



***Enhanced Learning
Educational Services***
“the study skills specialist”

STARTING SECONDARY SCHOOL



So you are just starting or have just started high school? Well here are the top things to know from a ‘study skills’ perspective – this means working effectively and efficiently at home to achieve your personal academic best for school.

- You should read each point and **highlight the key phrases** in that point.
- Discuss with a friend or parent as you read through the handout.
- You may like to work through this over a number of sessions.

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1. HOMEWORK IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM HOW IT WAS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL.

- **PRIMARY:** In primary school you only had to do the work the teacher told you to do. You squeezed in the work you had to do between activities, sport and free time.
- **TIME:** In high school it is different. Rather than completing a set amount of *tasks*, in high school you should try and work for a set amount of *time* on most nights.
- **MOST NIGHTS:** It will be *most* nights because some nights you will have activities or other commitments so you can only do the bare minimum that night. But you then try to make it up on the other nights instead.
- **AVERAGE:** Most schools will expect Year 7 students to do on average around 1 hour of schoolwork per night or 7 hours over the whole week. Some schools may expect more. Check your school diary to see your school's requirements.



*a. How much time did you spend on schoolwork in primary school?
Do you know what your school's expectations are for high school?
What do you think you will do for that hour of schoolwork each night?*

- **WEEKENDS:** You will have to do some work on the weekends. It is a good time to catch up on things like assignments and summary notes. Many students will do 2 hours on one day rather than an hour on each day so they can have a whole day free with no schoolwork. Try and avoid leaving the schoolwork until the last minute on the weekend, i.e. Sunday night.



*b. What are your weekends like?
How do you think you will fit in your schoolwork over the weekend?*

- **TYPES OF WORK:** Now the big mistake many students make when they go to high school is they say 'but my teachers don't give me an hour of homework each night'. This is where the big difference comes with high school. In high school you have two types of work to do:
 - compulsory work (things like homework, assignments, studying for tests) and
 - independent learning

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- **INDEPENDENT LEARNING:** Your teachers don't always talk about independent learning – they just sort of expect you to do this now you are in high school! Students who get good marks at school have often worked this out for themselves, this handout is making it easy for you by telling you the secret now. ***Here it is... the nights you do not have much compulsory work, you make up the rest of the time doing independent learning!*** So if you have 20 minutes of homework, you do 40 minutes of independent learning. If you have 60 minutes of homework you do no independent learning that night. This is one of the best things you can start doing when you begin high school – it is a great habit to get into and will really pay off for you!
- **INDEPENDENT LEARNING ACTIVITIES:** So what is independent learning? This means taking responsibility for your studies, using your brain and saying to yourself 'what else could I do to help me understand this subject better?' It could mean:
 - making notes ('summaries' or 'study notes') on what you have been learning in class (usually in point form in a separate book)
 - making a mind map about what you have learnt
 - doing extra questions on a topic you found difficult
 - reading ahead in your textbook
 - doing extra research about part of the subject that interests you
 - learning how to touch type



c. In your own words, explain what Independent Learning is. See if you can come up with 10 examples of things that might be independent learning activities.

- **KEEP GOING:** Be careful though, after a while some students get complacent and think 'I don't need to do this independent learning stuff'. Yet the evidence has shown again and again, that students who do well at school do this – they just don't go around telling everyone about it!
- **TOO MUCH TIME:** Some students find when they start high school they actually are doing much more than an hour a night of schoolwork. This can be normal in the first term of school as students are getting used to the expectations of high school. However if you find you are consistently doing many hours of schoolwork a night you need to talk to your parents and teachers as students in the first year of high school should not be doing this much work at home.



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