 hours of exam preparation each day (eg. Two 90 minute sessions).
Saturdays: 6 hours of exam preparation (eg. Four 90 minute sessions).
Sundays: 4.5 hours of exam preparation (eg. Three 90 minute sessions).

Note that this schedule will enable students to complete **seventeen** 90 minute exam preparation sessions per week.

Exam Prep (Hrs)	Schedule
3 Hour Sessions	40 min exam prep – 10 min break – 40 min exam prep 30 minute break 40 min exam prep – 10 min break – 40 min exam prep
4.5 Hour Sessions	40 min exam prep – 10 min break – 40 min exam prep 30 minute break 40 min exam prep – 10 min break – 40 min exam prep 30 – 60 minute break 40 min exam prep – 10 min break – 40 min exam prep
6 Hour Sessions	40 min exam prep – 10 min break – 40 min exam prep 30 minute break 40 min exam prep – 10 min break – 40 min exam prep 60 – 120 minute break 40 min exam prep – 10 min break – 40 min exam prep 30 minute break 40 min exam prep – 10 min break – 40 min exam prep

3. Calculate the time, in weeks, that will be required to prepare for your exams.

$$\text{Total number of weeks required} = \frac{\text{Total Time Required (Hrs)}}{\text{Time Available Each Week (Hrs)}} = \frac{240}{25.5} = 9.41 = 9 \text{ weeks}$$

4. Plan to have all your learning completed by the time of your first written exam.

Although the majority of students will be studying until the last minute, by working towards an earlier deadline, you're creating a valuable buffer that will compensate for lost time due to homework and personal commitments.

If you do, however, manage to revise/re-learn course materials before your first written exam, use the remaining time to work through past papers under examination conditions. This will enable you to strengthen problem-solving and application skills and provide you with sufficient opportunities to improve on weak areas before the actual exam(s).

Note: Do not panic if you haven't revised/re-learned all examinable materials by the above mentioned deadline. You will still have **plenty of time** to complete exam preparations on the days between subject exams.

5. Determine when you should start actively preparing for your exams.

Total number of weeks required = 9 weeks

As the school holidays offer at least 51 hours of study opportunities each week, each week of the school holidays counts as 2 exam preparation weeks. This means that students need to put aside the entire 2 week school holiday period as well as an additional 5 weeks to prepare for their HSC exams.

Start Date = 2 weeks holidays + 5 weeks
= 7 weeks before the English exam

HSC English Examination = Thursday 18 October 2018

Start Date: Monday 27 August 2018

<i>At Home or Revision at School</i>				
Mon 27 Aug 2018	Mon 3 Sep 2018	Mon 10 Sep 2018	Mon 17 Sep 2018	Mon 24 Sep 2018
10.5 Hrs Exam Prep (7 Exam Prep Sessions)	25.5 Hrs Exam Prep (17 Exam Prep Sessions)	25.5 Hrs Exam Prep (17 Exam Prep Sessions)	25.5 Hrs Exam Prep (17 Exam Prep Sessions)	51 Hrs Exam Prep (35 Exam Prep Sessions)

<i>Week 1 Holidays</i>		<i>Week 2 Holidays</i>	<i>Sun 14 Oct 2018 "Complete" Exam Prep</i>
Mon 1 Oct 2018	Mon 8 Oct 2018	Mon 15 Oct 2018	
51 Hrs Exam Prep (35 Exam Prep Sessions)	51 Hrs Exam Prep (35 Exam Prep Sessions)	0 Exam Prep Weeks (0 Exam Prep Sessions)	

Note: Do not panic if you haven't revised/re-learned all examinable materials by the above mentioned deadline. You will still have **plenty of time** to complete exam preparations on the days between subject exams.

6. Determine how many 90 minute exam prep sessions will be allocated to each subject.

Divide the total number of hours required to prepare for your exams by the length of each exam prep session:

$$\text{Total number of exam prep sessions available} = \frac{240}{1.5} = 160$$

Divide this value by the number of subjects being studied:

$$\text{Number of exam prep sessions per subject} = \frac{160}{6} = 26.67 \approx 27$$

i.e. Allocate 27 exam prep sessions to each subject being examined.

**WORK
WINS OVER
SMARTS**

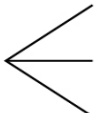
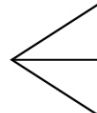
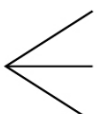
7. Determine how your subject materials will be divided.

If each 90 minute exam prep session is dedicated to just one subject then:

- Each subject can be divided into 27 sections or topics.
- The notes for each subject can be divided into 27 sections or sets.

This means that you'll have 90 minutes to revise/re-learn one section or one set of notes in a particular subject.

8. Divide subject materials into different sizes and difficulty levels.

Difficulty Level		Length of Notes or Section Size
Easy topics & topics you enjoy		Small topic or set of notes
		Average sized topic or set of notes
		Large topic or set of notes
Topics that you "sort of understand"		Small topic or set of notes
		Average sized topic or set of notes
		Large topic or set of notes
Difficult topics & topics you dislike		Small topic or set of notes
		Average sized topic or set of notes
		Large topic or set of notes

9. Aim to re-learn/revise an average of 17 sets of notes or 17 topics each exam preparation week.

Remember that this **will not** be initially possible, and sufficient buffers have been incorporated into the suggested timetable to take this into account.

