MASTERING THE EXAMS

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO PREPARING FOR THE EXAMS

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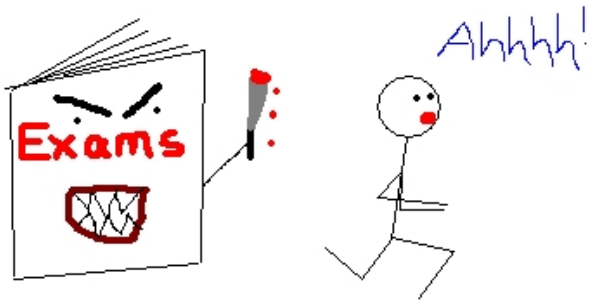
INDEX

SECTION 1: A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO PREPARING FOR THE EXAMS



Exams are a great source of stress for most students, but it doesn't need to be this way! With the right advice and a solid study plan, you can greatly reduce stress, cut down on the time you spend studying, and markedly improve your examination marks!

Step 1: Determine the overall plan.

Step 2: Start exam preparations as soon as you can.

Step 3: Organise a comprehensive set of notes from which to learn.

Step 4: Design and implement an effective exam preparation timetable.

Step 5: Commit course materials to memory in a fast and effective way.

Step 6: Engrain information into long-term memory.

Step 7: Extend on and refine examination skills.

Step 8: Look for other ways to develop a further advantage over your state-wide peers.

IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

"Learning Sessions"

The act of committing information to memory (learning materials off by heart).

"General Study/Homework"

Less intensive activities such as general homework, writing essays or notes under stress free or mildly stressful conditions, reading, internet research etc.

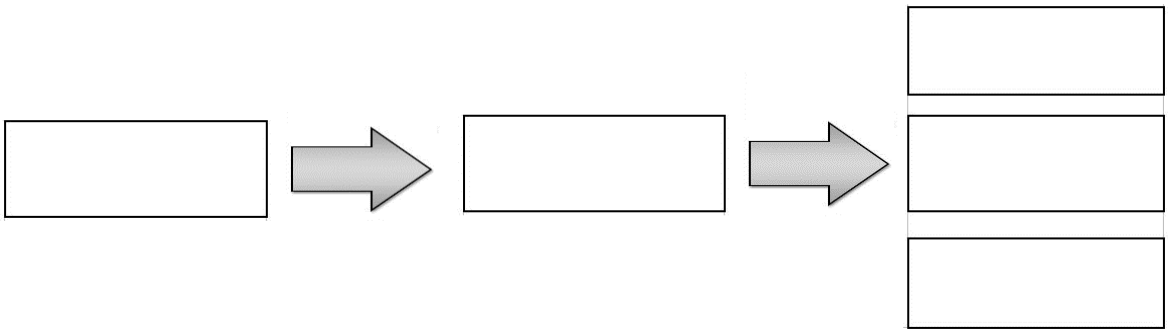
STEP 1: DETERMINE THE OVERALL PLAN

How do students prepare for their exams?

Exam Marks		

STEP 2: START EXAM PREPARATIONS AS SOON AS YOU CAN

Students usually start their exam preparations too late and run out of time to learn materials to exam standard, and to work through a sufficient number of examination papers before their exams.

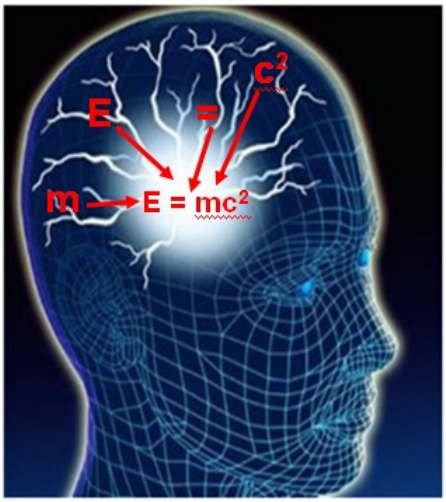


WHY DOES IT TAKE LONGER TO LEARN UNDER HIGH STRESS CONDITIONS?

