Student exercises based on Elevate Education’s “Study Sensei” seminar

For more information contact Elevate Education on 1300 667 945.

Study Sensei
Student Implementation Guide
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You are probably sitting there having walked out of the Study Sensei seminar feeling pretty pumped up. You may have said something to yourself like “things are definitely going to change now, I am going to try to finish my notes for the year and do 50 practice papers tonight!”

The problem is we can often get home after school, put the booklet in the bottom of our bag, get something to eat and promise ourselves we will get to it first thing tomorrow. With the best intentions in the world we tell ourselves we will do all of these things, but the most difficult thing is actually sitting down and using these skills and techniques.

At this stage just having listened to the seminar means absolutely nothing has changed!

The good news though is it is actually really easy to put these skills into action.

How to use this resource kit:

As you will remember from the seminar, Study Sensei introduced you to 8 techniques used by the top students:

- Use your syllabus
- Make notes during term
- Use folders
- Use trigger words and colour-coding
- Use a system of review
- Mind-mapping
- Practice papers
- Independent learning

All of the skills and techniques in the coming pages were covered in greater detail in the seminar, but they are all set out in the same way.

1) What is the specific skill and why is it so important?

2) What are the benefits of doing it?

3) How do you actually do it?

4) An example of what it might look like and tips for getting it done.

We guarantee that if you start using these techniques as a roadmap for the next few weeks, months, or years you will see a massive improvement in your grades.

Best of luck implementing the skills.

The Elevate Team
Step 1: Use Your Specification/Syllabus

How do I do this?

1) Do I know which exam board each of my subjects use?
2) Do I have a copy of the syllabus for each of my subjects?
3) Have I downloaded from exam board websites and asked my teachers for
   • marking schemes and criteria?
   • past exam papers?
   • specimen papers?
   • examples of high achieving papers?
   • reports on the examinations?

4) Have I identified which topics are examinable for my next assessment and located them in my specification?

Tip: If you struggle to stay focused in class and find you have been staring at a squirrel outside the window for 5 minutes, bring your specification to each class with you. Nothing makes you focus more than being able to identify that what you are being taught in that class is examinable!

Activity: Using the example on the next page, turn your syllabus into a checklist for all of the topics you will have to learn across the term. Write each topic down in a checklist with a column to tick when you have completed your notes. At the end of every week work out the syllabus bullet points you covered in class and use this as the basis to structure your note-taking. Before an exam, cross-check your notes against the syllabus/study design and the content your teacher has covered to ensure you have covered every topic that could come up in an exam.

Business Studies

Measuring and Increasing Profit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Finished Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• the calculation and understanding of net profit margins</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the calculation and understanding of return on capital</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• methods of improving profits/profitability</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the distinction between cash and profit.</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5) Using your syllabus/study design identify language specific to each of your subjects. Make a list of key terminology and make sure you understand each term and how you could use it in your responses.

**Activity:** Go through your syllabus/study design and identify language specific to that subject.

For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>practical/critical work, portfolio, starting point to realisation, lines of enquiry, social and cultural contexts, forms and media, artifacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>correlations and causal relationships, investigative and practical skills, data, qualitative and quantitative analysis, sampling, validate, methodology and decision-making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>textual, reading and meaning, structure, form and language, coherent, wider reading, shared context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>fieldwork and enquiry, investigation, spatial and conceptual background, data presentation and processing, methodologies, context, analyse, evaluate and interpret.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tip:** If you just stick to what is in your syllabus/study design you will end up with the same information as everyone else. The top students use their syllabus as a starting point to narrow the focus to what is examinable and then expand their knowledge of the topics by going deeper and getting further information and examples to help them stand out.

**Step 2: Take notes during term.**

How do I do this? Use a note-taking planner for each subject and break down the process of note-taking to clear, specific tasks.

**Tip:** Divide up the book between people in your class or year who you know will do the work well. Finishing notes on 16 chapters between 4 people is a lot faster than finishing 16 chapters yourself.
Activity: For each of your subjects draw up a table like the one below and using your syllabus/study design write down the topics you covered each week as you go during term.

Chemistry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Content Covered</th>
<th>Specification or chapters</th>
<th>Done</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Atomic Structure, amount of substance, bonding</td>
<td>Unit 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.3 Chapter 2.</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Periodicity, organic chemistry, alkanes</td>
<td>Unit 3.1.4, 3.1.5, 3.1.6 Chapter 2.</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Energetics, kinetics, equilibria</td>
<td>Unit 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.2.3. Chapter 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3: Use a folder for every subject

How do I do this?

