

Helping Students Develop Effective Study Skills

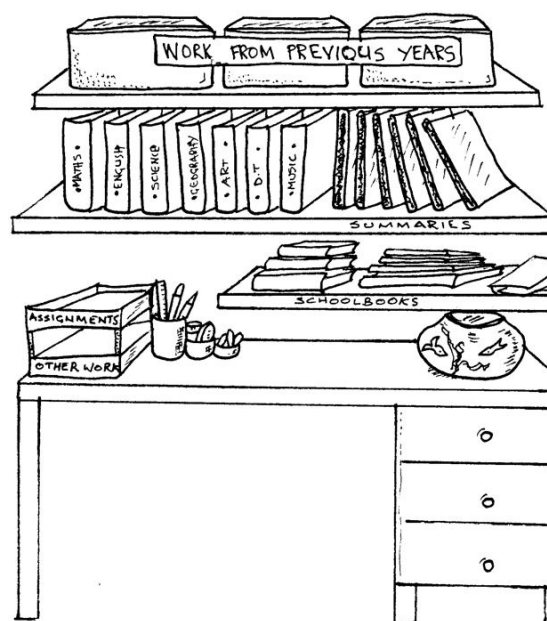
ELES Top 10 Tips for Students



**Enhanced Learning
Educational Services**
"the study skills specialist"

1. HOME STUDY ENVIRONMENT:

- Ensure you have a well-set up and organised space to work in.
- Consider if their chair and the lighting in their room need to be upgraded.
- Provide storage space and a noticeboard.
- You may like to have the Internet capable computer in the main part of the house, students can collect their research onto a memory stick and then use this to work on assignments on a cheap notebook computer (not connected to the Internet) in their room.



2. ORGANISATION AND FILING:

- Discuss with your student whether they use exercise books or folders and how well this is working for them. How do they manage loose sheets of paper?
- It is a great idea to set up a folder for each subject that stays at home – somewhere to file away past tests, assignments, completed topics and to keep everything together.

3. TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS:

- Clarify with your student the concept that in secondary school students are expected to do a set amount of schoolwork each night (as opposed to just getting the homework done as quickly as possible).
- Juniors should be spending around 1 hour per night on schoolwork, seniors from 1.5 up to 3 hours per night.
- Students should work on homework first, then assignments or test preparation. After this students need to look for other things they can do to enhance their understanding of their subjects, such as making study notes, doing extra questions, revising earlier topics.
- It is best to either have a timetable with slots allocated to schoolwork or else have students do a certain number of half hour blocks each night.

4. MANAGING WORKLOAD:

- Students should have a term planner visible in their room that shows due dates for tests and assignments.
- Check that students are using their diary as a planner by breaking down larger pieces of work and scheduling when they will do each step (this can be done in pencil so can be changed as needed).
- Some students may need help in chunking down tasks and putting together a plan to complete each step.
- Check how students keep track of the work they have completed and check that uncompleted work is moved forward in the diary to the current day.
- If students are feeling overwhelmed, help them list everything they need to do and prioritise the tasks.



5. DEALING WITH DISTRACTIONS:

- The best way to deal with distractions is to work in half hour blocks with no distractions during this time. This means during the half hour blocks allocated to schoolwork, no Facebook, TV etc – not for the whole night, just for those half hour blocks.
- The general rule with music is that if students are doing easy work it is ok, but for anything that requires concentration, particularly if there is memorisation involved, students should either switch off the music or have baroque classical music playing softly.
- Many families have an Internet capable computer in the main living area where students can research and save information onto a zip drive, and small cheap notebooks not connected to the Internet for students to use in their room.

6. IMPROVING CLASSROOM SKILLS:

- Check with teachers at parent/teacher night who your student sits with in class and how well they work together. If it is not an effective partnership, request they be moved to a different seat for future lessons.
- Have students keep a list of questions they need to ask their teacher about and encourage them to ask about these in class or else make an appointment to see their teacher outside of lesson time.

7. SUMMARISING:

- One of the biggest mistakes students make is leaving their study notes until just before their exams. One of the best habits students can get into is doing their study notes throughout the year – at the end of each topic is a good time to do this. Whenever students don't have much homework, they should be working on study notes.
- Another mistake is writing too much and not breaking the content down into short key points in their own words. Have a look at the sorts of notes your students make and see if you can provide suggestions for improvement.

- Suggest your student takes any study notes they make to school and asks their teacher to have a quick look to check they are on track and see if there is any way they could improve the notes they are making.
- Students with handwriting issues may like to visit www.ringpen.com to find out about a pen that could be useful!

8. ACTIVE STUDYING:

- When studying, students should be using a wide range of study techniques.
- One of the biggest mistakes students make is just to read their notes over and over and hope it sticks in their head instead of testing themselves on the content like they should be doing.
- In addition to retaining the content, students need to practise applying the skills of the subject, doing as many revision questions and past exam papers as possible. You may like to look at purchasing an additional textbook in a different brand so that students have more questions to use as revision.
- If students struggle in an exam situation, they need to do more practise under exam conditions (i.e. under time limits and not looking at any notes or answers as they do the practise exam).



9. LIFESTYLE AND BALANCE:

- The best students are those with a healthy lifestyle and good balance in their lives. Think about the types of food your student eats, whether they drink enough water, if they exercise regularly and most importantly if they are getting enough sleep (amount needed varies but the average is around 8 hours).
- It is also important that students have time to do the things they enjoy, spend time with family and friends and also have 'down time' just to relax.

10. PERSONAL BEST:

- Rather than having students competing with others, stress the concept of 'personal best', the idea that while not everyone can be at the top of the class, everyone is able to work towards achieving the best results they are capable of.
- A great read for all parents: *'How to Motivate Your Child for school and beyond'* by Andrew Martin.