

Study Skills

Tips

SECTION A – GET ORGANISED

1. Get organised

- Be organised in class everyday
- Write your homework down clearly.
- Bring home the books you need.

2. Follow a routine every day

- If you get into the habit of doing your homework and some revision for a couple of hours straight after school every day, it will become a normal part of your day and make school life easier. You will get your homework and study done quickly which will leave more free time for you to enjoy yourself!
- Organise your time with your friends so that you are all studying at the same time, this way you will not feel like you are missing out on things.

3. Make a study plan

- This helps you plan your week and manage your time. Decide what time and how long you are going to spend doing your homework each day. Plan around other activities such as sports training or activity clubs. Making a plan for each week helps you start and finish your study faster as you know what to start with!
- Once you have your homework done it is good to spend some time learning topics in different subject areas. Pick 2 subjects to study for 30 minutes each. It might be useful to plan your study around your class timetable. For example if you have science on Monday you can revise work covered in science class on Monday evening. It can also be good to start with the subject you find most difficult and get it out of the way first!

- Take 10 minutes to fill in our study planner. If you still don't know where to start talk to your year head or one of your subject teachers.

4. Find a quiet space

- Figure out where you find it easiest to study. Your study space should only have the things you need to study. It is good to sit at a desk in a quiet area.
- If you find it noisy or if there are distractions at home maybe go to the local library.

5. Turn off your phone

- It's easier to study when you do not have distractions. Switch off your phone or turn to silent and you can check if you got messages when you take a break.

6. Study for 30-40 minutes

- Read over the topic to get to know what it is about.
- Read it again, more slowly and take notes or highlight important information for example formulas in maths or science, dates in history.
- Learn the important bits. How you learn best depends on what kind of learner you are. Here are some suggestions.
 - i. By re-reading again and then turning over the notes to see what you can remember. Repeat this as many times as you need to until you know the information.
 - ii. Reading and repeating your notes out loud can help you recall them.
 - iii. Writing out the information can help you learn and also test how much you can remember.
 - iv. Ask somebody at home to ask you questions about what you have learned and answer them verbally (by saying it, not writing it).
 - v. You might find it easier to learn and remember information by making your own chart or graphic (mind

map etc). This involves you writing down a central idea and noting down around it connecting ideas and thoughts using words, pictures and symbols to build up a visual map of a particular topic.

- If you find it difficult to remember information write it on coloured card and stick it somewhere you will see it a lot.
- Keep your notes safe and organised so you can use them again when you have a test.
- For more tips and samples look at the reading and taking notes sections.

7. Take a break for 10 minutes.

- It's good to get some fresh air or have a chat with a friend so you can start back feeling energised!
- Remember to keep separate time for relaxing. You won't be able to study effectively if you are not feeling healthy and relaxed.

8. Start your next topic and study for a second 30 minutes.

9. Tidy away your notes so your space is ready for the next day.

10. Ask for help if you need it.

- Your exams are important and your friends, family and teachers want you to do well. We know it can be difficult to get into a study routine so talk to us and we can help you figure out how you find it easiest to study.

SECTION B – MAKING A STUDY PLAN

1. Write a list of **topics** you are going to study.
2. Make a **REALISTIC** weekly study plan.
3. Set **times and goals** for each week.
4. Keep a record of **projects** and their **due dates**.

Setting SMART STUDY GOALS - Be S.M.A.R.T!

- **S** = Be **specific** with your goals! Pick what you want to study every day and stick to it. Be specific. Don't say "Study geography for an hour." Do say, "Revise physical geography – rivers, and mountains and look at this question on last year's paper and write an answer for it." If you are in an exam year and have a project due start work early rather than rushing it a week before the due date. Breaking a project into smaller tasks will make the job easier and reduce stress.
- **M** = **Measure your progress**. Make a study timetable at the beginning of each week and then tick off each topic when you have finished it. You'll be able to see how much work you are doing and it will give you a sense of achievement. **Test yourself** a lot and tick off the things you are happy with.
- **A** = **Decide what action** you will do each day, eg. Monday- note taking, Tuesday- Reading, Wednesday- Asking questions with a friend, etc.
- **R** = **Be realistic** with what you can do every day. If have football/dancing every Tuesday, you might only be able to do 30 minutes but on a Saturday you might get 2 hours done. Choose realistic times for yourself.
- **I** = **Time** the study well. If you have an English test on Monday and French on Friday, use the weekend for English and the week for French.

