

Goals for Senior Years

The last years of school have lots of things to recommend them. You are there with your friends and many of the friends you make in senior school will stay with you for life. There are lots of fun and exciting activities and social experiences like school formals. Sometimes it is not till much later that you will look back and realise what a great period of your life it was. But there are lots of challenges as well. It is likely that at some stage you will find the last two years of school to be quite demanding.

A good aim for the senior years is:

To get great results
BUT
to still have & enjoy a life!

Because the workload is quite demanding, you will need to be clear about what is important to you over the next one or two years and what you want to achieve so you can prioritise and manage all the things to do.

The steps you need to follow are:

- work out what you want from the next two years academically and what targets you would like to reach
- work out what is important to you in other aspects of your life and what you want to make sure you retain

Then you need to have a system to manage your goals and implement the steps you need to take to achieve them.

This section of the workbook will take you through this process. Depending on when you are working through this workbook, you may be looking at either a two or one year plan.

Before we begin, complete the following:

(i) Academic Goals

- What is the final outcome you would like to achieve this year?
- Is there a certain mark or overall result you would like to achieve?
- Is there a particular university course you would like to be accepted into?
- Is it more that you want to achieve a certain level in each of your subjects?
- What will you aim for this year?

It is much better if you can quantify what you are striving for rather than have a general goal of 'doing your best'. Although you want to do that anyway!

If you need to do some research first about courses and cut-off marks, don't put it off, get on the Internet, get some resources from your library or make an appointment with your school's careers advisor. Don't forget to make your goal S.M.A.R.T. and don't forget the 3 P's.

My academic goal(s) for the senior years:	
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Now the hard part. What will you need to do to achieve these goals? The following is some recommended advice about key attitudes and actions to ensure you achieve strong academic results.

- Make the most of every lesson: squeeze out every bit of knowledge: listen, ask questions, work efficiently.
- Complete every piece of work set to the best of your ability: put in maximum effort.
- Aim for 100% understanding: chase up every little thing you don't understand by asking questions (seeing your teachers at lunch or after school) or doing extra work to understand it.
- When you are working on things for school, make your work focused and efficient and ensure you are putting in enough time.
- Take a complete approach: highlight the day's work, complete homework, work on major pieces of work, create study notes regularly.
- Keep taking stock of the way you study for your tests and exams and ensure you are doing enough practise and studying in a way that suits your learning style.
- Stretch yourself by seeking out additional resources and doing the most challenging and difficult questions you can find.

On the next page is an example of the template for you to complete and the following page is your chance to translate your goal into actions to take.

Example of things you may need to do to reach your academic goals (but don't forget, it will be different for everyone. Think about what you really need to focus on improving).

To achieve my academic goals I need to do the following.....

As a one-off:

- Set up some folders at home where I can file away all my sheets etc.
- Decide what sort of study notes and summaries I will do
- Decide how much time I will spend on schoolwork each day (at least 1.5 hours per day)
- Put a post-it note inside each textbook so I can keep a list of questions I need to ask about
- Improve my home study environment (lighting, chair, shelves, ventilation, storage)
- Buy additional study guides or resources for my subjects

Each day:

- Ask my teacher about anything I couldn't do in my homework
- Really listen in Science lessons
- Get all my class work finished in the Maths lessons by really staying on task
- Write all my homework into my diary
- Allocate 2 hours to doing schoolwork at home each night (and maybe have set times to work in eg 4-5pm, 6.30-7.30pm)
- When I get home, spend 20 minutes highlighting key points from the lessons, sticking sheets in and doing any quick pieces of homework
- Make a plan of what work needs to be done that evening and decide in what order and what times I am going to do it. Get all the books etc out and ready in piles.
- Highlight in my diary the work that was completed, cross out anything not finished and write in my diary when I am going to do this work.

Each weekend:

- Make a plan for any assignments I received that week of what needs to be done and write in my diary when I am going to do it
- Work on assignments that I have coming up
- Get caught up on any work that I did not have time to finish during the week
- For any topics that I finished that week, work on creating the study notes for those topics
- Prepare for any tests or assessments

Each school holidays:

- Ensure my study notes are up-to-date for all the work covered that term
- Do extra work on any areas that I find difficult or challenging
- Catch up on any work that is overdue or not done
- Do some extension work such as past exam papers or questions in study guides

7 REASONS WHY WE DON'T ACHIEVE OUR GOALS

1. NO ACTION PLAN

Every year people make new year's resolutions and then break them. Lots of resolutions fail because they are simply wishes as opposed to true goals. A goal is a clear image of exactly what you want to achieve with a plan in place of the actions you need to take to make it happen. Even if you are not clear on every action that might be needed, you always have the next action to take clearly established.

⇒ **TO DO:** Look back over the goals you have set.

Have you got actions that you need to take established for each goal? YES / NO

Have you decided when you will do the first action for each? YES / NO

Do you check each day/week which actions you need to now do? YES / NO

Do you check whether you need to update the actions to take? YES / NO

If you do not have action plans in place or steps to follow to achieve your goals, then this is something you need to do right away. Make a time to check your goals regularly and to write a to-do-list or to write in your diary when you will do each step.

