

B

Getting Organised

Suggested Timing:

At least 5 weeks before
the examination period

Moving right along. Now read this (and highlight):

The problem with school (one of the problems!) is that you are given so many bits of paper. In fact, these sheets you are reading now are a perfect example of this. More paper! Apart from the issue of trees and the environment, you have a more immediate problem of how to manage all these papers.

Some students seem naturally good at this. They stick in every handout they are given, cutting it out carefully and pasting it in their book. Other students are not so good. These students end up with bits of paper scrunched in the bottom of their bag. They open their Science book and History sheets fall out. They lose sheets, they can't find their homework. The bits of paper seem to make their life very difficult for them.

If you are in the first group of students, congratulations! You are very lucky. You can probably almost skip this section altogether. Maybe you should just read it quickly through to check that you are doing everything you should and that you are totally organised.

If you are in the second group, don't despair. There are a few simple things you can do in order to improve your organisational skills. The steps are actually quite simple. It is a good idea to choose a night or a weekend to sort out all your papers in one go.

Organisation Steps

1. *Get together all pieces of paper, all your exercise books and folders.*
2. *Sort them out into piles for each subject.*
3. *Stick the sheets into your exercise books.*
4. *You also need a folder that you keep at home (preferably a folder for each subject) where you can file papers that will not fit in your exercise book. This is also where you should file all past tests and assignments. When you finish an exercise book and need to start a new one, file the old exercise books here as well.*
5. *Now you need to check that you have a full set of notes with no sheets or anything else missing. The best way to do this is to ask a student who you know is organised if you can compare your exercise book to theirs. They are unlikely to want to let you take their book home, so bring your book to school and look through theirs at lunchtime. Photocopy any notes or sheets that you have missing.*

Excellent. Now your current papers should be under control.

Below are some other ways to keep yourself organised. Tick which ones you currently use.

____ You keep stationery like scissors, glue etc in your pencil case so you can deal with pieces of paper as soon as you are given them.

____ You keep a plastic sleeve or manila envelope pouch with your books or folders at school, and when you are given things that won't fit in your exercise book, you place them in this folder and then deal with them at home that night.

____ You haven't been able to get out of the habit of just placing sheets you are given into your school diary, but you improve your organisational skills by making sure that every night you go through the sheets and paste them into your book or file them away.

____ You have an index page at the front of your exercise book or folder where you keep a list of the topics you have covered in that subject so it is easy to see everything you have done.

____ You date or number the pages and sheets you are given so you can make sure that you haven't lost any of them.

____ If you are absent from a class, the next day you ask the teacher for the sheets you missed and copy out from your friend's book any notes you missed.

____ You use different colour pens for headings or underline them so it is clear when new sections start in your notes.

____ You check every now and then with your friend that you have everything in your book that should be in there.

____ You keep all past tests and assignments and file them into your folders at home so you can refer back to them if there are any tests or exams on that topic.

____ You take note of what students who are really organised do in class and how they manage all their bits of paper.

(Section B then continues for another 2 pages).

(The following 2 pages are excerpts from Section C- Making Study Notes)

Steps to making a summary for a topic:

1. GATHER ALL INFORMATION

Gather all the information you have on the topic: your exercise book, the textbook, and any handouts you have been given. Choose one subject and do this now.

2. WORK OUT MAIN SECTIONS OR HEADINGS

Pick one topic to focus on and to start with. Glance through all the information without reading it in any great detail yet. Work out what the main sections or headings are in that topic. The size of the heading will usually indicate in textbooks if it is a main heading for a section. Smaller headings then indicate subheadings.

For example: A topic in Science might be Energy and the main sections or headings might be:

- *Energy Uses in Our World*
 - *Electrical Energy*
 - *Sound Energy*
 - *Light Energy*
 - *Heat Energy*
- The subheadings for the Energy Uses in Our World could be Home, Office, Industry, Other.*

3. TAKE ONE SECTION AT A TIME

- Take each of the main headings or groups of information one at a time and first read over the material just on that heading.
- Are there sub-headings like in the example above? If there are, take each sub-heading one at a time and focus on it.
- Once you have read through the information in your textbook and class notes on this heading, think about what the key facts are and write these down in point form. Try and avoid great big long wordy sentences. Instead, focus on the key pieces of information that you will need to know for the examinations.
- Try and use the minimum number of words that you can, and if possible try and express the point in your own words rather than rewriting slabs from your textbook. You are only writing down the things that you will need to memorise and know for the examination.
- If you are not sure what information to include, think to yourself - could I be asked a question on this? What type of question would it most likely be?

For example:

Electricity

- *Has been around for 200 years.*
- *Advantage: can move with ease through electrical circuits.*
- *Series and parallel circuits serve different purposes in households.*
- *Amount of energy used depends on power rating of appliance.*
- *Electric currents also produce magnetic fields.*

4. MAKE YOUR NOTES VISUAL

Try and use tables, diagrams and visual aids to organise the information as much as possible. Make your notes neat and tidy. Use highlighters, colour, headings and boxes for key information. The more organised it is, the easier it is to learn. By organising information into tables and charts, you make it easier for your brain to process and later recall the information.

Example:

<i>PUMP TYPE</i>	<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>
<i>Solar powered systems</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low maintenance• Clean and Green• No fuel needed• Easy to install• Reliable long life• Unattended operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relatively high initial cost• Lower output in cloudy weather
<i>Diesel or petrol systems</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moderate capital costs• Can be portable• Extensive experience available• Easy to install	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Needs maintenance and replacement• Maintenance often expensive and technical• Fuel often expensive and supply intermittent• Noise, dirt and fumes• Site visits necessary
<i>Windmills</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potentially very long life• Works well in windy areas• No fuel costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High maintenance• Costly repair• Difficult to find parts• Labour intensive• Safety issues• No wind, no power

Where possible, make visual and diagrammatic notes. Use arrows to show links between information. Notes like these will be easier for your brain to recall.

(Note: There is a mind map of the information here but to include it in the sample page makes the file size too large to download).

5. UPDATE AND ADD

Summaries should be continually added to and updated. After tests or exams add in anything else you need. You can also skim through textbooks and notes to make sure you haven't forgotten anything. Don't spend hours laboriously re-writing sections to make them look pretty - only rewrite sections if you need to reorganise or clarify the information. Wide margins are useful to add notes in at a later date.