Note that the 17 sets of notes or topics that should be addressed each week **do not** need to be restricted to just one subject. You can choose to revise/re-learn 5 Chemistry topics, 2 Maths topics and 10 Physics topics in one particular week, and then change the number of topics covered in each subject in the following week.

In What Order Should Topic Materials Be Covered?

Rank each topic in a subject in the order that you **would prefer to** study them.

- If your workload is light and you're feeling psychologically strong – choose the topic that's been ranked last.

Why?

Topics that you don't like or regularly put off are usually the topics that you don't understand and that require the greatest amount of attention. These sections of the course should be addressed first so that there's sufficient time to understand and commit the materials to memory.

- If you have a lot of homework to do, are feeling tired or de-motivated, choose an easy topic to learn, or a set of notes that are small in volume.
- If you're struggling with time, choose the topics that carry the greatest weighting in the exams. Leave those topics/sections of the course that are worth very few marks until all other materials have been committed to memory.
- Cross off each topic on the supplied "cross off list" as it's been committed to memory.

Important Suggestions:

- Complete assigned homework before starting exam preparations each day.
- Structure timetables and/or the order in which topics are covered so that the bulk of your exam preparations are being done on weekends and on those evenings where homework requirements are light.
- While students are still attending school, weekdays can offer up to 4 hours of exam preparation if homework requirements are light and students use every available minute across the day. **For example:** Free periods should be used to address homework, leaving the "active learning" or "memorising" to be done at home. Students should also use travelling times where possible.
- Weekends offer students the opportunity to address additional sets of notes (and hence reduce how much learning is required across weekdays) or to tackle very large or difficult sections of notes.
- Do not plan to learn any sets of notes on days when you have large volumes of homework that cannot be postponed.
- Students often get anxious and develop anxiety when they solely concentrate on 1 subject at a time. Although students who adopt this approach are still learning the same volume of materials as other students, many feel that they're not making sufficient progress as they're not attending to other subjects. We therefore recommend that students work on 2 to 3 subjects at a time.
- Students do not need to focus on just one subject each day. Some students may prefer to divide their available time each day to multiple subjects. **For example:** 1 – 2 subjects on weeknights, 2 – 3 subjects on weekend days. Choose the approach that you feel most comfortable with.
- Spend at least 15 minutes each night reading your English texts **OUT LOUD**. This will help commit information to memory and will make a marked impact on your vocabulary and essay writing skills.
- Allocate sufficient time to read through practical work.
- Read as many A/A+ English essays as possible (and out loud). Visit Edge Online at www.tsfx.com.au to access our large collection of A/A+ essays at no charge!
- Each Sunday, analyse the timetable for the forthcoming week. Don't be concerned if you find that you need to revise the timetable on a daily basis.

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Additional Suggestions

- Remember to start exam preparations earlier rather than later and when stress levels are low. Stress decreases how much you can remember as well as how much information can be processed in a given amount of time. This means that it will take you longer to prepare for your exams under stressful conditions.
- Don't commit the same subject materials to memory for more than 4 hours at a time. The concentration of brain chemicals (neurotransmitters) involved in memory and learning decrease dramatically after 4 hours, which means that it will take you longer to complete a learning task. You will learn more when you spend 4 hours/day across 5 days as compared to 10 hours/day across 2 days.
- If you must commit information to memory for more than 4 hours in a day, change subjects or the learning style being used every few hours. For example, spend 2 – 3 hours learning mathematics and then switch to a non-calculation based subject such as English or Biology. As different parts of the brain are involved in different activities, when you switch to a completely different subject, you'll be using a different part of the brain with high concentrations of neurotransmitters.
- Don't waste time in the weeks leading up to the examinations writing notes from which to learn. If you aren't attending the **TSFX Exam Revision Lectures**, use your text book and school notes as your learning materials and start actively committing these resources to memory. Those students attending our **Exam Revision Lectures** will receive a detailed and comprehensive set of notes from which to learn.
- Irrespective of which subject you're studying, the most effective way to learn is by reading materials out loud, followed by recitation (explaining what you've read out loud in your own words). Not only does this technique improve how much you commit to memory and reduce the time you need to spend learning, it also assists in the development of better writing and communication skills. This is a great way of preparing for essay writing without concentrating on the actual task!
- If you're studying a subject that involves calculations, you'll obviously spend large amounts of time putting pen to paper. To make learning more effective, vocalise what you're doing and why you're doing it every time you come across a question that addresses a different mathematical technique/concept. This will ensure that you effectively commit solution processes to memory and develop stronger application skills, which will be a great asset when addressing those questions you've not seen before, as well as the more challenging questions in the exams.
- As you're revising/working through materials, highlight the questions that you answered incorrectly or found challenging, and re-visit these questions before the examinations. Use the remaining time to work through different books/resources. The greater your exposure to different resources, the better you'll perform in the examinations.
- Seek advice and different perspectives from as many sources as possible, **especially from official HSC exam markers**. These individuals have access to important information that many teachers aren't aware of, and which can make a big difference when aiming for the higher marks.

Note:

When materials are presented in a different manner, comprehension rates improve significantly, reducing the amount of time needed to prepare for the exams. Hearing information from a different perspective also helps to build more **extensive connections in the brain**, improving how much you can remember, how well you can recall information when it is needed, and how well you can apply information in the exams.

Good luck with your exam preparations!

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