Overview

Elevate Education is Australia’s largest provider of study skills workshops to high school students, and works with over 1000 schools and 175,000 students every year across Australia and the UK.

Founded in 2001, Elevate has spent more than 13 years benchmarking the habits of the country’s top students. This research has identified 17 areas where the habits and study processes of the top students differ from middle and lower performing students. Elevate workshops introduce students to these 17 skills and show them how to adopt them.

What makes us different

Young presenters students can relate to
Elevate uses young presenters that have recently faced and aced the final years of school themselves. By using presenters that students can relate to, schools have found the impact of the study skills message is increased. Young presenters are perceived as being credible as they have only just gone through the experience themselves.

Practical study skills students can use
Most study skills programs fail because they are dense on theory and lack the kind of practical skills that students can use straight away. All of Elevate’s material focuses on practical study skills modelled from the top students.

Short, high impact sessions
Research shows that as the length of a study skills program increases, student implementation tends to decrease. Students are left with an overwhelming list of ‘52 skills’ which is so long that students don’t know where to begin. These short, sharp sessions maximise student retention rates and isolate a handful of skills to implement immediately, encouraging student skill adoption.

Follow-up resources
Most study skills programs are ultimately flawed in that teachers are not provided with materials to follow-up and reinforce the skills covered in the program. Study skills, like any skill, are developed through repetition, practice and review. This teacher implementation kit is designed to be used in conjunction with the Study Skills Kick Start seminar to reinforce the skills covered in the session.

How to use this document

This teacher implementation kit contains a range of modular follow-up activities for staff to run in class. The focus of this implementation kit is on getting students to use the skills while studying in a classroom subject. However, if this kit is being used in pastoral care time, the activities can still be run using work the students have done while in another class (e.g. English).
Resource Outline

This resource follows up the Study Skills Kick Start seminar, which introduces students to three core study skills: dynamic reading, note-taking, and conceptual learning. The skills in this seminar are designed to be applied together in sequence. As the skills closely dovetail, they will ideally be followed up together in an ‘activity set’. Each activity set asks students to work through an article. We have provided three articles so students can repeat the activity set three times to ensure they get a strong grasp of the skills over the course of the term.

Below is an example of how you might structure the activity sets across the term:

- **Activity set 1 (55 minutes)**
  - Story: *Honey Badgers (page 13)*
  - Activity 1 – Dynamic Reading (15 minutes)
  - Activity 2 – Note-Taking (20 minutes)
  - Activity 3 – Mind-Mapping (20 minutes)

- **Activity set 2 (55 minutes)**
  - Story: *Personality Types (page 14)*
  - Activity 1 – Dynamic Reading (15 minutes)
  - Activity 2 – Note-Taking (20 minutes)
  - Activity 3 – Mind-Mapping (20 minutes)

- **Activity set 3 (55 minutes)**
  - Story: *Rise of Eminem (page 15)*
  - Activity 1 – Dynamic Reading (15 minutes)
  - Activity 2 – Note-Taking (20 minutes)
  - Activity 3 – Mind-Mapping (20 minutes)
Activity 1 – Dynamic Reading Exercise

Note: Use the following three activities (Dynamic Reading, Note-Taking and Mind-Mapping) as part of one follow-up lesson (you’ll need about 50-60 minutes to get through this Activity and the other two). Pick one of the stories provided on page 13-15 as the basis of the next three activities.

Class time required: 10-15 minutes

Research Background

In our work with underperforming students, we noticed that students usually have poor sets of notes in each of their subjects. The key problem with their notes is that they include too much information, and more precisely, they include information that isn’t relevant. The reason for this is that students don’t know how to properly read a text. When they read a text they will, most of the time, simply summarise every sentence or every idea, with the result that they include key ideas or facts as well as a whole range of descriptive language that is irrelevant. In the graph to the right, taken from a sample year 7 cohort, you can see how a large majority of students will read articles thoroughly without taking note of headings and sub-headings. The problem then for these students is that all of this information goes into their notes and students have close to zero understanding of the key ideas. As a result, when they get into an exam, they cannot zero in on what the examiner wants from them or get to the core of a question and instead just regurgitate a whole heap of information, a lot of which is irrelevant. This activity provides students with a framework to differentiate between the key facts or ideas within an article, and the interesting, but less useful facts. At first the process may seem counter-intuitive for students, but by the end of this resource kit, they should develop a good understanding of the dynamic reading process.