SUBJECT TECHNIQUES

Maths/ Music / Art	Practice, Practice, Practice
English	Watch a DVD of the novel and play. Practice essays and exam questions to the time given in the exam.
Gaeilge French	Study should involve speaking, listening, reading and writing. Write down new vocabulary in a vocabulary notebook.
Geography, History, Biology, Business	Practice essays and exams questions to the time given in the exam. Use Flash Cards or place post-its with key information somewhere you will see it often.
Projects in Home Economics, Geography, Construction etc	Start the projects on time. Keep notes on your work as you go along.

More tips on learning Gaeilge and French

- Study out loud.
 - Study with a friend which means you both speak and listen.
 - If you study by reading silently you are drawing only on your visual memory. If you study out loud, you are also using your verbal memory and practising your pronunciation.
- Study day by day.
 - You cannot learn a language by cramming at the last minute! You may be able to learn vocabulary but you cannot teach your mouth to use them in sentences.
- Review 'old' topics and vocabulary.
 - You learn new skills on the back of old ones. The more you 'recycle' familiar information the easier you will find it to add new vocabulary.

- Don't be afraid to make mistakes
 - Being self-conscious or worrying about how you sound can be a problem when learning a language. Remember everyone feels the same fears and practice makes perfect!
- Try to memorise 4 words every night
 - This will add up to a large vocabulary by the end of the year.

Techniques for Maths

- The best way to learn maths is by doing it. Practice as many different types of questions as possible from your text book and exam papers.
- Take a step by step approach. If you don't understand a step or are lost talk to your teacher and ask for help. It is important to understand formulas and procedures so you can work it out alone the next time.
- Make a set of cards with important formulas which you can refer to when revising.

REMEMBER

- **Be active** – always work with a pen and paper, look for key points, test yourself. Focus on tasks and specific questions.
- **Be organised** –Have a plan for what you want to cover each week. Have your folder for this subject, pen, paper, the book, exam papers and stick to your study plan.
- **Understanding and Remembering** – Make sure you can understand what you are studying. If you can understand the topic, it's easier to remember it. If you can't understand something go back to your book, look at examples, and ask your teacher.
- **Review and repeat.** Review your study topics every week, read over your notes, the more your review and repeat the less you forget.

- **Don't avoid subjects you find difficult or don't enjoy so much.** If you spend more time of your weaker subjects you will feel better about them as you see improvement.
- ***Do not get discouraged!*** There are times when you won't enjoy studying, but remember, it **WILL** be worth it in the end!

MY STUDY PLAN

DAY	SUBJECT	SUBJECT
MONDAY	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
TUESDAY	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
WEDNESDAY	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
THURSDAY	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
FRIDAY	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
SATURDAY	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
SUNDAY	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>

SECTION C – READING TIPS

You need to concentrate when you are reading. Here are some tips!

- **Remember pick the right place and time to do your work.**
 - Is the location you have picked to study quiet? It is usually not a good idea to listen to music. If you are aware of the music you are not concentrating 100%.
 - Are there distractions? Try to remove things which catch your attention or might distract you, for example face a wall rather than a window so you don't become distracted by what's going on outside. Remember switch off your mobile phone.
 - Is there enough light? Your eyes will get tired if the lighting is too dim.
 - Have you a table and straight backed chair?
 - Have you all your books, notes and study supplies (calculator, dictionary, highlighters etc) to hand?
 - Are you tired, is it late? If you are finding it difficult to concentrate maybe you need to change the time of day or place where you study.
 - Is it too warm? This might make you drowsy!

- **Are you concentrating and taking in what you read?**
 - Think about what you are reading
 - What do you already know about the topic?
 - Are you looking for answers to questions?
 - Are you researching ideas for a project?
 - Use one of the examples to take your notes.

