

# What's the point?

You can only really start to study when you have worked out a good reason to bother. Take a few minutes to try and answer the following six questions, honestly, for yourself.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:**  
"EXAMS ARE NOT EVERY-  
THING"

1. What are your life time goals?
2. What are your goals for the next five years?
- 3 What are your goals for this year?
4. What are the things you need to do in order to accomplish this year's goals?
5. What are the consequences of achieving these goals (weekly or daily? (e.g. How will I feel? What are the rewards? What will others think of me?))
6. What are the rewards for improving your study behaviour?



## Concentration

Two frequent complaints of students are that they can't concentrate while studying, and that they can't remember what they studied. There are many techniques for improving your concentration and memory, although you will have to see which one suits you best.

Break your study time up into manageable periods of time, and schedule a regular break.

5 Ways that may be Helpful ↓

**SPECIFIC:** Describes what you want to accomplish with as much detail as possible. (One Chapter, one exam question. Etc)

**MEASURABLE:** Describes your goal in terms that can clearly be evaluated. (Can I now solve this quadratic equation...?)

**CHALLENGING:** Takes energy and discipline to accomplish. (Don't give in easily... realise it is hard work.)

**REALISTIC:** A goal you know you are actually capable of obtaining. (Do the best you can, not the best someone else can achieve!)

**STATED COMPLETION DATE:** Goals that break longer term goals into shorter pieces and clearly specify target completion dates. (By Saturday I will have six pages of Geography notes..)

# Your study environment should allow you to work efficiently

## 1. TRY TO KEEP A TIDY DESK:

It's a good idea to have a desk, which is devoted entirely to studying. You will find that you get into the habit of beginning to study as soon as you sit down. Be sure you have sufficient workspace. Remove everything from your study area that is not related to what you are studying at the time, so your space is uncluttered. The area should be large enough so that you can work comfortably. Only have the books and materials you need for that subject on the desk. Tidying your desk is not part of study time. If able, arrange your desk to face a blank wall rather than a window, so you don't become distracted by what's going on outside.

**YOUR** memory is actually very good. Many people complain that their memory is bad. Unfortunately, a lot of students think that they should know something after reading it once. They get the mistaken impression, that they are "thick", and are not good at learning when they cannot remember it. They do not realise that "clever" people need to revise over something again and again until it is well mastered.,

The reason why so many teachers can teach their subject without the aid of a text book is because they teach the same material many times each year every year. Again, it is exactly the same as developing a skill in sport - frequent practice is required for each skill.

## 2. GOOD LIGHTING:

Be sure that there is adequate lighting. Try not to have shadows across your books and if using a desk lamp make sure that it is not shining directly into your eyes.

## 3. ROOM TEMPERATURE:

If the room is too warm your concentration declines and you will feel sleepy and tired. If the room is too cold you will find your-self becoming irritable and commitment declines.

## 4. GOOD VENTILATION:

If the room is not well ventilated you will gradually become accustomed to the diminishing freshness and begin to feel sleepy with a decline in work rate. Parents are great at dropping in to see how things are going and believe them if they think that the room is stuffy.

## 5. TELEVISION:

You cannot study efficiently if the television is on. Turn off the television and radio and mobile phone.

## 6. MUSIC:

You should not study with radio or "your music". It is true radio does not inhibit your understating of the subject but it does reduce your ability to recall the information. You need to be able to recall as much as possible on the day of the exam. If you must have music the experts say keep it classical.



## 7. INTERRUPTIONS:

Do not allow yourself to be interrupted. If the phone rings you are not to race the other members of your family to it. Do not answer calls, return them between your planned study sessions or after your evening's study.

## 8. GOOD-POSTURE:

Sitting up with a slight forward lean really does improve the quality of your work.

**MNEMONICS** (Memory-Aiding Devices) are simple 'methods' to help you to recall something that you find difficult to remember.

To help you start thinking mnemonically look at the following examples:

**Maths:** To remember the values of Pi 3.1415827..

"How I wish I could remember it rapidly." (The number of letters in the words gives the value of pi.)

**Geography:** To remember the six counties Northern Ireland

"fat dad"

(Fermanagh Armagh Tyrone Down Antrim Derry)

**Astronomy:** To remember the order of the planets from the sun:

"Mary Very Easily Makes Jam Saturday Unless No Plums."

(Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto)

**Biology:** To remember the classification of living things

"Kings Play Cards On Fairly Good Soft Velvet."

(Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, Species, Variety)

**Colours of the Spectrum:** To remember the order of the colours of the spectrum:

"Roy G. Biv"

(Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet)

**Blood:** For the functions of blood:

"Old Charlie Foster Hates Women Having Dull Clothes."

(Oxygen (transport), Carbon Dioxide (transport), Food, Heat, Waste, Hormones, Disease, Clotting)

**Excretion:** For the excretory organs of the body:

"SKILL"

(Skin, Kidneys, Intestines, Liver, Lungs).



## Success in School

1. School is my best learning resource.
2. It is my responsibility to learn.
3. Self-discipline is the best discipline.
4. Let the teacher teach.
5. Messers - wise up.
6. In Class
  - a) Be positive.
  - b) Be prepared.
  - c) Listen.
  - d) Question.
  - e) Make Notes.
7. Today's classwork has to be revised today.
8. Extracurricular activities are great

## Written Homework

1. A vital part of exam preparation.
2. Great for developing answering skill.
3. A revision of today's class.
4. Do it under examination conditions.
5. Do it well.
6. Practice good presentation.
7. Correct it neatly.
8. Be positive about written homework.
9. Homework copies - good for revision.

## Self Motivation

1. Better than manipulation.
2. Why should I study?
3. Concentrate on your daily goals.
4. Plan your weekly work schedule.
5. Imagine results day.
6. Believe in yourself. Positive self-image.

## Memory and Recall

1. Be positive.
2. Want to learn.
3. Maintain interest in your subjects.
4. Understand each topic.
5. Get the most out of class.
6. Frequent testing when revising.
7. Written homework under Exam Conditions.
8. Physical fitness and sleep.
9. Use mnemonics.

## Coping With Exam Stress

1. First do the work.
2. Develop answering skill.
3. 'Psyche up. Not out'.
4. Exams are Opportunities for reward.
5. Confidence — positive self-talk.
6. Use a simple relaxation technique.
7. Concentrate on the 'now'.

## Time Management

1. Minimum work time after school each day.
2. Take breaks.
3. Adequate sleep time.

## Success In Exams

1. Confidence and positive thinking.
2. Exam paper timetable.
3. Select questions wisely - take time.
4. Clear understanding of the question.
5. Plan the answers.
6. Neatness counts
7. No post-mortems.
8. If you go 'blank' - relaxation technique.
9. Do not lose heart!

# Learning is YOUR responsibility...

- ❑ The entire responsibility for your learning does not rest with your teacher. **YOU** have an obligation to make school work for you.
- ❑ Your behaviour must contribute to a high standard of learning in class. Anything less is cheating on yourself and on your classmates.
- ❑ Take control of your own learning. Do not rely on your parents or teachers to control it for you.
- ❑ You are at an age where you insist on being taken seriously, therefore you should behave conscientiously.
- ❑ It is up to you to get the best from your teachers by giving them your fullest co-operation. See your teachers as a valuable resource that you can use. In other words - let the teacher teach.

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## *Don't put up with a Messer*

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**ONE** messer in a class can use up one third of the teacher's class time. You could be losing up to 80 hours of good tuition in a subject just because of one messer in your class. This huge loss of time causes you to work harder - you have to make up for the work not done in class.

Just imagine how much extra work and revision the teacher could do for you if the class worked with the teacher! It is amazing how much time a teacher has to waste attempting to bring just one messer under control, never mind the damage done to the teacher's good humour and the general atmosphere in the class.

Similar behaviour in a sports club would not be tolerated. The coach would simply tell the messer after training never to return to the club. In a well run school messers are not tolerated. As a result teachers are guaranteed that no time or energy is lost on class control.

Remember that a class messer is doing a great job at reducing your chances of doing well. Maybe if there are any messers reading this they may consider changing their ways and giving their friends a fighting chance in the exams.

With so much pressure for points, the damage done by a messer in your class can stop you getting the results you need to get enough points to do the course you want.

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**In Class: LISTEN - THINK - JOT.**

**SELF-MOTIVATION** is much better than manipulation by your parents or teachers. Parents can make you go to your desk but they can't make you work. Teachers can try to make your life more difficult with extra work or even detention but at best you will only do the minimum to get them to leave you alone. It is much better if you **WANT** to do well in your studies.

Many students say they lack motivation. What they are really saying is that there are other activities higher on their priority list. So why isn't study further up the list?

