Overview

Elevate Education is Australia’s largest provider of study skills workshops to high school students, and works with over 700 schools and 175,000 students every year across the UK and Australia.

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 but 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 Time Management 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).
Activity 1 – Non-Required Tasks

Initial class time required: 20 minutes
Follow-up time: 5-10 minutes each week
Suitable subjects: all
Resources required: Activity 1 from the Student Template Pack (page 2)

Research Background

Many students work exceptionally hard and meet their class deadlines, but still find they receive average marks in their assessments. This is because students often think it is enough to simply complete work set by their teachers, and nothing else. They don’t realise that they are being compared to other students, and that the top students are inevitably those who can differentiate themselves and stand-out, and that in order to be able to do this, one needs to go above and beyond the basic expectations. However, this sort of work is almost always non-compulsory, meaning students are not held accountable if they don’t complete it. As a result, they relegate it to the bottom of their schedules and never get it done. In a sample cohort, less than 5% of students would prioritise the non-required work when doing homework (see graph). While this seems intuitive, it’s the number one reason why this sort of work never ends up being completed. In the Time Management seminar, students are introduced to the concept of non-required tasks, or the tasks which will enable them to differentiate themselves in assessments and assignments. Specifically, these tasks include:

- Making notes during term
- Completing practice tests
- Doing extra-reading

Students will only be able to complete these tasks if they prioritise them above the compulsory work. While this might appear to put students behind in their compulsory homework tasks, students are shown that by completing a single non-required task for each subject, each week they will achieve a large cumulative advantage over the average student, who might never complete a single non-required task. Moreover, top-performing students tend to limit the length of each non-required tasks to 15-20 minutes. This means that for an extra 15 minutes each week, the average senior school student will have completed up to 10 practice exams by the end of the year. Compare this to the average student who will complete 1 or 2 practice tests a few days before an exam, and the advantage becomes very significant.
Desired Outcome

This module encourages students to identify and complete a single non-required task for their subject each week. Spot checks are then conducted to ensure students are sticking to their commitments.

Lesson 1 – Identify Tasks

In this lesson, start by ensuring each student has their Activity Pack open to page 2, Activity 1. Have them read the introduction. In the exercise there is a non-required task tracker, on which students will identify the types of non-required tasks they will complete across the year to ensure they can gain a competitive advantage. Spend the first 5 minutes of the lesson brainstorming non-required tasks with the students and have them fill in the first column. An important point to remember is that non-required tasks need to be around 15-20 minutes in length. Here are some ideas:

- Complete 1-2 practice questions from a past exam (or practice paragraphs for English)
- Write a page of notes on a topic covered in class during the week
- Write a page of notes on an extra reading topic (such as newspaper article)
- Draw a mind map of the notes written earlier in the week

An example of this is seen below:
Lesson 1 - continued

Once students have identified a range of non-required tasks they can complete for their subject, have them go home and complete one non-required task each week. This could be two questions from a practice test, writing a page of notes on a character they are studying in a text, or creating a mind map of the notes they wrote that week. It is important to stress again that these tasks should not take more than 15-20 minutes to complete, or students may start to find themselves overworked. Have students write down in their diary what their non-required task for the coming week will be.

Follow-Up Lessons

Each week after students have committed to completing their one non-required task, spend 5 minutes going around the class doing a spot check to ensure they have completed their tasks. Have students produce their work to show you that they have completed their tasks, and sign off on the task in the non-required task planner. At the end of term, some teachers will tally up the number of non-required tasks students have completed, and compare these to the test scores of students. There is almost always a correlation between the two, which can be a powerful tool in helping students to understand why their marks aren’t as high as they could be. An example of a non-required task tracker which has been completed by a student is below:
Activity 2 – Study Groups

Initial class time required: 30 minutes
Follow-up time: 25 minutes
Suitable subjects: humanities subjects
Resources required: No additional resources
Timing: This activity is best run when a new sub-topic is being introduced

Research Background

A common mistake students make is viewing their final years of high school as a solo journey. However, in surveys with students on their time management skills, a large majority will typically never find themselves working collaboratively (see graph). However, our research shows that top-performing students work in teams and share tasks around to free up time. This enables them to lead more relaxed lives during busy periods of the year, and frees up time to focus on other types of work which have a higher yield in test performance. The easiest and most effective way to achieve this is by delegating time-heavy tasks like note-making to friends in a study group. However, for these groups to work students need to ensure they form them with the right people, and have a clear plan as to how they will share the work around. This module is designed to get students forming study groups around a specific task (such as a new sub-topic being introduced) and have them share note-taking activities in a structured environment. When students realise how many hours of work they have saved by working in a study team, the process becomes far easier for them to continue by themselves.