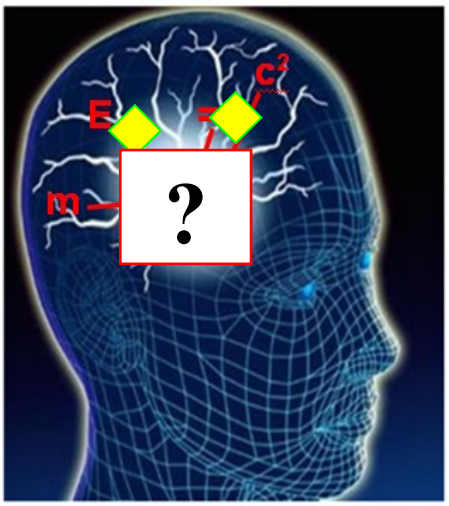
- During high periods of stress, a hormone known as “cortisol” is produced.
- This hormone is responsible for the body’s “fight or flight” response.
- Cortisol prepares the body for physical danger by releasing glucose into the bloodstream, improving the brain’s use of glucose, and increasing the availability of tissue repairing substances.

  Cortisol also curbs body functions that aren’t essential in emergency situations such as the immune, digestive and reproductive systems, as well as the brain.
- From a cognitive perspective, cortisol makes it difficult to concentrate and impairs how much information can be input into the brain – increasing the time it takes to learn materials. It also reduces your ability to recall information when it is needed.

GENERATION OF A THOUGHT



Normal Stress



High Stress

Normal Stress

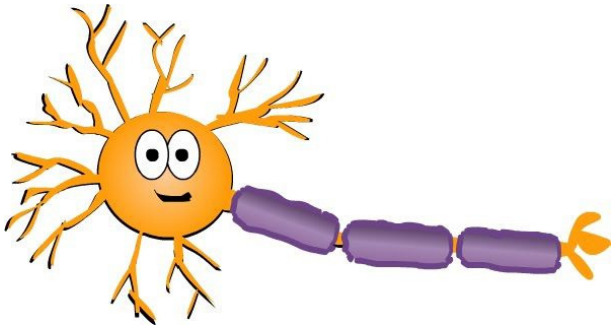
High Stress

NEURAL CONNECTIONS

Small Degree of Neural Connections

Extensive Neural Connections

BUILDING & STRENGTHENING NEURAL CONNECTIONS



STEP 3: ORGANISE A COMPREHENSIVE SET OF NOTES FROM WHICH TO LEARN

The majority of students will start their 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, they spend huge 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**.

Writing or quiet reading doesn't engage many parts of the brain, which means that it's easy to think about unrelated matters – impairing how much information can be processed by the brain.

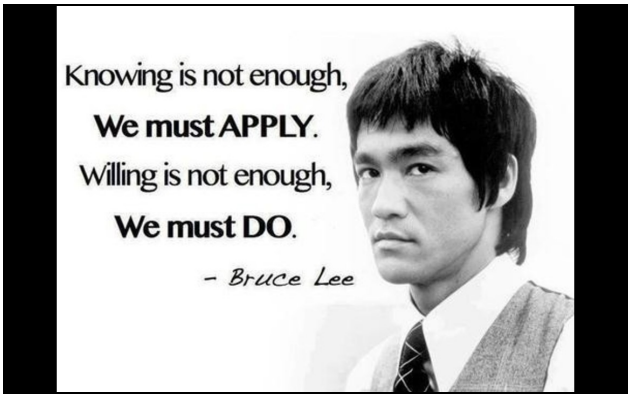
As an example, when re-writing materials or reading silently to yourself, have you ever reached the bottom of a page only to realise that you have no idea what the page was about?

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

Writing, re-writing and silent reading are only effective (and only moderately so) if the materials are of great interest, which is usually not the case when preparing for tests and exams!

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

Note: It is the actual learning and applying what you've learned that has the biggest impact on exam marks – not writing and/or re-writing notes and summaries.



Leaving tasks such as writing up notes/summaries until the weeks immediately before the exams will also take much more time than if you had written these materials as you learned them i.e. when the information was fresh in your mind. There's also the stress component to deal with – nothing ever gets done as efficiently or effectively during high stress periods.