2. NOT BEING COMMITTED TO THE GOAL

If you are unhappy with the lack of progress in reaching your goal, you need to assess what is really keeping you from accomplishing it. You may need to examine the validity of the goal you have set. If you are not motivated to really work towards this goal and if you give up at the first sign of trouble, maybe you had not really thought it through when setting the goal. If it is a goal you have set really more for other people than for yourself, or a goal you have set not so much because you want to reach it but more because you feel it is the sort of goal you should have, then you will struggle to achieve it.

⇒ **TO DO:** Look back over the goals you have set.

Are you passionate about reaching the goals you have set? YES / NO

Are your goals set for you and not to keep other people happy? YES / NO

Are you committed to stick with your goals even if they are difficult? YES / NO

If you look back over your goal and discover that really it has little personal meaning for you, do not waste any more time on it. Instead think about what you really want to achieve and ensure this is reflected in the goals you set.

3. NEGATIVE THINKING

Each of us has a little voice in our head. It is the voice of our subconscious and it provides a running commentary and opinion on everything that is going on in our lives. During this self-talk, we discuss our plans, analyse what we think people meant in conversations, speculate how people see us and think about all the things coming up in the future. Lots of people aren't even aware of this running commentary in their head or the effect it has on their actions. The self-talk can be both positive and negative. Unfortunately negative thoughts such as thinking about everything that could go wrong or doubting your own ability can really sap your self-confidence. This in turn affects your actions as you are unwilling then to take the steps needed to reach your goals. If you let your mind wander at will, it is simply a matter of luck as to whether your thoughts run along in an optimistic or pessimistic fashion. So start to listen to the interpretations your subconscious places on what is going on around you. Challenge any negative thoughts: the more you believe in yourself and your abilities, the more you can change the tone of the voice of your subconscious.

⇒ **TO DO:** *Look back over the goals you have set.*

Are your goals positively stated? YES / NO

Are you aware of the thoughts running in your head? YES / NO

Do you challenge negative thoughts when you start to doubt yourself? YES / NO

If you have never thought about this before, start to become conscious of the thoughts swirling in your brain and keep an eye out for any negative thoughts – and challenge them!

4. NOT REWARDING YOURSELF ALONG THE WAY

If you don't celebrate the minor achievements along the way, you can just become depressed with all the thoughts of everything that you have left to achieve. Create a series of milestones where you can reward yourself at different stages on the way to your goal. This will motivate you to move forward.

⇒ **TO DO:** *Look back over the goals you have set.*

Have you set milestones along the way to your goals? YES / NO

Have you planned what rewards you will give yourself at these points? YES / NO

Your rewards don't need to be outrageous. Just something you enjoy or can look forward to in order to mark the occasion and celebrate your achievements.

5. TRYING TO FOCUS ON TOO MANY GOALS

If you have too many goals, your focus is spread very thin. You may actually spend more time organising and checking your goals than you do in actively working towards them. With an unmanageable surplus of goals, nothing becomes a priority and you simply feel overwhelmed. You will feel like you are never accomplishing anything and are often unsure where to even begin.

⇒ **TO DO:** Look back over the goals you have set.

Have you set an unmanageable number of goals? YES / NO

Do you feel overwhelmed by the goals you have set? YES / NO

If you feel this is happening to you, create two lists, 'A' priority goals that you will really focus on and 'B' priority goals that you will put to one side until the 'A' goals are under control.

6. NOT PREPARING YOURSELF FOR SUCCESS

You can set yourself up to fail really easily by making the goal too big or not achievable or making it all too hard. So set yourself up to succeed by taking baby steps and feeling good about what you are achieving. Success feeds off success. Visualise yourself achieving the goals and cultivate a 'winning' attitude to help you walk the path that successful people walk.

⇒ **TO DO:** Look back over the goals you have set.

Have you taken the time to visualise your goals? YES / NO

Do you feel positive and confident about your goals? YES / NO

Spend a bit of time really reflecting upon your goals and whether they are achievable. Break them into smaller pieces to create a sense of accomplishment when you achieve each step.

7. FEAR OF FAILURE

Sometimes your subconscious can be actively working against you – without you even realising it. Some students procrastinate and put off doing the actions that would help them achieve their goal. They are not really sure why they are acting this way, but it is actually something going on behind the scene that is blocking them from moving forward. What is happening is that they are afraid to try because they are afraid of failing so they limit themselves. If they don't put any effort in and don't succeed, then it isn't their fault. They can blame the fact that they weren't trying. But if they do put in the effort and they do fail, then they feel this will be a reflection on themselves. For these people, it is simply safer not to try at all – that way they feel less threatened by the thought of not meeting their goals. Lots of times they may not even realise this is what is blocking them, they just feel a reluctance to do the things they need to do. Stop thinking of it as failure and instead replace the word failure with the word feedback (see the tips on the next page).

⇒ **TO DO:** Look back over the goals you have set.

Are you confident in your ability to achieve your goals? YES / NO

Do you feel confident that if you don't reach your goals you can deal with it, learn from the experience and feel proud of what you did achieve? YES / NO

If you are continually doing everything else except the things you really should be doing to move towards your goals, stop and analyse why that might be. Face your fears and address them so that you can overcome them.