

Taking Responsibility for your own Learning

Purpose of this session

- to improve your already very accomplished working habits
- to enable you to become even more independent learners
- Not everything in this session will be applicable to every student
- Everybody should take **something** from today's session to make them even better learners

Part 1: Working habits

Class notes

- Important to read through class notes on a daily basis, i.e. every time you have a lesson in that subject.
- Identify anything you haven't understood.
- Follow it up!

Exercise books

- Make sure all tasks are titled and dated.
- Make sure all worksheets are secured into the book (glued, stapled...)
- Make sure any missing work is copied up.
- Make sure completed books are stored sensibly for future use.

Files

- Keep files organised. Decide on a sensible order.
- How much to carry around school?
- Date sheets and notes.
- Underline key points.
- Use headings and different colours to emphasise key points.
- Try to do this automatically in lessons.
- If not: allocate additional study time to sort this out at least once weekly.

Vocabulary

- Check unfamiliar vocabulary.
- Compile a glossary of specialist terms for each subject.
- Some subjects ask you to reserve a page in your exercise book for that purpose.
- Practise that vocabulary.
- Using key terminology appropriately can significantly lift your grades.

Spelling

- Take note of spelling corrections – **actively learn these**
- “sp” in the margin? – look the word up
- Weak spelling? There are lists and practice activities on the net – engage with them!

Grammar

Do you need to re-visit:

- There / their
- A lot / alot
- Its / it's
- “Sentences” without verbs

Advice and practice on the net, or talk to an English teacher / attend English clinic

Spelling and Grammar

- A weakness in either spelling or grammar will affect your grades in most subjects.
- Do something about it **now**.

Where to work

- Use somewhere quiet to work at home with **no distractions** (Facebook, mobile phone, twitter, music, TV...)
- Are you really **working** when you say you are??

Type and Quantity of Study

- Independent study time should be shared out equally between all subjects; one subject **should not** dominate private study time.
- This needs to be **planned**.
- Begin homework as soon as it is set so as to meet deadlines.

Use of the planner

- You need a written **record** of your academic work; phones are not a substitute!
- You should record **all** work details in the planner; time taken, if work was set by the teacher or if it was independent learning.
- You should also record the date due for submission.
- Part of the planning process involves being aware of the pressure points, i.e. deadlines for coursework, research projects, subject tests and exams as well as extra-curricular activity demands.

Good planning

- In other words:
- Everybody's private study timetable is different.
- It doesn't matter what it looks like, as long as it is **planned**.

Weekly planning sheet (example)

Time↓	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
P 1/2							
P 3/4							
P 5/6							
Lunch time							
P 7/8							
6 pm							
7 pm							
8 pm							

Develop Positive Study Routines

- Academic success depends upon developing habits into a routine through repetition so they become second nature.
- Study every day, plan ahead, complete work to deadlines and set high standards to achieve academic potential.

Independent learners

- Central to this is the move away from 'spoon fed' learning controlled by teachers to independent learning where you are increasingly motivated to work for yourself and confident enough to read beyond the syllabus to achieve a deeper understanding of the material.

Part 2: Becoming a more independent learner

Whose job is it?

- Teachers will give you lots of information and help you understand it.
- But it isn't their job to get you through the examinations.
- That's **your** job, with their **help**.
- The following is a checklist of all the things which you could do for each subject. Much of it will be supplied by your teachers at some point.

Exam boards and specifications

- Do you know which exam board and which specification you are using?
- Create an electronic link to their website.
- Check:
 - Past papers and mark schemes
 - information for students
 - resources for students

Use past papers

- Download those past papers which you can access. The most recent ones will be locked.
- (Check with teachers if there are any they don't want you to use.)
- If you need more practice: Go through them. Some can be marked online, using the mark scheme, some need teacher input

Using the textbook

- Go through any aspects of the textbooks which were not used in class.
- Check with your teacher whether such sections are useful or maybe irrelevant.
- If they are useful, access them in your private study time.

Using revision guides

- There is a plethora of revision guides available.
- Check with teachers which are useful.
- Remember that revision guides are a **prop**. Often they are unnecessary – you will have covered the work in lessons.

Reading around the subject

- Use the relevant resource lists provided by your teachers.
- Also check for videos – there is a lot of reputable material around, e.g. TED talks
- Consider adding “reading around the subject” to the list of tasks which you perform weekly.

Subject-specific demands (1)

- Do you have to create coursework, or a piece of practical work or a long essay?
- Make sure that you know when the deadlines for these pieces come up, especially if you have to do several.
- Create an overview of your annual work demands. Are there any pressure points?

Work plan for the year - example

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
September				
October				Half Term
November				
December		Mock Exams	Mock Exams	Christmas Holidays
January				
February			Half Term	
March				
April	Easter Holidays	Easter Holidays		
May			Study leave GCSEs start	Study Leave GCSE exams

Subject-specific demands (2)

- For each such task:
- Know **exactly** what the success criteria are
- Create a timeline
- If appropriate, check with your teacher frequently that you are doing the right thing
- Use sample materials for guidance, if they are available

Preparing for the exam (1)

- Access the mark scheme
- Understand the success criteria for your target grade
- Do you achieve your target grade for each aspect of the exam?
- If not, why not?
- Ask your teachers what you need to do to bridge the gap
- You may want to do this before the Mock Exams

Preparing for the exam (2)

- For each topic area:
- Once you have finished with the topic in class, prepare it for the exam.
- Summarise important information, maybe on a mindmap, or on a A4 page in prose. Do this whilst the understanding is still fresh. File it away carefully so that you can use it during revision work.
- You may want to do this from January onwards

Review and revise

- The words are often used to mean the same thing. However:
- Assume that you review materials on a regular basis throughout the year, so that topics which you have finished continue to be fresh in your mind.
- Assume that you revise materials in order to cram them into your head just before the actual exam.
- Hence review is ongoing, throughout the year, and prepares you for sensible revision