Therefore:

- If you want to maximise how much you can learn and reduce the typical pressures in the lead up to the exams you need to commit as much of your time to actively learning and practising questions from past exam papers – not writing or re-writing notes.

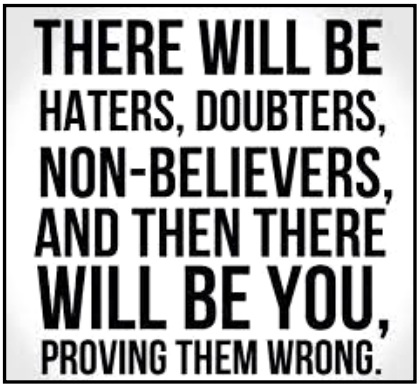
Note:

- Students aiming for the higher scores need to find the time to work through **AT LEAST** 15 exam papers and assessment reports per subject before the VCE exams.

  This **won't be possible** if students start their exam preparations too late, **waste time** writing notes or use ineffective and time consuming learning techniques.

- To increase the amount of information being committed to memory whilst reading – highlight or underline important points.

So what options are available to those students who don't have a solid set of notes from which to study?



1. THE HIGHLIGHT METHOD

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 you have.

Step 2: Read through a small section of the notes/texts. Take the time to understand the materials that you'll be committing to memory.

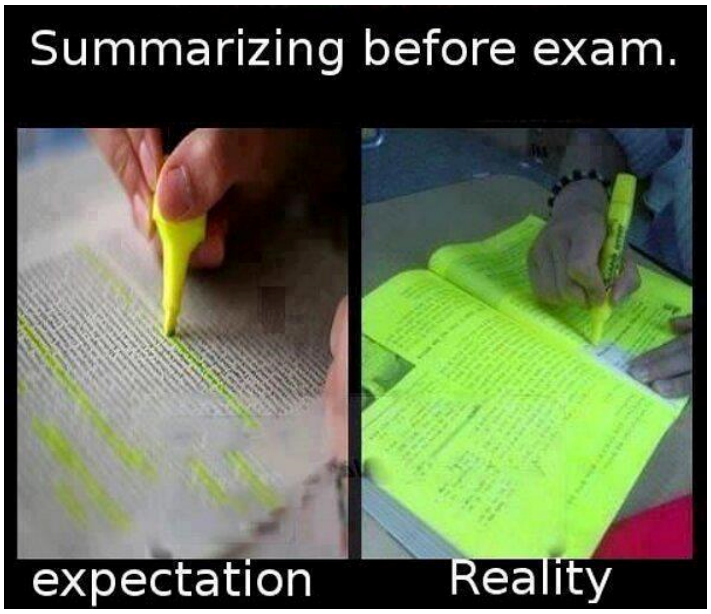
Step 3: Commit the materials to memory using an appropriate learning technique. Repeat Steps 2 and 3 on the remaining materials that need to be learned off by heart.

APPLY THE MAGIC LEARNING TECHNIQUE

Step 4: At the end of your learning session, highlight the key points, as well as those sections that you're 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

ONLY HIGHLIGHT AFTER APPLYING THE MAGIC LEARNING TECHNIQUE, OTHERWISE, THIS WILL HAPPEN:



Step 5: Implement the first review by reading through the **YELLOW HIGHLIGHTED** sections.

APPLY THE MAGIC LEARNING TECHNIQUE

As your understanding of the examinable materials improves, many of the sections highlighted in **YELLOW** won't be viewed 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 you re-highlight key words and the important/difficult sections using a darker highlighter colour such as **ORANGE**.

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.
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Step 6: Implement the second review by reading through the **ORANGE HIGHLIGHTED** sections.

APPLY THE MAGIC LEARNING TECHNIQUE

Once you've completed the second review, highlight the materials that require a further review using an even darker colour such as **GREEN**.

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 7: After a topic has been reviewed twice, read through your secondary (and then tertiary) sources of notes, and write up any important points you come across on post-it notes, and insert these into your primary source.

