

Top Tips for helping students develop effective study skills

The following tips are taken from the teacher summary sheets from the relevant units of www.studyskillshandbook.com.au, a study skills site for schools by Prue Salter of Enhanced Learning Educational Services.



1. ORGANISING RESOURCES:

What you could do to support students' learning in the area of 'Organising Resources':

- If the opportunity arises in class or with individuals, discuss with students how they organise their papers, file and manage papers at home, and what sort of an afternoon routine they follow.
- Maybe take a moment in class to have students compare their exercise books, folders and discuss how they could improve their approach to managing their papers. Students will often gain ideas from hearing about what other students do.
- Give suggestions or guidelines as to what you think would work well for your subject and how they should best group all the papers associated with your subject.
- If students have lots of loose sheets, explain to the class your expectations. Do you expect students to paste in sheets or have a separate folder for loose sheets or something different?
- Remind students to date their work in their books.
- Arrange for students to have an index page at the front of their books where they list the topics covered in that exercise book or section of the folder.
- Check students' books now and then and suggest specific ways they could be more organised in their work, eg. Consistent pen colour, pasting in sheets, how they lay out their notes on the page.
- Discuss management of digital resources pertaining to your subject. How should students set up folders or name files? How often should they be backing up their work?

2. TIME MANAGEMENT:

What you could do to support students' learning in the area of 'Time Management':

- Ensure you understand and communicate to students the school's expectations for the amount of time students are supposed to spend on schoolwork each night.
- Whenever possible in class, reinforce the idea that in secondary school, the idea is that you allocate a certain amount of time each night to schoolwork. Students do homework and assignments first, any of the allocated time that is left should be used for additional work on their subjects.
- Following on from the point above, ensure your classes are clear about what sort of work they could do for your subject if they have no homework. For example, should they be working on study notes, should they do review exercises? Ensure they know what they could be working on if they have no homework. You may need to explain the difference between homework (compulsory work you have set) and additional study (work that the student chooses to do to help them better understand and achieve in that subject).
- If you have individual students who are feeling overwhelmed, help them prioritise and manage their work.
- In the last lesson of the day, always finish 5 minutes early and have your class prioritise their homework. You may like to remind students about different techniques for prioritising.
- Look for opportunities to discuss with students how they try and deal with distractions and what works for them – sharing strategies can work well. Stress the idea that one of the best ways to deal with distractions at home is to separate schoolwork and personal time and work in 20-30 minute blocks with no distractions during that time. Also look for chances to point out research has shown that doing work with things like Facebook open means that the work will take around 3-5 times longer to complete.

3. MANAGING WORKLOAD:

What you could do to support students' learning in the area of 'Managing Workload':

- Whenever you tell students about an assignment or test, stress that they should a) write the task onto the due date of a wall planner or calendar at home b) write the due date in their diary and c) do a plan of when they will do the work to complete the task.
- You may like to work with students in chunking down a task and scheduling the steps into their diary so they can practise applying these skills. As part of this process you may like to discuss different techniques for chunking down a task.
- Perhaps half way before the task is due, have students take out their diaries and discuss with a partner how they have been going with their plan and what they need to change to ensure they finish the task in the remaining time.
- Some students may need individual help in using a diary effectively. If you have a student you connect with, who needs this individual help and may be receptive to your involvement, go through the key principles with them, perhaps on a daily basis:
 - Doing a plan for any work that takes more than a day or so.
 - Each night prioritising all schoolwork by writing the order next to each piece of work.

- At the end of the night, highlighting completed work and rescheduling uncompleted work by writing it into the next day (or whenever they are going to do it).



4. STUDY NOTES:

What you could do to support students' learning in the area of 'Study Notes':

- Discuss with your class:
 - Ways of storing study notes (files, folders, exercise books etc)
 - Making study notes regularly (how often should they work on them, when can they allocate time to this)
 - Different styles of study notes (different students will find certain styles work best for them).
- Have students share their thoughts, ideas and experiences with study notes and the way they organise their notes.
- Hand out a course outline that students can put in the front of their study notes and tick off when they have summarised this section.
- Model together with the students how to summarise part of the topic.
- Set making 'study notes' for particular topics (or sections of topics) as part of the homework or as an assignment.
- Have a day where students bring in their study notes and look at each other's work to learn from different styles of note-making.
- Give students bonus marks for bringing in their study notes on the day of a test.
- Give students a scaffold or outline to get them started.
- The key is to ensure students understand the benefits of making study notes, how to do them, how to improve the notes they make and how to use them in preparation for tests and exams. Some students need more of an incentive than others to do them and may require a more 'compulsory' approach to start with.

5. STUDY TECHNIQUES:

What you could do to support students' learning in the area of 'Study Techniques':

- Present information for your subject to students in different ways to help cater for all learning styles.
- Discuss with your class ways of studying in general for your subject (and what would work for different styles). Do not assume that students will know how to study for your subject.
- When tests or exams are approaching, ensure students are clear as to what they need to study and have ample time to prepare.
- When tests or exams are approaching, have students brainstorm ideas of the sorts of things they could do to prepare for the test. Discuss with them different ways they can 'learn' the information and where they can find questions to 'practise' from.
- Review exam techniques for your subject before the test.
- Remind students to pray for concentration, discernment of where to deploy effort, and memory/understanding capacity