Step 1 – Reading Exercise

Step 1: Print out Article

For this exercise students are to have access to either an electronic or printed version of the article found on the first page of Student Activity Pack. We recommend that students have a printed version so they are able to actively go through and highlight the appropriate points.

Step 2: Read through the article

Ask the students to either read through the provided text individually or get a variety of students to read out different sections.
Step 2 – Dissecting the Text

Step 1: Work through Dynamic Reading Template

Have students turn page 2 in their Student Activity Pack, and have them complete the questions.

The first question asks students to determine the purpose of the text, ie, “Why are we reading this and what does the author want to convey to us?” In the dynamic reading process, students are encouraged to use the title to determine what the author’s key points are. For example, by referring to the heading in the first article, students can deduce that the author wants to convey why…. By extension, then, they are looking for any key point in the article that will describe why....

The second question requires that students identify the key points in the article. In the case of the Honey Badger article, the key points are contained within the sub-headings of the text. This is usually the case, or otherwise within the first few sentences of the paragraph.

The last question gets students to identify why or how the sub-heading is important. In essence, they need to find evidence that backs up the sub-heading. For example, Honey badgers are strong because they have great claw strength.
Follow Up Lesson

Please now have students complete the Note-Taking exercise, found over the page, in their Student Activity Packs using the information gathered from this exercise.
Activity 2 – Note-taking Exercise

Class time required: 20 minutes

Research Background

The most common note-taking technique we see used by students is to write long, verbose notes. The problem many students then have is processing such a large amount of information when they read back their notes. Additionally, when students attempt to write (or type) as much as they possibly can in class, notes are often formatted poorly and are then re-written when students go home. This double-handling of work prevents students from doing higher-value work, such as working through practice tests and doing supplementary reading. In the example to the right, you can see how in a typical cohort a large percentage of students will try to fit as much detail onto the page as possible, often coming at the expense of formatting and analysis.

The top students reduce the amount of words in their notes by up to 80% to just focus on the key words or ‘trigger words’. Students were shown how to use trigger words in the Study Skills Kick Start seminar and will be familiar with the concept. This exercise aims to get students writing their notes using trigger words in class, which prevents them from needing to re-write notes later in the term. It will also ensure that while studying their notes, extraneous information does not cloud their revision; only the critical information required for assessment will be memorised.

Step 1 – Getting students to use trigger words

Students have been exposed to the process of using trigger words from the seminar, but will often find this difficult if they are used to writing full sentences. As such, when content is being taught in this class, make regular reference to how the students could reduce their words down to the bare minimum. Have students write their notes using the following process:

- The topic being covered in the lesson should form a main heading at the top of the page, to be written in big, bold letters. This should draw instant attention to the main topic at a glance. If you are using the Honey Badger article, ‘Honey Badger’ would appear in the main heading.
- Sub-topics should form sub-headings which are more specific, and cover a sub-set of specific points. These should be bold, but less obvious than the main headings.
- Finally, specific content should be represented by bullet points which fall under the sub-headings. These points should not go past a line (get students to draw this line, or imagine it if they are typing) running down the middle of the page. This forces students to write notes which use only the most important trigger words.
Main headings should be bold, and draw instant attention to the topic of the page of notes.

Sub-headings should also be bold (or in their own topic-specific colour) and indicate a new set of sub-points.

Bullet points should only be a few words long, and focus on key words rather than full sentences.

A central line down the page, beyond which students must not write, will force students to summarise points and not write full sentences.
Follow-up Lesson

After the students have been encouraged to use this note-taking system in class, it is important that the process is followed up.

**Teacher spot-checks** (done once a week throughout class time)

In a number of schools, staff will require students to hand in their notes each week for a spot check. Teachers should grade their students on the degree to which the notes reflect the note-taking format discussed in this book. Students who are writing notes that are too detailed should be encouraged to reduce the amount of words they write for the next spot-check. Some schools offer a class prize to students who have written notes with effective use of trigger words.