- Change how you read according to why you are reading the text.
 - Read quickly or skim a piece of text to get the general gist of the passage.
 - Scan quickly for specific information. Looks at headings and skim through text. Can you find 5 key words?
 - Read difficult or sections with new information slowly. Have your dictionary in case you need it.
 - You might find it helpful to work with a friend to identify the three main points from a text.
 - Skip material that is not about your topic or is not so important.

Remember PQ2R

- **P** = Preview. Read over the thing you are studying very quickly to get an idea of what it is about. It is called skimming.
- **Q** = Question. Write down five questions about the thing you are studying and answer them while you study them.
- **R** = Read the thing you are studying carefully and underline or take notes on the things you think are important.
- **R** = Review. Look back over your questions, notes and read the thing you were studying one more time.

SECTION D - TAKING NOTES

There are a number of ways of taking notes which will:

- Make it look well.
- Make it easier to read.
- Make it easier to revise.

Here are some ideas for taking notes and keeping them organised.

- Make sure you have a proper **system for your notes**. Have a separate copy or refill pad for each subject.
- **Date** and put a **title** on your work.
- **Notes are a summary not a repetition**. Identify the main idea of each paragraph and take shorter notes. Put it into your own words.
- Have a **separate paragraph** for each section.
- Use **headings, numbers or bullet points** to separate different topics in your notes.
- Go onto a **new page** for a **new chapter or topic**.
- **Underline important** words and headings.
- Use **capital letters** for key words or **IMPORTANT INFORMATION**.

Consider using a graphic to organise your information

- How you lay out your work can help you visualise or learn the key facts. Some ideas are listed below.
- Put information about different topics in boxes.
- Use a **Mind map** to map out your ideas.
 - Use key words or wherever possible images.
 - Start from the centre of the page and work out.
 - Make the centre a clear and strong picture of the theme of the map.
 - Make sub-themes and put key words on lines.

- Use block capitals rather than script hand writing. It makes the map easier to read and remember.
- Use colour to show different themes or ideas. Anything that stands out on the page will stand out in your mind.
- Use arrows or other graphics to show links between different parts of the map.
- Making the map helps you learn and think about a topic and have a short summary to use again when revising. Look at the examples!

Photocopied notes

- You might decide to photocopy important pages or your teacher might give you handouts. If using photocopied notes **use a marker to underline** or highlight **important words or phrases**. You might jot ideas and thoughts in the margins.
- **Use post-its** to summarise points from a text/ lesson.
- **Use flash cards**

REMEMBER

- Pick **key words**.
- Keep the notes **short and to the point**.
- Write the notes **in order**, do not go from chapter 6 to chapter 3 etc.

SECTION E

- PREPARING FOR JUNIOR/ LEAVING CERT EXAMS

- **Get into a study routine** from the start of the year. Studying is more than just doing homework. Make a weekly plan deciding what you are going to study each day after homework.
- **Ask for help.** Figure out what kind of learner you are.
- Get into a regular routine of **practicing exam papers** and **preparing revision notes.** Get familiar with exam words and layout of papers.
- Keep your notes **organised.**
- **Test yourself** after learning information.
 - Write it out
 - Get someone to ask you questions
 - Do an exam question
- Practice different sections by answering questions from previous years.
- Be familiar with how many **marks each section is worth.**
 - Which sections are compulsory?
 - Which are optional?
 - Is there a pattern of topics which come up?
 - Listen to your teacher's advice
- Think about how to **manage time** when answering exam questions.

ON THE EXAM DAY

- **Arrive** at the exam **early**.
- It's natural to feel a bit nervous. However feeling too nervous can make it difficult to concentrate. Take a few deep breaths and remember the work you have done to prepare for the exam. Try to be positive!
- **Read through the exam paper carefully.** Identify the questions you are going to attempt and eliminate those you can't answer. Even if faced with the situation where you can't answer all the questions you are better off to make an attempt at the required number of questions.
- **Read instructions and questions carefully.** Highlight or **underline the key words** in each question.
- **Don't rush.** If you have a choice about which questions to answer, spend some time deciding which questions you can answer best.
- Look at how many **marks each question is worth** and spend more time on the parts of the exam which carry more marks. Estimate how long each answer will take and keep your eye on time.
- If you are writing an **essay** style answer **decide on your structure.** Use a rough sheet to make some quick notes on what you want to say. This will also help you figure out how much you know.
 - How are you going to start or introduce your topic?
 - What are your key points? Make a paragraph for each.
 - What is your conclusion? Summarising what you have said in the essay.
- Always **keep the question in mind** to avoid going off the point. Remember it's what you are saying rather than how many pages you write (quality over quantity). However in essay type questions

you need to go into more detail to back up the points you are making.