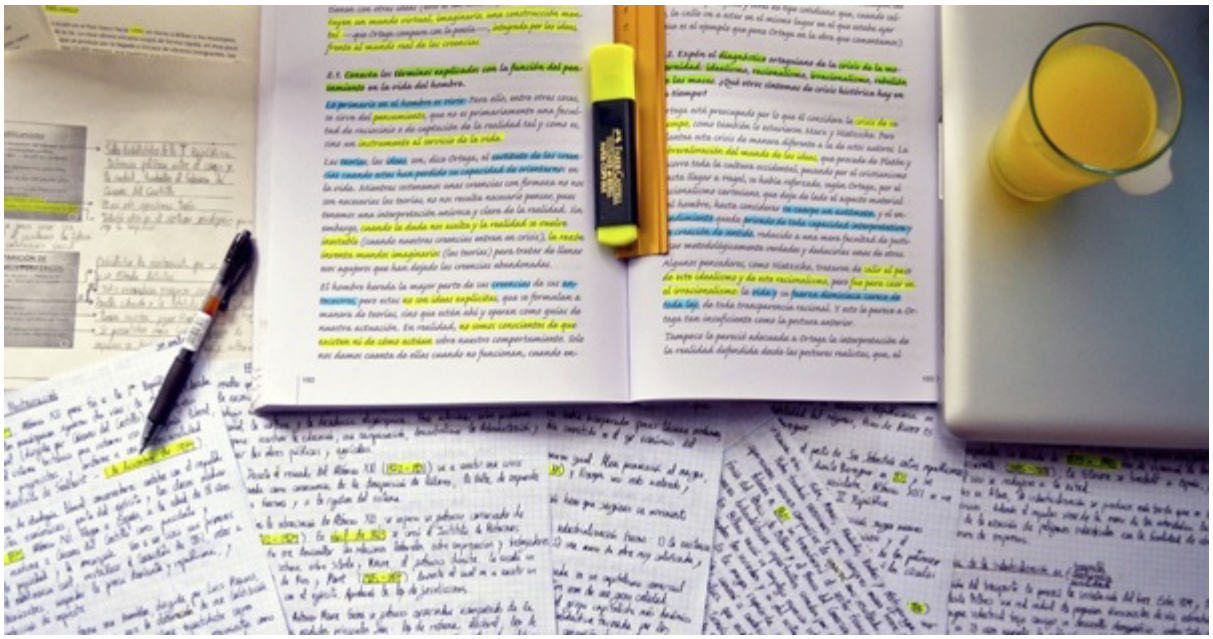
Step 8: Before the exams, read through the sections in your notes/texts that have been highlighted in **GREEN** as well as the additional information added from the secondary and tertiary sources. If there's sufficient time available and/or you're finding a topic difficult, read through the sections in **ORANGE** as well.

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

We would then recommend that you spend the remaining time working through exam-style questions from as many different sources as possible.

Remember – it's the actual learning and application of your learnings that has the biggest impact on exam marks – not writing and re-writing materials.

2. ACQUIRE A COMPREHENSIVE SET OF NOTES AND SAVE 100'S OF HOURS IN STUDY TIME!



GET DETAILED & COMPREHENSIVE NOTES AT OUR LECTURES

At **TSFX**, every student who attends our lectures receives a **complete** and **generous** set of notes that covers all examinable concepts in easy to follow, student friendly language. Our notes also include a huge collection of **worked examples** with step-by-step instructions, as well as additional questions to work through at home.

As an example, students who attended our 'Unit 3 Exam Revision Lectures' last year received the following materials:

#1

Accounting:	307 pages of notes and questions.
Biology:	318 pages of notes and questions.
Chemistry:	459 pages of notes and questions.
Physics:	248 pages of notes and questions.

We provide **fully comprehensive notes** so that students can listen and learn during our lectures, rather than miss vital concepts while simultaneously writing notes.
Our comprehensive materials also **eliminate** the need for students to **waste valuable time** preparing notes, significantly **reducing** the levels of **stress and anxiety** in the lead up to the exams.

To provide students with the **ultimate edge in their examinations**, our teachers also **examine** and **analyse** the **major text books** used by Victorian schools – meaning that our course materials provide students with the added **benefit and wisdom** of the major resources used across the state, without having to purchase or read through these valuable learning tools. This incredibly important feature is not offered by any other VCE lecture program provider!

Note:

To date, NO OTHER seminar/lecture provider has been able to match the quality and depth of materials that are issued to students who attend TSFX programs.

