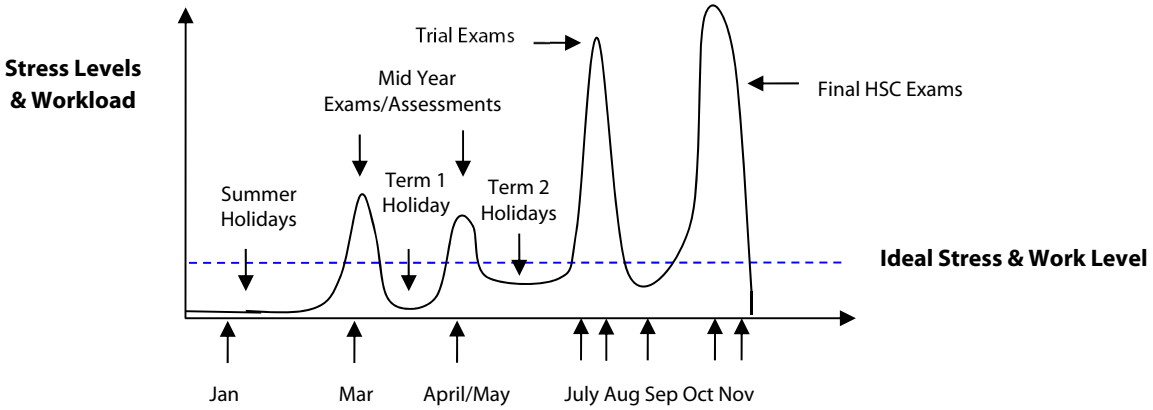
Minimise Study Time
Maximise Scores



Exam/Study Tip # 4: Creating Effective Study Timetables

The demands on HSC students rise and fall like a rollercoaster and are quite inconsistent in terms of intensity across the year. When you add the fact that the majority of students use inefficient study strategies and leave most tasks to the **last minute** – you get the following stress/workload profile across Year 11 and Year 12:



Students who apply themselves in this way spend more time on their studies and receive **much lower marks** than otherwise possible. Students aiming for the highest possible marks must therefore implement strategies that will **smooth out** the intense peaks, to create an even and consistent, but lower level of stress and study across the year.

In order for this to occur:

Year 12 students need to invest 20 to 24 hours each week for personal study.
Year 11 students need to put aside 16 to 20 hours each week for personal study.

Suggested Schedule:

- Four weeknights and one whole day over the weekend OR four weeknights and two half days across the weekend for study-related purposes.

  For example: Monday to Thursday with Friday evening off + most of Saturday

- Weekday study sessions should be in the order of 3 to 4 hours for Year 12 students, and 2.5 to 3 hours for Year 11 students. These sessions can be done after school, across free periods, before school and while commuting to and from school. Examples include:

PTO

If you have no after school commitments:

2.5 hrs = 5pm to 6.30pm & 7pm to 8pm
2.5 hrs = 1 free period at school & 5pm to 6.45pm
3 hrs = 5pm to 6.30pm & 7pm to 8.30pm
3 hrs = 1 free period at school & 5pm to 7.15pm
4 hrs = 5pm to 7pm & 7.30pm to 9.30pm
4 hrs = 1 free period at school & 5pm to 6.30pm & 7pm to 8.15pm

If you have after school commitments:

3 hrs = 1 free period at school & 45 minutes travelling time & 8pm to 9.30pm
4 hrs = 2 free periods at school & 45 minutes travelling time & 7.45pm to 9.30pm

- Weekend study sessions should be between 6 and 8 hours for Year 12 students and about 6 hours for Year 11 students.

  For example:

  A four-hour study session (3 hours for Year 11 students) on Saturday morning, followed by a one to two hour break and then another four hour study session (3 hours for Year 11 students).

- Maintain the recommended weekly study sessions across each school holiday.
- **Note:** Schedules will depend upon personal commitments and concentration levels.

What's classified as personal study?

- ✓ School assigned homework
- ✓ Learning materials off by heart
- ✓ Essays/assignments
- ✓ Getting ahead
- ✓ Preparing for tests and exams
- ✓ Working through exam questions
- ✓ Revising course materials
- ✓ Weekly tuition classes
- ✓ Head start and exam revision lectures
- ✓ Private tuition



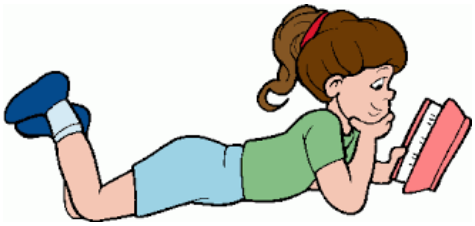
PTO

What should I do during my personal study sessions?

