Minimise Study Time
Maximise Scores

# Exam/Study Tip # 5: Using the School Holidays to Your Advantage

No doubt you've been looking forward to the school holidays, and deservedly so! However, with the **trial exams fast approaching**, we strongly recommend that you put aside as much of the school holidays as possible for study activities. Not only will this reduce stress levels and study loads in Term 2, you'll be giving yourself a significant advantage over your HSC peers. As most students **don't** invest much time to their studies during the Term 1 break and the first few weeks of Term 2, every hour you invest into your studies across this period will get you further ahead in the '**HSC race'**, making it harder for your peers to catch up, improving your subject rankings and ATAR results.

**So how should students be using their school holidays?**

- **Revise the topics** that have been covered at school.
- Finalise your **summary/revision notes** while course materials are still fresh in mind.

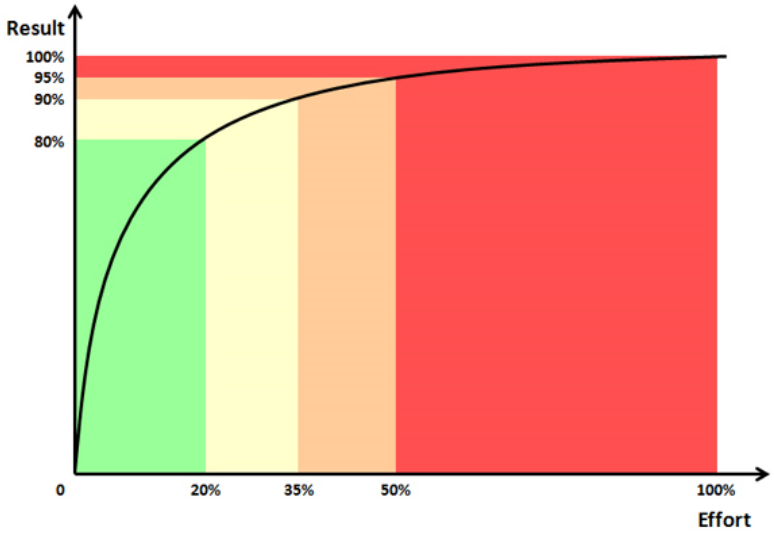
  Not only will this reduce the amount of study required in the hectic weeks before the exams, your assessment marks will greatly improve, giving you a further **advantage** over your HSC peers.
- Read (or re-read) your assigned English texts.
- Work through the topics that will be covered in Term 2 **before** they're addressed at school. By getting ahead, you will:

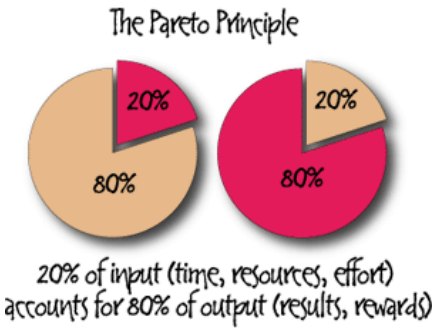
  - absorb more information in the classroom.
  - develop a stronger understanding of course materials.
  - reduce the time spent completing homework.
  - improve your ability to recall information and apply concepts.

  Working through topics for the second time at school has the **added benefit** of engraining examinable materials deeper into long-term memory, which will decrease the amount of time you'll need to prepare for your exams.

  Your assessment marks will also **significantly improve**, giving you that **added advantage** in the quest for the highest possible marks.
- If there isn't enough time available to get ahead in all your subjects:

  - Concentrate on the subjects that are being assessed first and/or the subject(s) which you find most difficult.
  - Alternatively, try to get 1 to 2 weeks ahead in each subject. Then spend part of each weekend in Term 2 doing all you can to maintain this critical lead, focusing on your 3rd and 4th best subjects. Note that you'll get the greatest improvement in marks per study hour when you invest your time into your weaker subjects (refer to the Pareto Principle on the next page).




- Practise applying learned concepts by working through past exam questions.

  Work through as many past examination questions as you can so you can build the skills that you'll need to achieve the higher examination marks (these take a bit of time to establish!)

  The best way to develop strong examination skills at this stage of the year is to work through past exam questions **by TOPIC.** If no such resources exist in a subject, simply print out 5 to 10 past HSC examination papers from the NESA website, and work through the relevant questions. If you're studying HSC subjects, **do not**, however, work through any questions from the last two official HSC examinations. Save these papers to complete under exam conditions one week before each exam, and use them to refine the pace that you'll need to adopt if you're to complete each examination paper in the allocated time.

- Use the HSC marking guidelines to learn how examination papers are marked, and what answers would be awarded full marks in the exams. These reports are published in each subject each year, and are available from the NESA website at https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/11-12/resources/hsc-exam-papers/

- If your school is holding half-yearly exams in Term 2, use the holidays to thoroughly revise, and then extend on the topics you covered last term. **Don't forget** to work through as many past HSC examination questions as possible so you can practise applying your learnings, rather than simply stating facts.

## Additional Suggestions:

- When you return to school, work through past examination questions as each topic is covered at school. If you do this consistently across the year, you'll have completed 8 to 9 papers before you even actively start preparing for your final exams.

- Don't leave the task of collecting commercially produced examination papers until just before your trial or HSC exams. Gather as many exam papers and resources while you have some free time, and when there are no queues at the photocopiers at school.

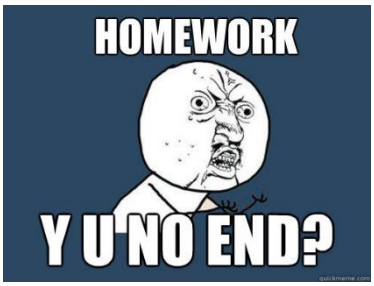
- Where possible, don't waste time writing notes.

  Not only is the notes writing process time-consuming, it's also the **most ineffective** way to memorise information. Learn directly from your text books and invest the time saved for those activities that have the **biggest impact** on examination marks: learning examinable materials and applying your learnings to questions you've not seen before.

- If you must write notes or summaries, do so while topic materials are fresh in mind – on the same day the topic was covered at school, or immediately following the first or second review. You'll save huge amounts of time!

  Writing notes/summaries in the weeks before an exam will take significantly longer than if you'd written these materials when each topic was fresh in mind. There's also the stress component to deal with – nothing ever gets done as efficiently or effectively during high stress periods.

## How much time should I invest into holiday study?

If you're keen to keep stress levels as low as possible and maximise your HSC marks, dedicate **between 16 and 24 hours** to study for each week of the school holidays. If you can find more time to study, then commit to it. The further ahead you get now, the harder it gets for the rest of the state to catch up, maximising your ATAR result.

Regards,
The Team at TSFX.