(This excerpt is taken from Section A: Study Notes)

5. How do I improve my study notes?

Make them as visual as possible. The more organised they are, the more structured and visual they are, the more your brain will respond and remember. Make it easy for your brain:

- use wide margins so you can add in extra information as your understanding grows
- use bullet points and abbreviations rather than long sentences and paragraphs
- highlight or box important points and formulas
- rewrite any sections that are not clear (but don't rewrite it all just for the sake of it)
- use sub headings, indenting, numbering: the more they are broken down, the easier to learn
- complete sentences should be rare – key phrases are better
- legible, neat handwriting
- use clear and noticeable topic headings

6. How do I use study notes?

The process of creating the study notes is the first stage of learning the material so you can recall it. It is important that you do not just read through your study notes. Of course, reading your notes is useful, but in order to ensure information moves to long term memory you need to make your study active. Some ways you can do this are to read through a section of your notes then put them to one side and see what you can write out from memory. Or try and speak out loud what you have read without referring to your notes. You can also try writing out the information in your own words or using your study notes to jot down sample essay plans.

7. How can I do study notes for English?

Many students find it difficult to do study notes for subjects like English as there is such a huge quantity of material studied for each topic or piece of literature. One way to approach study notes for English is to try and do one-page summaries on particular aspects of the novel and organise your thoughts in this way. For example, you may do a page of notes on each particular character, a page on themes, a page on the author's techniques, a page on the plot and so on. Make sure you avoid long wordy paragraphs and stick to point form as much as possible. It is likely you will still need to read through many of your notes again but these single pages will help you consolidate your ideas and remember the key points and quotes for essays.

8. Should I include examples in subjects like Mathematics?

This is very much a personal decision. Some students like to keep the examples separate from the formulas they need to memorise. Other students like to include examples of questions they find difficult. One way to do this is to have a separate section of examples of questions you find difficult and you can cover the answer and attempt the question again. Most students find including some examples beneficial. Another way to do it is to place your summaries in a display folder with the rules to memorise on the left-hand side and examples on the right-hand side. You could also create a list of the types of questions you find difficult and so need to review.

(This excerpt is taken from Section B: Planning)

Steps To Planning Your Study Time

There is no such thing as a perfect study timetable – it will be different for everyone as everyone has different needs and commitments. Without some sort of plan, your study is likely to be haphazard and ineffectual. Many students are resistant to the idea of a making a study timetable – they say it is of no use as they never stick to it. Without a rough plan however, it is much more difficult to make yourself stay on track. The thing to do is to create the sort of study timetable that suits you and that you can work with.

For some students this will be only a very simple outline that says what subject they will study on what day. For other students they might just make a list of what they want to get done for each subject as preparation, then just work through the list whenever they are studying that subject. For other students, having a detailed plan with set times for each subject really helps them to complete much more effective study than if they just approached their preparation haphazardly.

It is useful to go through the process below even if you do not end up using as detailed a study timetable as it helps you to think about how you will approach your study over the next few weeks.

Step 1

On the grid following these instructions, write down approximately how much time you will aim to study each night. Cross off any days that you know you will have activities or will not be able to do any study. For example:

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1 hr	1 hr	basketball	2 hours	1 hour	3 hours	2 hours

It is true that other work may arise, tests and assignments and so on, and that you may need to reschedule this work. But unless you have a goal of what you'd like to do in terms of study, you definitely will not make the time to do it. Set a goal of what you'd like to achieve and you are more likely to find a way to make it happen.

Step 2

Next, allocate subjects to each of these time slots. Try and separate similar subjects and study the subject you find hardest when you are most alert. For example:

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1 hr – Maths	1 hr – History.	basketball	2 hours - Physics	1 hour - Geography	3 hours – English and French	2 hours – spare time if need to reschedule work

Alternatively, you may like to break up your study sessions and study a few different subjects each day.

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1 hr – Maths and English	1 hr – History and Physics	basketball	2 hours – Physics French	1 hour – Geography Maths	3 hours – English, French, Geography	2 hours – spare time if need to reschedule work

C Studying

Skim through the following paying attention to the questions that most apply to you.

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. How do you actually study?

Pre-Quiz: When you study do you:

- prepare study notes and summaries?	Y / N
- do practise examination papers?	Y / N
- test yourself to see if you can remember the information?	Y / N
- do lots of different question types?	Y / N
- make sure you understand the material before memorising?	Y / N
- use a variety of different techniques to learn it?	Y / N
- practise the skills of the subject?	Y / N

Many students feel they don't really know how to study. They read through their notes and textbooks, they do some questions and revision sheets, maybe even a few essay plans, but they are not really sure if what they are doing is as effective as it could be.

Studying involves the following main aspects:

1. **Experiencing and understanding the course.**
2. **Actively learning and remembering the content.**
3. **Practising the skills of the subject.**

Some students interpret this as read through your notes then do a couple of practise papers. If this is all you are doing, you are right – your study is not as effective as it should be. There is a lot more you could do to save yourself time, to make your memories and recall stronger, and to give yourself a better chance of achieving excellent results in the examination. Think about whether you are still studying the same way you did back in Year 8. The complexity and volume of the work has increased so your study approach should have developed in order to meet these increasing demands. Now might be a good time for a quick makeover, a time to add some new techniques and update your repertoire. It is amazing what a difference a few changes to your approach can make.

Read through the information below to check and see if you can improve the way in which you approach your study. You might like to review in particular the next few pages each time before a test as your brain needs repetition to help it remember to apply a variety of strategies.

1. UNDERSTANDING THE COURSE

Memorising information without really having a clue what it means is simply a waste of time. It is impossible then to apply your knowledge to any slight variation of the question. And of course, it is impossible to predict exactly what the examination question will be! So the first stage of your study should be making sure that you understand the concepts. It is actually a bit difficult to separate this out as really this stage is intertwined with the next two. As you begin to go through the process of learning and practising for the subject, you will come across sections of work that you do not understand. If this happens you should follow these steps:

- Spend a reasonable amount of time trying to decipher and understand the information. To do this you might:
  - look through any examples or worked examples
  - re-read sections of the textbook
  - give a friend a quick call and see if they can explain it to you
  - see if you have any other books where the explanation is clearer
  - find similar questions
  - try and work backwards if it is a numerical problem with an answer
  - take a short break then come back fresh
  - see if there is anyone in your family who could help
  - read through your class notes again
  - do a quick search on the Net
  - post a question on a student chat site
  - look at earlier or later sections of work and see if they help bring it into perspective
- Have you heard of the saying 'there's no point flogging a dead horse'? This means that it is important to know when to stop, to know when you have got to the point when you are really just wasting your time.

SMART STUDENT APPROACH

Smart students have a real go at understanding the work themselves first, they work out exactly where their main problem lies, come up with a list of questions to ask their teacher, and then move onto something else. They go to school the next day, clear up the point they are having trouble with (and this usually takes less than 10 minutes with their teacher before class or at lunchtime) then go home and continue studying that topic. When they get stuck again (and everyone gets stuck at some point), they repeat the process again.

THE 'OTHER' APPROACH

The other not-so-smart approach is to spend hour upon hour labouring over the subject trying to understand the information but just getting more frustrated and going round and round in more and more circles of confusion. The problem with this approach is you get no other productive work done and at times you reach a point where you do need outside help to progress further. All this approach does is make you feel frustrated and likely just to give up after a while. Students who follow this approach end up with great gaps in their knowledge (which they only discover in the exam!).

(This section continues for another 8 pages)