The ideal order of priorities is:

1. Complete/prepare for assessment tasks.
2. Compete any homework that was issued that day. If you're stretched on time, complete the homework relating to the subjects that you're studying at school on the next day.
3. If no homework has been issued in a particular subject, spend 10 minutes per hour spent at school on that subject revising the materials that were presented that day.
4. Revise and prepare for your assessments by working through past exam questions.
5. Read topic materials ahead of school.
6. Revise past topics by working through past exam questions.

In the lead up to the exams, spend at least 10 minutes each night reading your English texts OUT LOUD.



How to Make an Effective Study Timetable

Schedule Your Fixed & Regular Commitments

Block out the days or times where you can't study. Include regular commitments like part-time work, sporting activities and anything else you do on a regular basis during the times you could be studying. You should also consider special events such as birthdays and holidays.

Don't forget to schedule in some relaxation and "me" time.

Once the fixed and regular commitments have been entered, you'll be able to see where you can schedule your study sessions.

Document Due Dates for Assessments

Enter the due dates for assessments, including the dates when exams are being held. Then work backwards, blocking out the anticipated preparation time.

PTO

Identify Your Power Hours



Our body moves through a daily cycle of high and low energy. At certain times of the day and night, we can feel energetic or lethargic and everything in between.

Avoid studying when your concentration levels are low. Use these times to eat, relax or exercise. Use peak concentration times for the more difficult tasks.

As there can be individual variations in daily rhythms, it's a good idea to document your energy, concentration and motivation levels across the day. You can then identify when you study best and incorporate these times into your study timetable. Don't be concerned if your study regime differs from other students – it's not uncommon to see variations in concentration profiles.

Decide on the Length of Your Study Sessions

Optimum efficiency is obtained when learning time is divided into

(a) 25 minute blocks followed by a 5 minute break or
(b) 50 minute blocks followed by a 10 minute break.

Saying that, everyone is different, so experiment to find out what works best for you.

Schedule Time for Breaks

Breaks are essential for study success. You're not a robot, so you can't work non-stop for hours on end. You'll do better overall if you give yourself regular breaks.

What should you do during your breaks?

Anything you want as long as it doesn't involve technology! Clean your room, go for a brisk walk (to improve oxygen levels in the brain) or engage in a rhythmic activity such as sit ups, skipping or drumming to boost your dopamine levels in the brain. Your concentration and motivation levels will improve, and you'll set yourself up for success in your next student session.

Note:

Stop studying when you feel tired or begin to lose concentration. Drink a glass of water and see how you feel in 5 minutes.

Take 1 minute mini-breaks to stretch and get energized. Studies show that getting your heart rate up helps with concentration.

Determine Which Subjects You'll be Studying Each Day

Weekdays:

We don't recommend that you split the available time across all of your subjects. This approach will only create frustration as you won't be able to get through a decent amount of material on a daily basis.

PTO

The most effective approach is to divide the available time each weekday to 2 or 3 subjects – making the subjects that you're studying at school the following day a priority.

Weekends:

As weekend study sessions are in the order of 6 to 8 hours, you can divide the available time among all of your subjects. You can also use this time to write summary notes, tackle the larger assignments, write essays and prepare for tests and exams.

Decide on the Order that Tasks Will be Completed

Should you start with the easier or harder tasks? There are pros and cons to each approach.

Starting with the easiest tasks:

- Reduces the risk of procrastination
- Gives students a quick 'win' so they feel encouraged to continue
- Gets some tasks checked off the list quickly, so there are fewer things to think about

Starting with the hardest tasks

- Enables students to tackle their most difficult work when their focus & energy level are highest
- Gets the most challenging work out of the way, so the rest of the homework feels easier & more enjoyable
- The most important work is being done first, so if they run out of time to finish everything at least the most important work is done

Using the blended approach:

- Start with an easy task
- Tackle a challenging task
- Take a short break and repeat until all tasks have been completed

Note:

If you're tired or feeling demotivated, start with the easiest task or one that requires the least amount of concentration.