**Outcomes**

The desired outcome from this process is to get students writing notes using trigger words and effective spacing. If assistance is provided on a weekly basis, students will become more comfortable with the process to the point that it becomes habitual. If followed up regularly, you should notice students having more time at home to complete other work set by you, such as extra readings, practice tests and short assignments.
Activity 3 – Mind-Mapping Notes

Class time required: 20 minutes

Research Background

When you ask a group of students who among them have heard of mind-mapping, every hand usually goes up. However when you ask them who actually uses this technique, in any given room it will be much lower. In the graph to the right, taken from a middle school cohort, you can see how the use of mind maps is at best inconsistent. However mind-mapping is one of the most effective conceptual learning tools for helping students to process information. Each year, the top performing students use conceptual learning tools such as mind-mapping more often than average-performing students, as mind-mapping allows students to link sub-topics more easily and, in test situations, form a clearer understanding of the overall topic. This aids responses in the exam room and prevents students from developing ‘tunnel vision’ when they sit down to consider a question.

Step 1 – Have students convert notes into a mind map

In the Study Skills Kick Start seminar, students are shown how to convert a page of notes into a mind-map. In this lesson, students will create a mind-map from an existing set of notes. Ask students to use the notes from the Honey Badger exercise to form their mind-map.

Step 1: Create main headings

The centre of the mind-map comes directly from the main headings on the page of notes. Have students draw a large circle in the middle of the page, and draw out the main heading from the page of notes they are using.

Step 2: Create first branches

The sub-headings on the page of notes are then drawn onto the mind-map as branches. They are bold, like the sub-headings in the original notes, but are smaller than the main heading in the middle.
Step 3: Create second branches

Students will then identify bullet-points on their page of notes and branch these off the first-branches in the mind map. These should remain in trigger-word format (discussed in Activity 2) to enable students to fit as much into the mind-map as possible.

Step 4: Add new pages of notes to the mind-map

Students should not limit themselves to making a mind-map for just a single page of notes. One of the best aspects of mind-mapping is the ability to link multiple pages of notes together which would otherwise have remained separated (physically and conceptually) across the term. Asking students to link a page of notes from week 2 to one written in week 7 will, provided content is relevant, help to solidify their overall grasp of key concepts. This simply involves students taking a new main heading from another page of notes and repeating steps 1-3 adjacent to the original mind map.

Step 5: Link topics together

Finally, students should be encouraged to look for links between items on the mind maps and link them together graphically – particularly for points which stem from different sub-headings (first branches on the mind map). This helps students realise cross-topic links which can allow them to create more advanced test responses.

Follow-up Lessons

As a follow-up activity, have students spend a revision period each term drawing mind-maps of the notes they have written for a sub-topic. This can be a guided process where students work in teams to produce mind maps, or could be done individually with teacher support.

Outcomes

The overall focus of this activity is to create a habit of properly mind-mapping, and to show students how they can form links between sub-topics within a subject. Our research shows that when students are told how to mind-map, but never give it a try by themselves, the positive-reinforcement of having actually made a mind map (and seen how it can aid study) isn’t there, which discourages students from mind-mapping their notes on their own.
Example: Creating a Mind-Map

- **HONEY BADGERS**
  - **STRENGTH & RESISTANCE**
    - Claw strength
    - Not vulnerable to poison
  - **COURAGE**
    - Guinness Book of Records
    - Fights several lions
    - Raided bee's nests = NAME
  - **SELF-DEFENCE**
    - Pouch with liquid
    - Skin - loose & thick

- **HONEY BADGER**
  - Immune to poison
  - Claw strength
  - Most feared animal
  - Guinness Book of Records
  - Pouch with smelling liquid
  - Skin
  - Loose & thick
  - Pouches
Article 1: Honey badgers: the world’s most fearless creature?

Who would win a fight between a badger and a lion? Most people would not hesitate to say a lion. However, the honey badger, despite its sweet name, is not your standard badger and gives the ‘King of the jungle’ a run for its money every time. Weighing in at a small twelve kilograms, this is not the type of animal you would expect extreme aggression from. However, the honey badger is one of the most feared creatures across southern Africa, Southwest Asia and the Indian subcontinent.

Strength and resistance.