1) Do you have a folder for every subject?
2) Do you have dividers to split the folder up by topics?
3) Have you printed off your syllabus and made it the cover sheet of your folder?
4) Do you file information as soon as you receive it?
5) Are all of your notes for that topic filed in the same place? Have you printed notes off your laptop? Have you hole-punched sheets?

Tip: Organise your notes in each folder by the topics listed in your syllabus/study design.

For example:

**History**

- Medicine in the Ancient World, c10 000 BC–c500 AD

**Topic 1: Medicine Through Time**

**Topic 2: Media Through Time**

**Topic 3: The American West 1840-1895**

- Medieval and Renaissance Medicine, c500–c1700

- Medicine in the Industrial and Modern World, c1700–present day
Step 4: Take effective notes

How do I do this?

Activity: Get a blank piece of paper. Read this example of a set of notes on practical ethics in philosophy. Once you have read this passage, turn it over and re-write as much information as you possibly can from memory.

Utilitarianism (also called consequentialism) is an ethical theory developed by Jeremy Bentham (1748 - 1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806 - 1873). A utilitarian approach to morality implies that no act is intrinsically right or wrong. Instead the rightness or wrongness of an act can only be measured by the overall consequence produced through doing that act. The best moral course of action is always the one that leads to the greatest good for the greatest number of people. One major limitation of utilitarianism is the problem of ‘cultural relativism’ whereby it is extremely difficult to enforce laws or regulations on another culture or society. A quote to illustrate this is “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter”. Therefore what many people would consider to be ‘wrong’ may go completely unpunished and unregulated. An opposing ethical theory is called deontology which follows Scripture, natural moral law and intuitions of common sense. The word ‘deontological’ comes from the Greek word deon which means ‘binding duty’. Deontological ethics comprises three important features; firstly duty should be done for duty’s sake; humans should be treated as objects of intrinsic moral value; and finally a moral principle is a categorical imperative that sits above culture and subjectivity.

How did you go? Most students will only be able to write fragments or a few key words. While this text looks complicated and uses some complex language, the content itself can be expressed in a far more simple way using trigger words.

Activity: Read the same content structured in a different way at the top of the next page. Once you have read it, again try to re-write as much information as possible. As a challenge, next to the words you remember try to write in brackets which colour they were written in.

Practical Ethics

Utilitarianism: greatest good/greatest number.

Bentham (1748 - 1832) & Mill (1806-1873)

No innate right/wrong -> consequences

Murder 1 to save 100 lives ✓

Problem: Cultural relativism. Where do you draw the line?

‘One man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter’.

Deontology: ‘binding duty’

Scripture & natural law

Duty for duty’s sake

Humans have intrinsic moral value

‘Categorical imperative’

universalizable = above culture.

“They shalt not kill”

Problem: Who decides what is objectively right?
The vast majority of students will find the second activity significantly easier. Most students will not only be able to remember more words, they will also be able to remember which colour they were written in and where they were located on the page. Structuring your notes only using trigger words and a colour-coding system means that when you are revising your notes you are simultaneously quizzing yourself. If you come back to your notes in 1 month’s time and read ‘categorical imperative’ and have no idea what it means you can always look it up. If you come back to your notes and the words ‘categorical imperative’ are 2 of 200 words in black pen it is much more difficult to realise what you don’t understand.

Colour coding system:

Using a colour coding system is important to break up the text visually to assist spatial processing but also to help recall information. An example of a colour coding system:

- Writing formulas and definitions in red. \( a^2 = b^2 + c^2 - 2bc \cos A \)
- Creativity: The process of having original ideas that have value.
- Writing dates in green. 1066. 1914.
- Writing quotes in blue. “Management is efficiency in climbing the ladder of success, leadership determines whether the ladder is leaning against the right wall” - Covey.
- For languages having word endings in different colours from the root of the word.
  - ambul\(a\) oambul\(a\)bamb\(a\)lamb\(a\)bit
  - ambul\(a\)v\(i\)ambul\(a\)veramb\(a\)vero

**Step 5: Use a system of revision**

How do I do this?

1) As soon as you have finished writing your notes spend a few minutes and scan over them straight away.

