

Minimise Study Time Maximise Scores



HSC Exam/Study Tip 11: The Highlight Method

The majority of students start their test and exam preparations by preparing a solid set of notes. They spend **countless hours** condensing information from all of the resources available to them, and as their learning progresses, spend considerable amounts of time re-writing materials to produce summaries, and even summaries of summaries!

Although it's important to have a comprehensive set of notes from which to learn, spending large amounts of time preparing such materials in the weeks leading up to the exams is a **detrimental waste of time**.

The process of writing or reading silently doesn't engage many parts of the brain, which means that it's easy to stray or think about unrelated matters – impairing how much information can be input into the brain.

As an example, when re-writing materials or reading silently to yourself, have you ever reached the bottom of a page only to realise that you have no idea what the page was about?

And this is the method most students use to commit course materials to memory!



The writing process is also quite time consuming, reducing the time available to commit course materials to memory and to work through practice exam papers.

Note: It's the actual learning and practising of questions that has the biggest impact on examination marks – not writing and/or re-writing notes and summaries.

Therefore, those students who wish to maximise how much they can learn and reduce the typical pressures in the lead up to the exams need to commit as much of their time to actively learning and practising questions from past exam papers – not writing or re-writing notes.

So what options are available to those students who do not possess a solid set of notes from which to study or learn?

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We suggest that students use their text books, school notes or TSFX lecture notes as their main learning materials, and adopt the suggestions detailed below.

Step 1: Choose the main/primary source from which learning will be conducted i.e. Choose the most comprehensive set of materials in your possession.

Step 2: Read through a small section of the notes/texts. This could be a half a page, a whole paragraph or even 1 sentence – it just depends on how difficult or new the material is. Take the time to understand the materials that you will be committing to memory.

Step 3: Commit the materials to memory using an appropriate learning technique i.e. verbal recitation (see Exam/Tip 8) Repeat Steps 2 and 3 on the remaining materials that need to be committed to memory.

Step 4: At the end of your learning session, highlight the key points as well as those sections that you are not confident with using a **YELLOW** highlighter. Then jot down supplementary notes and/or explanations in your own words, where required.

When radiation from the hollow cathode lamp enters the flame, some of it is absorbed by the ground state metal atoms. The metal atoms absorb the wavelengths of radiation (from the light source) that are needed for the **outer** electrons to move to higher energy levels. The greater the concentration of metal atoms, the greater the amount of radiation absorbed.
i.e. Absorbance \propto Concentration

Step 5: Within 3 days, implement the first review by reading through the **YELLOW HIGHLIGHTED** sections out loud. Rephrase the materials in your own words and out loud.

As your understanding of the examinable materials improves, many of the sections highlighted in **YELLOW** will not be deemed as critical and would be excluded from summaries prepared by students. However, rather than wasting time re-writing the more critical materials, we suggest that students re-highlight the important/difficult sections and key words using a darker colour such as **ORANGE**.

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Step 6: During the following week, implement the second review by reading through the **ORANGE HIGHLIGHTED** sections. Once you've completed the second review, highlight the materials that require a further review using an even darker colour such as **GREEN**.

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Step 7: After completing your second review on a topic, read through your secondary (and then tertiary sources of notes), and transfer any important points to your primary source on post-it notes.



Step 8: Before the exams, read through the sections in your notes/texts that have been highlighted in **GREEN** as well as the additional information added from the secondary and tertiary sources. If there is sufficient time, read through the sections in **ORANGE** as well.

By using this technique – you can produce 3 summaries without re-writing one word!!!!

We would then recommend that students spend the remaining time working through exam-style questions from as many different sources as possible. Remember – it is the actual learning and practising questions that has the biggest impact on examination marks – not writing and re-writing materials.

Regards,
TSFX