Honey badgers are notoriously strong creatures who can often escape from potentially dangerous situations. The strength of the honey badger is a massive physical advantage, as is its persistence. So strong are honey badgers’ claws, that they have been known to burrow through walls and rip up wooden hen houses in order to eat the chickens inside! Another physical advantage that honey badgers possess is that they are much less vulnerable to poison than other creatures: there are examples of honey badgers being bitten by venomous snakes and surviving. Some experts claim it is because they have been exposed to small amounts of venom throughout their lifetime due to the close contact they come into with bees and snakes. As a result, honey badgers are more than happy to take on snakes.

Courage

Commonly viewed as one of the bravest creatures around, honey badgers will take on any animal, big or small if they need to. Indeed, they were listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the ‘most fearless’ animal in the world. Although they will usually steer clear of potentially dangerous predators, as soon as their own safety is threatened, they will fight back with a serious viciousness. Honey badgers have been known to fight off up to seven lions, just to protect their food. On top of this, their name comes from the fact that they will often raid bees’ nests in order to find their favourite food: larvae. They endure the stings of literally thousands of bees, just to source their favourite dinner!

Self defence

As well as being physically very suited to survival, honey badgers also possess certain self defence mechanisms which mean they are not scared of predators. Similar to skunks, they have a small pouch beneath their tail which contains a strong smelling liquid. Although this is normally used to mark the honey badger’s territory, when they are faced with danger, they release the liquid, and with it, an absolutely disgusting smell! This puts off potential predators as they instantly move away from such an odour, allowing the honey badger to escape. Their skin is very loose and allows them to move freely, meaning that when they are attacked, they can wriggle into a position where they can fight back by clawing or biting their aggressor. The safest place to grip a honey bear is by its neck, a hold from which it finds it difficult to escape. The skin is not only loose, it is also very thick. Predators find it very difficult to penetrate because some parts of the body are covered by layers as thick as 6mm. It is said that spears and arrows cannot pierce honey badgers’ skin and they can withstand multiple bee stings.

So if anyone ever asks you to pick a winner between a lion and a badger, make sure you think twice!
Article 2: What personality type are you?

Have you ever wondered why you do the things you do? Why you love some things whilst disliking others? Have you wondered why one of your friends always wants to pick an argument with someone, whilst another always sticks up for their friends? Well psychologists say that there is a reason for all of these things happening. They say it is because each of us has a specifically personality type, and this leads us to act in a certain way. They say that there are four main personality types and that if you know someone’s personality type you can understand them better and even guess how they will behave. The question is, which personality type are you?

How to pick a creator

The first personality type is called the “creator” and researchers say 35% of the entire population fall into this category. The creator has a few clear traits, which make it easy to identify if this could be your personality type. First and foremost creators are people that like doing things. They are driven by new sensations and want to experience as many new things as possible. These are the kind of people who if you are going on a road-trip, or plan to do something different or a bit out there like sky diving, they will be the first people to say “yes”. Secondly, because creators are so open to new sensations, they are also, just as the name would imply, very creative. These people tend to make great artists. Famous creators include people like Eddie Murphy, Madonna and Bart Simpson.

How to pick if you are a protector

Our second personality type is the “protector”. Researchers say that the majority of the population, 43% of people in fact, fit into this category. We can pick a protector because they also have a number of key traits. The first and main characteristic is that they are very stable people, they like continuity and hate change. When they like something, they will continue liking it. The second characteristic of the protector is that they are very responsible. They are the kind of person who would try and talk you out of going sky diving by explaining each of the risks one by one. Finally, you can pick a protector because they are highly organised, punctual and enjoy routines. They even probably have a really clean room! Famous protectors include the Queen and Monica from Friends.

How to pick if you are an intellectual

Our third personality type is the “intellectual”. This is the smallest category, made up of only 10% of the population. These people are easy to pick, first and foremost because they love to argue. To them an argument isn’t a fight, but rather a test of how much you know about a subject. Some of these people will argue for something they don’t even believe in, simply to test the other person’s knowledge of the subject! We all know someone like that don’t we! Intellectuals are also quite hard to offend. They are less sensitive than a lot of people, especially creators and visionaries. Intellectuals are also very good problem solvers. They love solving problems, whether it is a Maths problem or a question of how to tune the TV into the DVD player. Finally intellectuals are very curious people. They love finding out why things happen, lending them to ask a lot of questions. Intellectuals include Bill Gates, Tom Hanks, Gandalf from Lord of the Rings and Mr Burns from the Simpsons.