How likely are you to use study groups?

Answered: 151  Skipped: 18

- Very unlikely 16.56% (25)
- Likely 32.45% (49)
- Very likely 5.30% (8)
- Unlikely 45.70% (69)
Lesson 1 – Form Study Groups

Form groups of four

Research shows that the ideal number of students for a study group is four. Break the class into groups of four (if numbers do not allow, some students may form groups of three or five). It is highly recommended that this process be moderated to ensure the groups will be productive. Some students will form effective groups of their own volition, while others will form groups which are more aimed at socializing than effective study. Teacher discretion to ensure students form groups that are likely to be able to work productively is critical.

Division of labour

Students will be required to divide a sub-topic up into four segments, which each student will write 1-2 pages of notes on. This works especially well when a new sub-topic (for which the students have not yet made notes) is being introduced. For example, if students are studying *Othello*, and the week’s topic is sexism in Shakespearean Europe, students might be encouraged to each pick a major character in *Othello* and produce a page of notes which focus on the gender perceptions of and about that character. There are some important points to note:

- Students should type their notes if possible to ensure other group members can easily read them
- Students should allocate each other topics which have a relatively equal work load

Issue instructions

Once students have divided up a topic into four areas, instruct the students to produce one or two pages of notes to be brought to class at the end of the week. Make sure all students know that they will need to bring three additional copies of their notes for their team members, and must come prepared to explain their notes to each member of the group when the group re-convenes.

Lesson 2 – Study Groups Meet

Discussion time

One week after the groups were formed and the work delegated, have the groups re-convene and present their notes to one another. Move from group to group and check that students have both brought enough copies of their notes for the other group members, and that they have come prepared to explain their notes. Have each group member spend 5 minutes explaining their notes to the study group, and answering questions from other group members. Ensure that each student shares their notes with the other group members.

Debrief process

Once students have all shared their notes with the group, start a discussion on the amount of time they have saved by only needing to complete one quarter of the notes on the sub-topic. A good way to do this is to ask individual students how long they took to complete their share of the notes. By multiplying this by three, students can see how much time they have saved in one week across one subject. Multiplying this by 10, students can see how much time they can save across the entire term. This is usually enough to show students how they can directly benefit from maintaining the study group across term.
Outcomes

This is a process which will ideally not be done in class time, but which usually needs to be demonstrated to each student for them to see the value in it. By running this session in a single week (Monday being the formation process, Friday being the debrief process), students can see the tangible benefit of forming a study group. If students are able to halve the amount of time they spend writing notes, this allows you to set them more practical work such as practice questions and extra-reading tasks. It will also ensure students don’t overwork themselves across the term by becoming snowed under with note taking.
Activity 3 – Make an Effective Timetable

Initial class time required: 45 minutes
Follow-up time: 5 minutes each week
Suitable subjects: all subjects
Resources required: Activity 2: Making an effective timetable from the Student Activity Pack (page 4)

Timing: This activity is best run at the start of term

Research Background

At the start of the year, it’s very common to hear students say “this year is going to be different”. This seems true enough after a relaxing six week holiday, and students will often create a study timetable in line with this surge of motivation. But as the term drags on, the motivation usually drops. The timetable is then left behind in a cloud of optimism, leaving students with little direction and a feeling of constantly “being behind”. Have a look at the graph, taken from a year 11 sample cohort. Here you can see over two thirds of students admitting their study timetables didn’t last.

The solution to this problem is to create a study timetable that is above all realistic. This means first blocking out when students aren’t realistically going to be able to study (sport training, social time, gym, music lessons, youth group, and so on), and then fitting study around these times. This means that students are studying when they otherwise wouldn’t be doing anything else. Not only do they find they have more time to study than previously thought, but they typically find they can concentrate more. This process has been proven to work time and time again – but the key is getting students to use this method on a weekly basis. This ensures the timetable remains both realistic and dynamic to changing time commitments.