Those students who haven't previously benefited from or aren't aware of the quality of programs available across Victoria are encouraged to contact lecture providers **and view their program materials before enrolling** into any programs. Extracts from our lectures may be viewed at **www.tsfx.edu.au**.

3. PURCHASE A COPY OF EXAM ESSENTIALS

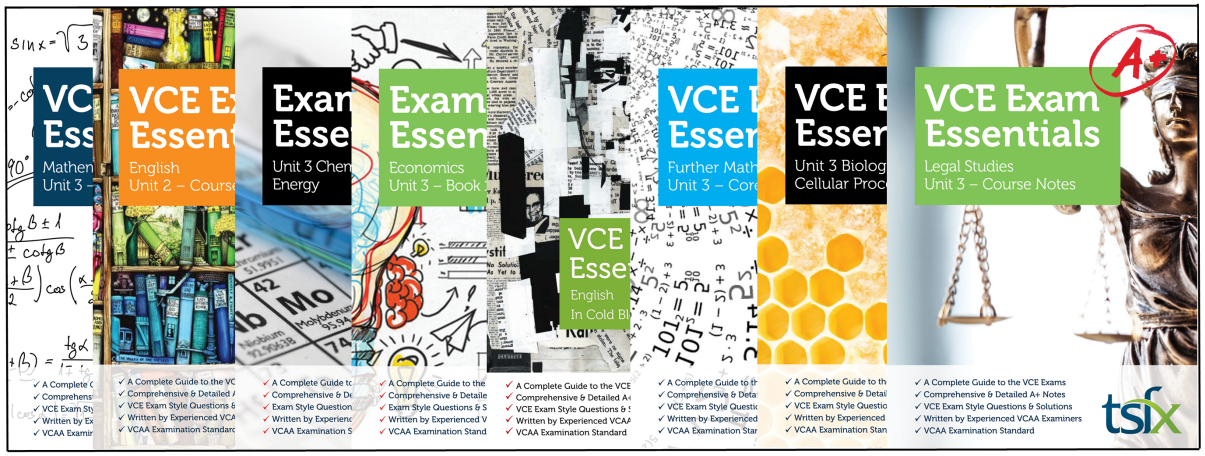
What do experienced VCAA Assessors find most important in the Study Design?
Find out in our comprehensive study guides – a publication written , reviewed and published by the same teachers who'll be marking your VCE exams!

In this study guide you will find:

- A comprehensive A+ overview of examinable materials
- Detailed explanations
- Worked examples
- Exam tips
- Exam style questions and solutions

All written to VCAA examination standard.

An essential tool to maximise your exam marks!