- Answer first the questions you know most about. This will help you feel more confident. Leave until last those you are less sure of.
- **Be aware of time.** Don't spend all your time on one section as you will have to rush the rest. You can always come back to a question at the end. Leave some space between questions in case you want to add another point or write additions on left hand page and show insertion points clearly.
- Try to leave some time at end to **read back over all your answers.**
 - Check you have not left anything out.
 - Check for mistakes and clarify unclear points.
 - Check you have answered what you were asked.
- Write as clearly as you can. Your hand will get tired but remember you can only get marks if your examiners can work out what you've written!
- **Do not leave the exam early,** a moment of clarity might come at the last minute.

EXAM TIPS FOR MATHS

- When you go in write down any formulas that will be helpful for you to answer questions.
- Make sure you answer what it being asked! Often students know how to solve a problem but misread or misunderstand the question. Do not start until you are sure you understand what is being asked.
- Show how you worked out the problem. This gives the examiners the opportunity to see how you got your answer and you might pick up method marks even if the end answer is wrong.
- If you are unable to answer a question, leave it and go on to another, coming back to the hard one later. Often with a fresh start you will see what you need to do.
- Multiply choice questions
 - Answer all questions. Make an educated guess if you do not know the answer.
 - Read all options before selecting your answer, even if the first one seems right.
 - Rule out obviously wrong answers. When you narrow it down read the question again and work it out logically.

MANAGING EXAM STRESS

Stress is our body's response to challenge or excitement. A certain level of stress is good as it makes us take action. However it can also lead us to worry about how we are going to perform in a task which can lead to us feeling anxious. Our goal here is to give you some tips for managing exam stress. In an exam year you want to use stress to motivate rather than overwhelm you.

- Don't avoid or put off study. The earlier you start the more progress you will make and the more in control you will feel.
- Have realistic performance expectations. It is important to work hard to reach your highest potential but you also need to listen to your teacher's advice and not demand too much of yourself.
- Try not to compare yourself to other students. Everyone is different and you need to set goals to better yourself rather than worrying about being better than your friends.
- Talk to your Career Guidance Teacher a lot of students worry about achieving the right grades and points to get their first choice for college. Remember there are lots of options. Ask for advice. Figure out what is best for you and have a backup plan.
- Visualise success! Try to be positive about what you do know rather than worrying about what you don't know so well. This will help you feel more confident going in to the exam.
- If you are feeling panicky try distractions like the following – breathe in for the count of 3, hold for the count of 3 and exhale for the count of 3. Repeat as many times as you like.
- Watch what you eat and drink. Water is important for concentration in class and during study. Avoid too much sugary foods. Eat food that helps improve energy and concentration like bananas, vegetables, protein rich food and carbohydrates.
- Remember to also take some time each day to relax/do something you enjoy.

FINAL EXAM TIPS

- Don't panic!! If the exam is more difficult than you expected start with what you can do. If you get some questions done you will feel better. Then tackle the more difficult bits later. When you are more relaxed it will probably come back to you.
- If your mind draws a blank try using a page to write down ideas which come to mind when you think about a topic. This is called brainstorming and can help jog your memory.
- Don't give up. Read questions you are unsure of a few times. Underline key words. Give it a shot. Write down what you do know.
- Get an early night before the exam. You will not perform so well if you are tired.
- Eat a good breakfast, lunch and dinner. Drink lots of water.
- Take a rest or do an activity after going home.
- Do some study for the next day
- Don't keep thinking about the exam which maybe did not go so well, learn from it for the next time. Forget it and concentrate on the next one.