The following are some of the reasons they give:

- a) **Study is not easy.**
- b) **Study is "boring". There are many more interesting things to do.**
- c) **The work load is unmanageable - there is too much to do.**
- d) **It is difficult to gauge if progress is being made.**
- e) **It is hard to know where to start.**

# MESSED method



Here are a few ideas to keep in mind when learning to make notes. Do not be disappointed in your early attempts. Remember when you were learning how to ride a bicycle. After many crashes you finally mastered it and have never lost it. So it is with making notes.

**M:** Use two margins. On an ordinary A4 page use a narrow margin of one centimetre width on the left side. This is for numbering the headings. Use a wide margin of about six centimetres on the right. This wide margin allows you to make any necessary additions later on without upsetting the organisation and appearance of the notes.

**E:** Easy to read. Your notes will be used frequently. It is to your advantage that they be user friendly allowing you to revise swiftly and often. Care now will save you a lot of time.

**S:** Short. Do not write sentences. The exceptions to this rule are important definitions, quotes and equations. Use words, abbreviations, symbols and diagrams.

**S:** Spaced. Do not cram your notes together to save space or paper. Open up the notes. Have plenty of white space on the paper. Crowded notes do not display the information clearly and are discouraging. These open spaces allow you to add to the notes later on without destroying their attractiveness.

**E:** Emphasise and Enhance. You should number and highlight each heading. The headings are the major points which are expanded upon in the text.

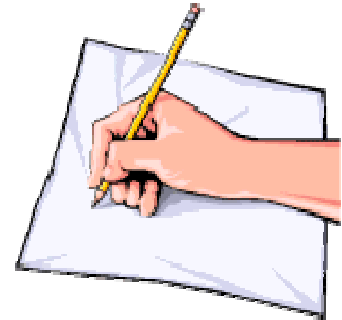
**D:** Down and Designed. Concentrate on working down the page rather than across the page. Well designed notes are both attractive and easier to use. Critically examine each set of chapter notes after its completion and see how in future the design can be improved. Do not rewrite the notes because you do not have the time.

*The notes you make are for your personal use. As long as they work for you that is all that matters. Do not be offended if someone asks you for a loan of your notes and later returns them saying they were useless. Use class time to develop the skill. At the end of four weeks you may have had more than 100 practices. You should be quite good at note-making then. From then on your chapter notes should be your class notes along with any necessary additions which should be included when revising that day's classwork.*

## Making notes on 'old' chapters

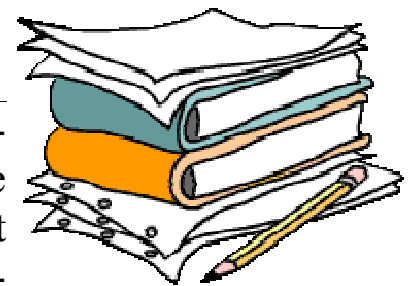
Preparation is vital before you put pen to paper. There are six preparatory steps, all involving reading but it does not take long, five minutes on average.

1. Read the introduction or first paragraph if there is no introduction.
2. Read the summary or last paragraph.
3. Study the illustrations - diagrams, charts, graphs, photographs, cartoons. Read the headings and any highlighted text.
4. Read the questions at the end of the chapter. This is the only part that may take time. Your notes should contain the answer to these questions.



### Advantages of making notes in class

- Your learning in class is better.
- Your concentration in class is enhanced.
- You think more about the material and so review it more frequently.
- You are more actively involved in class.
- It is great preparation for making notes at lectures at third level.



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Accepting that study is not easy, you can motivate yourself by thinking about what it can help you achieve - the points, the course, the career, the wage etc. As you get into your work, it will become less boring, even interesting. As you gain control, it is easier to manage the work load and monitor progress. A good method of self-motivation is to set yourself challenging yet attainable goals. Only you know how honest your effort has been in school and at study so only you know what you are realistically capable of. Set yourself realistic target grades as your long term goals. You can always raise or lower them as you monitor your progress. On a daily basis, do not worry about your long term goals. Achieve at least the minimum each day. When you can, do a little extra if you take care of realistic daily goals the long term goals will take care of themselves.

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## Positive

- The more you learn during class the less work you have to do at home The teachers are doing their best, are you?
- There is great variation in personality among teachers and students. Do not expect every teacher's style to suit you. Respond to your teachers as you want them to respond to you - both of you are human.
- Teachers respond positively to your positive participation.
- Remember the teacher is not the subject. Try not to just because you happen to dislike the teacher. Be nice to your teachers; work with them not against them.