NOTE: Many students will likely have already made a study timetable following the Time Management seminar. The purpose of this module is to get students who have made their timetables updating them, and to get students who are yet to make one using a timetable full stop.
Lesson 1 – Identify study black-spots

Step 1: Complete ‘Study Down-Time’ worksheet

Have the students open to the first page of the study down-time worksheet found on page 5 of their activity packs. In their groups, students will complete the table to identify times of the week when they are not going to be able to study (this will later slot into their weekly study timetable). While students do this, it is important to make sure that while all types of potential distractions are included, they don’t over-budget for particular activities. For example, spending 2 hours on Facebook every night is not reasonable – 30-45 minutes would be more appropriate. An example of how this worksheet should look is over the page.
Example: a completed ‘study down-time’ worksheet

This worksheet gets students identifying and clarifying times when they simply won’t be able to study, so they can create a realistic timetable later on.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Activity</th>
<th>What is the specific activity?</th>
<th>What day and time do you do it?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>(e.g. netball training, netball game)</td>
<td>Wednesday 6pm - 8pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Footy training &amp; game</td>
<td>Saturday 12pm - 5pm (game)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobbies</td>
<td>(e.g. cycling, gaming)</td>
<td>Monday - Friday 7am - 8am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Running</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV shows</td>
<td>(e.g. Modern Family, Family Guy)</td>
<td>Sunday 7.30 - 8.00pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Modern Family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>(e.g. Hungry Jacks, Target)</td>
<td>Tuesday 5pm - 8pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Morris</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialising</td>
<td>(e.g. heading to mate’s house)</td>
<td>Saturday 10am - 6pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chilling at Robba’s house</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 2: Add study ‘down-time’ to the weekly planner

Students will now have a clear idea of when they aren’t going to be able to study during the week. What they can now do is take these specific activities and times and add them to the study planner (found on page 7 of their activity packs), so that actual study can be fitted around them. This should be a fairly straightforward task provided each student has assigned a day and time to the activities from the previous worksheet. An example is seen below:

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Step 3: Fit the study into the gaps

Now that students have isolated when they aren’t able to study, they can fit in hour-blocks of study in the gaps between other commitments. This means that each day, students have at least one activity they enjoy doing which won’t be distracting them from study. Also, they are likely to find a lot more time that they previously thought they had.
Activity 4 – Beat Procrastination

Initial class time required: 30 minutes
Follow-up time: 5 minutes each week
Suitable subjects: all subjects
Resources required: Activity 3: Beating Procrastination from the Student Activity Pack (page 8)
Timing: This activity is ideally run when a major assessment or assignment is announced

Research Background

Students are expert procrastinators. So are most people – but for students, the outcome of putting off work can be a poor test score, or in some extreme cases a failed subject. Procrastination is a given for almost any student, but the real issue lies in students’ ability to manage procrastination. In our research, a large percentage of students believe they don’t have strategies to avoid procrastinating when they have work that needs doing (see graph). Procrastination boils down to a perception that work will be unenjoyable, ineffective, or both. In the Time Management seminar students are shown three root causes of procrastination and three ways to beat it. Of the three root causes, the perception that there is an overwhelming amount of work is probably the most common. This usually sets in when students look at a major assessment or assignment and don’t know where to start. As the due date draws closer without any work being done, the task appears more and more insurmountable – until students have no choice but to pull an all-nighter on Sunday to produce a mediocre result. This module builds on one of the skills presented to the students, which shows them how to break an assignment or assessment down into tiny, easily completed tasks. When faced with a 20-minute task instead of a 2-hour one, most students will find the small amount of time and motivation to get it done.
Lesson 1 – Introduce the Assessment Planner

Step 1: Break down an upcoming assessment

The main tasks students tend to procrastinate are big, heavy-weighted assignments and assessments that require significant investments of time. Students often try to break these tasks down, but end up with, say, four 2-hour tasks. For a student who is tired after a day at school, it is still very easy to find easier tasks to complete first.

In this discussion, it is worth brainstorming the different aspects of preparation that need to go into an upcoming assessment. For example, many students simply assume “research” is a single step. But breaking this down further, there are many smaller tasks incorporated into it. For example, a smaller task within “research” might be “go to the library and get 3 books on the topic”. Another step might be “read 7 pages from each source”. These are highly specific tasks, but ultimately very short and easy to complete. For each stage of the assessment/assignment students are working in in class, try to see how specific you can get students’ inputs to be. You may want to draw a mind-map on the board, or keep a running list for each aspect of the assignment. This will form the basis of the assessment planner the students will later complete.

Step 2: Students complete the assessment planner

Once the discussion has taken place, have students produce their assessment planner (found on page 9 of their activity pack) and complete it. In this planner, students will write down small, manageable tasks in the ‘task’ column and assign a deadline to getting them done. As the tasks are much shorter than trying to complete an entire section of an assignment, procrastination is easier to manage. Have the students assign dates to each of the micro-tasks spanning until a few days before the due date of the assessment.
Follow-up

For this assessment, set aside a 5-10 minute time slot each week to do spot-checks on students’ planners. If students know they are going to have to show evidence of their progress, another layer of accountability is added to the process. Once students have this assignment finished well ahead of schedule (if they are held their plans), the lack of stress and high quality of the finished product is often enough to have them making these sorts of plans on their own accord.