2) Bring your folder to every lesson and at the very beginning of the class open your folder to last lesson’s notes and scan over them.

**Tip:** Make your notes visual. For humanities subjects write out essay structures and key quotes, dates and concepts. For languages write out vocab lists, translation passages or verb endings and tenses. For maths and sciences write out key formulas and definitions. Stick them up somewhere you will see them constantly. Swap the notes over every now and then and you will find you start remembering them without even trying!
**Step 6: Use mindmapping**

**How do I do this?**

1) Start with blank paper and write the main topic, question or theme in the centre.

2) Draw your sub-topics or key content headings as lines off the centre.

3) Condense your notes just down to the trigger words or key words and write them as branches off the sub-headings.

4) Use your colour coding system.

5) Link your main ideas and concepts to an image.

i.e. DNA in biology draw a helix. Inflation in economics draw a balloon.

The name for the kneecap is the patella - draw a jar of Nutella.

**Activity:** Challenge yourself to turn your notes into a 1 A4 page mindmap. Only write down trigger words and use your colour-coding system. Next to each key trigger word draw a picture to represent that concept. Try to memorise your mindmap paying close attention to the images and colour of the words and where you have written them on the page. Turn your page over, and try to re-draw your mindmap from memory. Check what you missed, and try to re-draw it again starting with the words you missed last time.

**Tip:** Use a whiteboard to practise memorising your mindmap. At the start of a test or exam when everyone is going crazy writing as quickly as they can, turn to the inside front cover and re-draw your mindmap. You now have cheat sheets with quotes, dates, formulas and trigger words in the exam next to you!

Continuing our notes on practical ethics, here is an example of how you can turn your notes into a mindmap.
Step 7: Practice Exams:

**Tip:** If you sit down at the start of the year and try to do an entire past exam under exam conditions you will never get it done. Not only does no one want to sit there for 3 hours doing an exam when you don’t have to, you also won’t know the content yet. Get your hands on as many past exams and practice questions as possible and split them up like homework. You might do a past paper over 4 nights, but it becomes far more realistic to think ‘tonight I have to do Q1 & 2 from the 2011 Physics Exam. Tomorrow night I will do Q3 & 4’.

**Where do I find them?** Ask your teachers, use exam board websites, ask older students at your school to photocopy their exams at the end of the year.

**Tip:** Turn it into a competition between friends and write your own exam papers. Split up the syllabus/study design and textbook so you are responsible for 3 chapters each. Each of you has to write an exam based only on those 3 chapters. Swap them with your friends and do them before an exam and see who has the highest number of similar questions come up in the actual exam.

**Tip:** Use websites such as mindmaps to create your mindmaps. Print them off and stick them on a bedroom wall like a cartoon story board and scan them like a cartoon every day before exams. Now you have turned 8 chapters of notes into 8 pages with pictures that you look at every day.
It is all well and good to sit down and do a few practice papers, but the biggest mistake a lot of students make is they never get them marked or get any feedback on them. The most important part of the process is getting them marked so you know what you are doing well and where you can improve.

How do I do this? If you went to your teacher the day before an exam and asked them to mark 5 exam papers, they won’t be too impressed. It is your responsibility to get them marked and to give your teachers reasonable time to do this. The feedback shouldn’t just be ‘this is good’ or ‘work on your introduction’, it should be as specific as;

1) What am I doing well and should keep doing?
2) What can I improve on?
3) Why does this need improving?
4) How should I do it next time?
5) Is there an example of the right way to do this I can see?

It doesn’t have to be your teachers marking your papers, it could be a tutor or another student in your year, or you could even mark your own. However your teachers are the experts in the subject so if your teacher 2 weeks before an exam tells you that you need to work on these 3 specific things to get a great mark it makes sense to do them!

**Step 8: Independent learning**

How do I do this?

- There is an infinite amount of information on the internet. Use credible and reputable sources to find further information.
- Use your library. Every school, every university and every city has a library so take advantage of this to find extra readings.
- Think about cumulative advantage. Reading a one page article your teacher gave you or finding a relevant case study may only take 10 minutes. If you do this every day that is an hour a week a lot of students will never do.
Where to from here?

1) Follow us on twitter @elevated for tips across the year

2) Go to our student website www.elevateeducation.com for free resources such as practice questions, presenter tips and video interviews. Username: Elevate Password: pacco

3) Use your seminar workbook from the session and start putting the skills into practice!