

How To Survive the HSC

After making it through the struggles of the HSC I've decided to make a few tips for all you rookies!!

You may choose to abide by them or ignore them fully – totally up to you!

1. Do not be disheartened by a grade

Yep. Even year 11. As they say – your past should not dictate your future!

You may have started year 12 with disappointing prelim marks. In the future you may receive a mark that does not reach your standard.

Whatever you do, do not let this affect you!!

Learn from your mistakes and remember it is **NEVER too late to turn around and change your habits.**

I had never actually done that well in Year 11. With a slight adjustment in study habits I managed to turn my rank around in Legal Studies to 13th in Year 11 to 1st in Year 12 before finishing with a final ranking of 2nd – I am living proof that “work input = output”.

2. Start your major work now

I'm sure you've heard of this statement many times before, and sadly, I must say it again!

In order to truly illustrate the importance of starting them now is by imagining yourself during trials.

Imagine the prospect of having your 40% trial exams looming in 2 weeks time and your half finished major work sitting on your desk!!

The best time to smash through these is during the **6 week holidays and in term 1!**

It does not hurt to finish your major work weeks before it's due date and I highly recommend getting them mostly done before trials comes around!

3. If they your teacher is marking out of 20 give them a 30/20

Your internal marks are usually made up of assignments and assignments to me are essentially “**free marks**”.

Think about it – You are given a task to take home and work on it for 2 weeks using a variety of online sources! You can plan, draft, write, edit, check and re-write as many times before submitting it!!

Try to achieve the highest possible mark on all your assignments. Do not let a mark slip away and dedicate time on these. Start them early and make sure they are as AMAZING as you can possible make them.

MAKE SURE YOU HAND IN **multiple drafts to your teachers**

4. Do your summary notes every night

By doing your summary notes every night, you are not only effectively LEARNING the content, but you are also SAVING your ass when assessment time comes around.

DO NOT wait until the week before exam blocks to start your notes.

After learning a section of the course at school, go home and make all your notes using multiple sources!!

I swear they only take 30 minutes per subject (depending on how long the section is) and you can even play around with formatting to try and make them look nice. Colour code them and include examples!

5. Drafts, Drafts, Drafts

Whether it be for an assignment, assessment, essay, practise essay or ANYTHING.

HAND IN DRAFTS. As many as you physically can and until **your teacher says it is “practically perfect”**.

This method is also good as a “back up” when you hand in assignments. If you’ve handed an assignment after your teacher has checked a draft and said “perfect” you have every right to challenge them on your mark.

6. Your Teacher is your best friend

Your teachers are walking, talking genius’s (well most of them). They have YEARS of experience and can answer a question in 0.2 seconds.

Write down EVERYTHING they say. Keep note of it, use it in your work and LISTEN TO THEM.

They award marks to people who abide by their ideas.

If Ms Turco hates gender in Hamlet then DO NOT talk about gender in your essay. DO WHAT THEY WANT and it will pay off for your internal mark.

Keep a 10/10 relationship with all your these teachers and utilise them as much as you can. They are all such hardworking people and will 1000% provide you with help at every beckon call.

Though you may feel very, very overworked by the amount of homework they give you – it WILL pay off.

7. Follow your syllabus, not your dreams

Know your syllabus. Know this off by heart, in and out, back to front.

Stick copies of it on your wall, in your shower, on the fridge.

This should be YOUR BEST FRIEND.

When you are asked a question you need to be able to identify which syllabus dot point and address everything underneath it.

8. Provide examples/evidence to support your claim

You can never just “say something” in the HSC. You must always provide examples using a variety of sources depending on the subject.

For English this may be quotes, in legal this is LCMDI, in PDH this is relevant examples/stats and in Society this is live action examples.

The more examples you use, the more likely the marker will give you a higher mark.

Make sure your notes are abundant and colour coded (I used blue) with examples!!

9. Introductions – ARE IMPORTANT

The Introduction is what markers first see. It is how they sort you into a band at first glance.

So start off profound, amazing and with a bang!

10. Write with sophistication

Widen your vocabulary and use long, profound words that sound academic. Often, the exemplar responses are always students who have a sophisticated writing style.

Not only does this make the script easy to read, it is engaging, has academic flair and demonstrates characteristics of a band 6 student.

11. Adhere to the course concepts

Every course has a glossary, lingo and vocab that you must use throughout.

Use the terminology of your respective course whenever you can as it adds great knowledge and depth into your essays. This may even differ from module to module or from topic to topic.

12. Do heaps of HSC questions

After writing your summary notes you MUST APPLY your knowledge.

Do HSC questions to death – this is my BIGGEST tip for success in year 12.