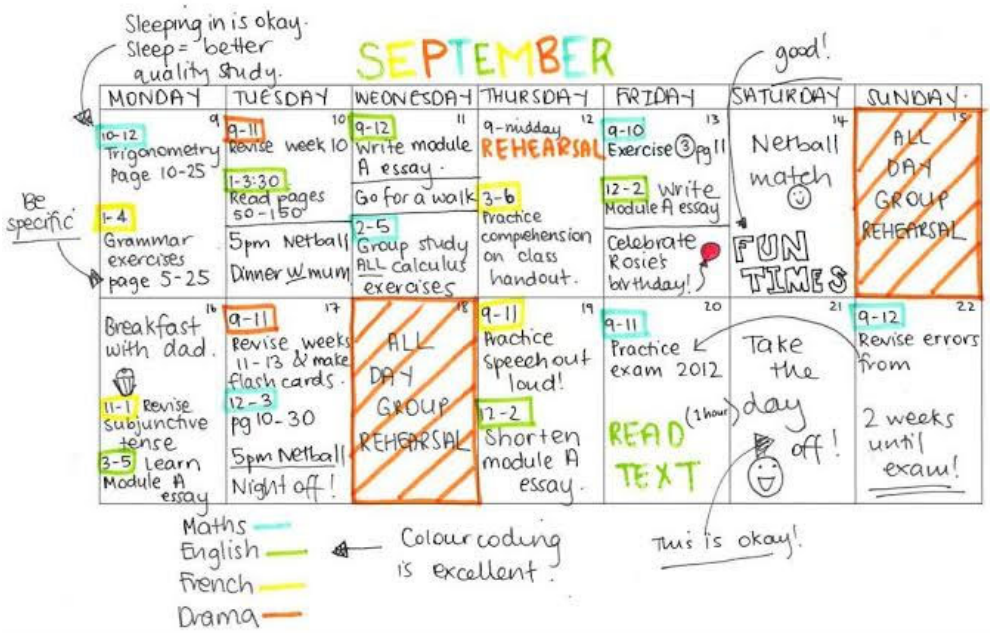
Start student sessions with finite tasks i.e. those tasks that can be done without revisions or rewriting, such as calculations. Infinite tasks such as essay writing will take up the time that's available for it, so it's best to get as many other tasks out of the way first.

Compete any homework that was issued today. If you have limited time, complete the homework relating to the subjects that you'll have at school on the following day.

Make Your Timetable Look Appealing

Colour coding classes and responsibilities will help make your timetable easier to use and easier on the eyes. You might be looking at this timetable a lot—make it your own!

PTO



Stick to it

It might take some time for you to really get used to using your timetable but keep at it. Once it's a part of your routine, it's going to be easy to get stuck into your studies each day. **Note:** Study at the same time each day so you can create firm regular study regimes.

Revise it

See what works and what doesn't, and if something isn't working, fix it!

Keep a time log that details how much time was required to complete each task. This will provide you with valuable information to help you structure more realistic study timetables. Questions you should be asking yourself include:

- Did I complete everything I had to do? Why/Why not?
- Did I have to rush to complete the assigned tasks? Why/Why not?
- At what time was I most productive?
- At what time was I least productive?
- What makes me more productive?
- What activities, foods, conditions, times etc drain my energy?
- Did I procrastinate at any stage? Why/Why not?
- At what times did I procrastinate?
- Is there a pattern evident in my procrastination regime?
- What sort of things did I engage in as part of my procrastination process?



PTO

- Which tasks were greeted with the greatest amount of procrastination? Why?
- How could I make such tasks less tedious?
- How much time did I waste procrastinating?
- How much time did I waste talking on the phone or watching TV?
- How much time did I waste searching for items? Why/Why not?
- How much time did I waste rebuilding momentum and motivation after being interrupted during study periods?

Suggestions:

- Set study goals before you begin studying each day.
- Allocate a time limit in which to complete each individual task. Work has a tendency to expand and fill the time that's available for its completion!
- Always allocate more time to complete a task than what's actually required. If you finish your work ahead of time you'll feel more in control. Your confidence will improve and you'll become more motivated in your studies.

  If your tasks actually take longer than what you expected, you'll have additional time up your sleeve, and you will not fall behind.
- Prioritise work that's worth a large percentage of your marks and/or the topics where you need the most improvement.
- Document the time it takes to complete each task and use this information to ensure that future timetables are more accurate and realistic.
- Start large tasks ahead of time. Don't leave these tasks to the last minute. Working on a large project for 20 minutes each day will feel like much less work than doing it all at once.
- Bring interest to the materials being studied as well as a sense of purpose to each task.
- Regularly ask questions. This will keep you focused and hopefully increase your interest in each task.
- Give yourself small rewards as each task is completed.
- Pass out your timetable to family and friends so they know when not to interrupt you.

Additional Suggestions:

- If necessary, start with short study periods and slowly build up to longer sessions.
- Once you get home from school, take a 30-minute break and have something to eat and drink. Then take a shower and change into something you'd wear on a non-school day. You'll feel as if you've started a new day, making it easier to commit to continued study. If you're really tired take a 20 to 25 or 90 to 110-minute nap, followed by a shower and change of clothes.
- Take advantage of free time during the school day. Use this time to revise new materials and to read materials ahead of school.

PTO

- Trade time to compensate for unexpected events. For example, if an unexpected visitor drops in and takes up 2 hours of your time, add two hours to your study schedule to compensate for the loss in study time.
- Construct daily and weekly lists of tasks to be completed.
- For easy access and reference, carry daily timetables on small cards.

Try not to break your study timetables. The longer that you stick to a timetable, the easier it becomes to commit to a regular study regime.

Regards,
The Team at TSFX.