How to pick if you are a visionary

Our final personality type is the “visionary”. This group makes up 12% of the population. The easiest trait to identify in a visionary is that they are sensitive, caring and compassionate people. The visionary is the person who hates to see someone get picked on in the play-ground. Consequently, they can often be quite sensitive and unlike an intellectual they can be easily upset. The visionary might think the intellectual is rude and the intellectual may think the visionary is super sensitive. The second key characteristic of the visionary is that they are idealistic and support good causes. These are the people who will sponsor a child in Africa, do the 40 Hour Famine etc. Famous visionaries include Johnny Depp, Ben Stiller and Oprah Winfrey.

Now that you have had a chance to look at these personality traits, which personality type do you think you are? Are you a creator, a protector, an intellectual or a visionary? Which personality type would you put your friends into?
Article 3: Explaining the rise of Eminem

Controversial, talented and hugely successful, Eminem is a character who you either love or love to hate. His story, artistically played out in the movie, ‘Eight Mile’ is a classic rags to riches tale which is laced with lessons that we can all learn from.

Goals

Eminem was born in 1976 in Kansas City to a single, unemployed mother. His mother used to move back and forth every 2-3 months between Detroit and Kansas City in search of work. As a result Eminem never ended up settling down. As soon as he began to settle down in a school in one city he was moved again to another city and another school. Each time he moved to a new school he found himself as the “new kid” with no friends. It was at this stage of his life that he found his only real happiness – listening to rap music. He began to rap and after a while realized that he was pretty good at it. It was at this stage that he set himself the goal to become a top selling rapper. This goal was extremely important for two reasons. Firstly it kept Eminem motivated. Because his family was so poor Eminem needed to work long hours just to get the money to scrape by. He used to come home at nights exhausted but instead of simply going to sleep or relaxing he made sure he spent another few hours writing out rhymes and practicing his rapping style. The second reason why his goal was so important was that it kept him focused. Eminem lived in an area where it was extremely easy to get involved in crime and drugs. Had Eminem got involved in this lifestyle and gone to prison you could almost bet that he never would have become the top-selling artist he is today. His goal gave him the focus to keep him out of trouble.

Action

Having a goal is all well and good but not enough by itself. Without action a goal is just a dream. Eminem took action on his goal by constantly practicing. In fact he used every spare moment he had to practice. One of Eminem’s old bosses described how Eminem used to work as a waiter in his hamburger restaurant and how he used to take the customers’ orders and then rap them to the chef. Similarly when he was just chilling out with people he would use any opportunity to start rapping, for example he would rap about his friends names, about the weather or about someone that walked by. This constant practice though ensured that his skills always improved. Eminem also took action upon his goal by constantly trying to get noticed. He used to go into clubs and try and get on stage in freestyle battles where two rappers challenge each other in an “off the cuff” duel. It was only by getting himself heard in clubs and on the radio that he managed to come to people’s attention and to earn himself his first record deal. Just because he had record deal didn’t mean he had achieved his goal. His first album was a failure. It was panned by the critics and hardly sold any copies. It was then that Eminem took action by never giving up. Despite his knocks he continued to take action, refusing to let his failures get him down. It was this action through persistence that eventually bought him to the attention of the biggest producer in LA who signed Eminem and helped him launch his first hit album.

Stand Out

Finally Eminem realised that he couldn’t be like everyone else. He realised that in order to be the best he would need to stand-out. As long as he was just like everyone else he would never achieve his goal. As a result he went to great lengths to make himself different and to make himself stand-out. He started by aiming to stand-out visually. He dyed his hair blonde, got a number of tattoos on his arms and body and would often go on stage wearing a hockey mask. Secondly he aimed to stand-out lyrically. He would intentionally rap about controversial topics or bag out other celebrities such as Christina Aguilera, Moby and ‘NSYNC among others. Because he was so different and because he stood out so much, it became much harder for the public to forget about him. The longer people paid attention to him and remembered him, the more records he sold.