I did EVERY SINGLE HSC question and past paper from 1996-2016 for every single subject.

You can chose to do this a number of ways;

1. Per Paper – print of an entire paper and do the whole thing under timed conditions
2. Per topic – I would always sort HSC questions by topic into a word document. When my assessment or trial came up for that topic I would make sure I did ALL the HSC questions for that topic so that I was well prepared for the exam. Then, when I reached trials I had already answered all the past HSC questions from 1996-2016 for 3 of topics and for HSC I'd have already done ALL OF THEM.

By doing HSC questions you are articulating your knowledge, actively memorising, simulating exam conditions and practising your notes.

You will find that teachers often repeat the old HSC questions!

By doing HSC questions you are being exposed to questions that may well and truly come up again!!

13. Start studying for Trials EARLY

DO NOT wait until the week before. Start as early as possible!!

14. Use various forms of learning in order to memorise

Just plane old READING your note is not only boring but extremely ineffective.

Use various methods to do this!! I personally used the following;

- Audio – I recorded my voice and listened to my English essays in my free time
- Videos – There are plenty of videos out there on every topic! Google some and annotate your notes with them.
- Mind maps – get yourself some coloured pens and make pretty mind maps! Stick them around your wall too.
- HSC questions – obviously an application of your knowledge and one of the BEST forms of remembering things
- Brain Dumps – these are SO helpful. All you do is make a table of the syllabus and write down everything you remember from your notes under each dotpoint. Then go back and in red write down the things you forgot. Do this over and over again until you remember most of your notes.
- Make “Quick Notes” – keep summarising your notes until it just becomes ‘mental triggers’

15. Step 1 – rank well, Step 2 – help everyone

As soon as you walk out of your last assessment MAKE A GOOGLE drive and send all your notes to your class mates – if you all do well you will scale up significantly!!

16. How long do I study for?

This is one of the weirdest questions to me because I personally believe that we shouldn't be restricted by numbers!

My goal in the afternoon was to create a list of tasks and to complete them.

I would complete all my summary notes for the day, do my homework, some practise HSC and then additional readings if I felt like it.

I would usually also read ahead and try to stay 1 LESSON AHEAD of my class.

If this took me 2 hours then I spent 2 hours doing that. If it took me 4, then 4 hours it was for that day.

17. Take it easy on yourself – just try your best

While the HSC is difficult, stressful and at times you honestly may want to give up – take a break and unwind.

Take it easy on yourself and don't lock yourself up studying all year.

Do you absolute best – that is all anyone can ever ask from you 😊

18. ATAR goals?

While having an ATAR goal is recommend by most people, I never had one and didn't plan on one either.

If you aim too low then you won't be working as hard to get that AND if you aim too high then you may feel disappointed when you don't reach that goal.

My “ATAR goal” the whole year was:

“The Higher, The Better”

I walked into year 12 with the aim of trying my absolute best and accepting the outcome.

If this yields 95, 90, 85, 80, 72 or WHATEVER – the most IMPORTANT thing is that I will not look back on my time in year 12 with regrets as I knew that I TRIED MY BEST.

19. Work 1 lesson ahead (if you can)

Read or do your notes a lesson ahead of your class. This way you won't be hearing anything NEW in class.

You will never fall behind and you can ask your teacher for clarifications.

Not only that, you are being exposed to content TWICE.

20. When to take breaks?

Your body will KNOW when to take breaks.

Different people may tell you to take breaks every 30 mins or every 1 hour.

But I disagree.

Sometimes you just get into the "mode" of studying for a while. Don't take a mid-break if you are keen to do work.

Take your breaks when you start feeling hazy, tired or restless – get yourself a snack, for a walk, take a shower.

21. MOST IMPORTANT: Find a friend who will motivate you

While this may be something you haven't heard before - from experience - this was the most beneficial thing to me in the entire HSC.

Find a friend who has similar goals/aspirations to you. By doing this, you will be able to MOTIVATE each other and work together the entire year to reach your goals.

I had this friend. We spent the entire year asking each other for help, getting each other to proof read work, sharing our notes and simply just MOTIVATING each other to do well.

Sometimes this was achieved by her simply saying that she had "finished her assignment" while I was only half way through it. This made me want to work harder to try and stay at her pace.

You can have a friend like this for each subject! Do not feel restricted to your friendship circle!! You are all in the same boat, and chances are, most of you want to do well.

I hope these tips will be helpful during your HSC year!

Remember to vary your study habits (reading, audio, writing), do a little bit of work every night, make your STUDY NOTES AS YOU GO and stay calm. Work Hard and Aim High! It will be over before you know it!!

Good Luck!

Love – Neilab Osman xx