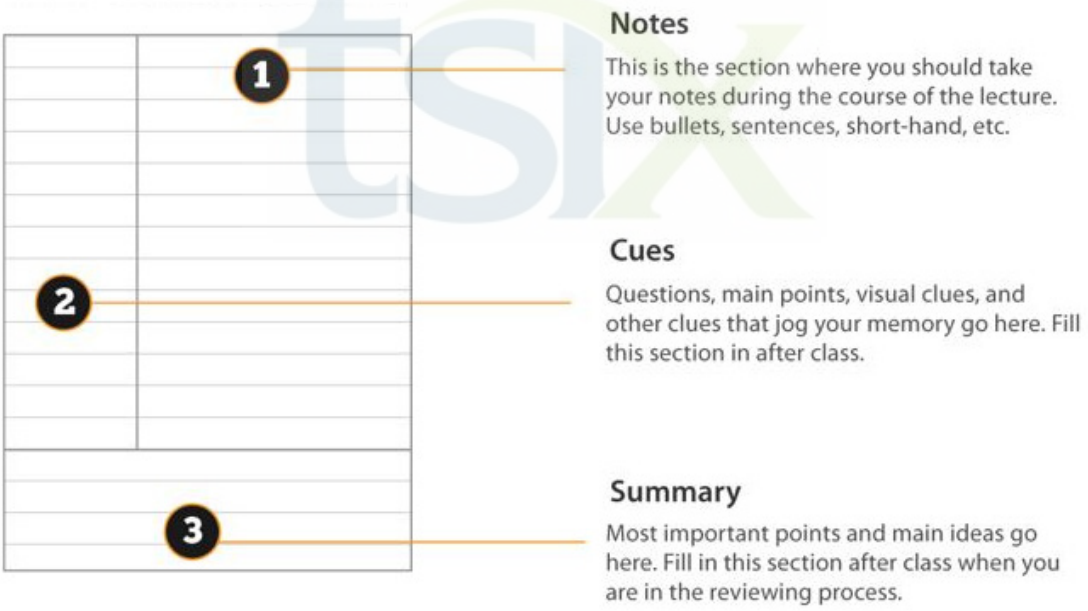


4. IF YOU REALLY, REALLY MUST WRITE YOUR OWN NOTES

- If you feel strongly compelled to write notes when preparing for their exams, do so in **your own words** and after you've revised that topic – not before.

- Write notes progressively across the year and while materials are fresh in mind. The better you know your work, the less time it will take to write up notes and summaries.

5. THE CORNELL METHOD



Cornell Note-taking (Two Column Notes)

Important Points to Remember

1. Skip lines to show the end of one idea and the start of another
2. On the left side, jot down key words and phrases for the ideas/facts on the right side
3. Underline or box key vocabulary terms
4. To review notes nightly, cover the right side and recite aloud facts & details as fully as possible using the main idea column as a prompt
5. Compare notes often with a friend and quiz each other

SS7G8 TSW describe the diverse cultures of the people who live in Southwest Asia (Middle East). Date

Major World Religions

Step 2: Recall	Step 3: Record
•Identify key concepts (main ideas) •Later, when you review your notes, jot down key terms and reminders	•During lesson, take notes here to record the facts & details relating to the main idea. •Skip lines to end one idea and to start another. Use abbreviations (b/c, gov., etc., lol) and phrases

Step 4: Summarize the ideas and facts in as few words as possible include notes about upcoming quizzes/tests

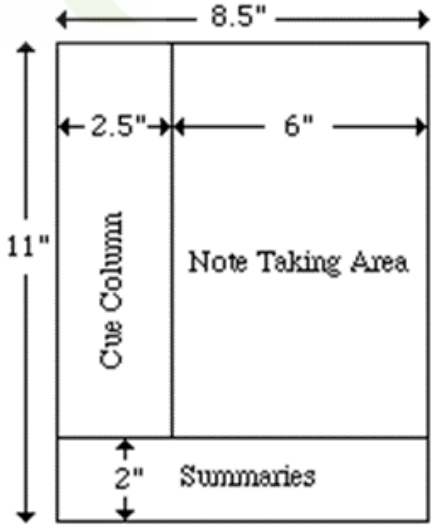
Example:

Cornell Two-Column Notes

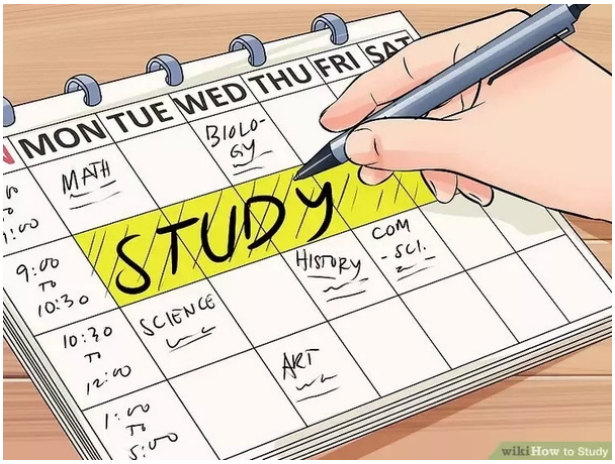
Keywords:	Notes:
	Types of Matter
Solids	I. Solids A. Have a definite shape B. Have a definite volume
Liquids	II. Liquids A. Do not have a definite shape B. Have a definite volume
Gases	III. Gases A. Do not have a definite shape B. Do not have a definite volume

Summary:

(Insert summary of lecture after class.)



STEP 4: DESIGN & IMPLEMENT AN EFFECTIVE EXAM PREPARATION TIMETABLE



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 **five** Unit 3/4 exams.