## Be Prepared

- Be ready to start class as soon as the teacher arrives.
- Be in your assigned place with all necessary materials to hand.
- Start each class with a positive willingness to learn.
- Have your written homework ready for correction or inspection by the teacher.
- Make sure you have revised and mastered the previous lesson in the subject.
- Read ahead, especially the questions at the end of the chapter and in exam years make sure you read the questions from the past papers.
- Ask your teacher what chapter or topic is next to be covered.



## Listen

- You must pay close attention to what the teacher says and what they do on the board The less you learn in class the more **YOU** have to do at home.
- If you have a choice of seat, then sit as far away as possible from the messer or messers. If the class has no messers then get as close to the front as possible.
- Your listening is greatly improved if you are determined to make good class notes.
- Your brain is a magnificent piece of equipment. You can think a lot faster than the teacher can speak The teacher's average speaking rate is 150-250 words a minute. Your brain can operate at over 1,000 words a minute!
- If you miss something do not worry, teachers have a tendency to repeat, important items again and again. Any missed items can be picked up when you revise the days work later that day.

## Question

- If there is something you do not understand in class then you must ask the teacher to run through it again. Do not rely on others to ask questions. They may not ask the questions you would like answered.
- Please do not laugh or ridicule any question from any student. Not only is it bad manners but could crush their interest and demoralise them
- Loss of interest is the biggest disaster that can happen to you in any subject.

## Jot Notes

- Jot notes during class if you are allowed. Follow the advice on note making given in this supplement. The making of notes 'will help' to maintain your concentration during class and 'your recall of the information after class will be much better.
- The emphasis is on the word "jot" -what you are jotting down is brief reminders of the essential points in today's class.
- If you develop the skill of making notes then you will have very little to add to your class note's for them
- to be a very efficient revision aid.
- Be in class on time. Have your written home work, and other materials ready.



## The 15 -minute rule

This idea is based on the six minute rule in athletics. This rule (devised by veteran Irish runner Noel Carroll) is that no matter how tired you feel on arriving home just get on your gear and run for six minutes. Then when you are nicely warmed up check how you feel and decide then to continue, or not. Usually you continue with your training session because you feel great. On the days you don't feel great you jog back and take a rest day.

It's the same with study. Sometimes students just don't feel like working after a long day in school. If you immediately give into this feeling, then you will not accomplish very much that evening.

Instead of giving in, go to your desk and work on your favourite subject for 5 minutes, If you are still genuinely tired then you should take an easy night. Just complete your written home-work. Your parents will be supportive long as it doesn't happen every night. If you are genuinely tired you should find out why. Too little sleep, overworking, not eating well, anxious? Remedy the problem, You do not work efficiently when tired.

## Books!

The textbooks for both Junior and Leaving Cert are very long. You may be surprised that the total number of pages can be a lot more than 3,000. It takes a big effort to bring this huge body of information under control. There is another problem. Frequent revision is required to retain mastery of each chapter completed in school. Using the textbooks for revision is difficult and time consuming if you try to revise each chapter at regular intervals of six to eight weeks. There is hope. Either make chapter notes or highlight the chapters. These are two skilled activities. It is important to put time into developing the skill and then make your notes and/or highlight the chapters. Ideally notes should be brief yet complete reminders of the essential information. Work to develop the ability to distinguish the "need to know" from the "nice to know". Close listening to the teacher in class and study of the past papers is very important here. If the textbooks are well written the first sentence of each paragraph will be a significant point. Having identified the important points you now have to perfect the skill of recording them briefly and in a fashion that will enhance your recall.

## Television

This is the biggest problem faced by students. The students themselves know this. They admit it during anonymous class surveys. If so many students cannot handle this problem then it is up to someone else to handle it for them.

## Part-Time Jobs

This is not recommended although it is very common. Students with part-time jobs have three major commitments; study, leisure and the job. These students too often give into the temptation of reducing their study time to maintain their other two commitments. You should only continue with a part-time job if the quantity and quality of your study is not interfered with or if you are prepared to sacrifice some of your leisure time to keep your job.



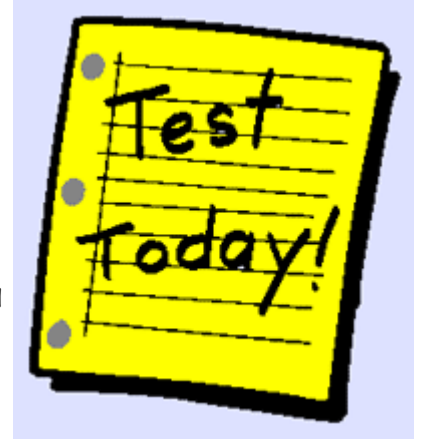
## Break Before Sleep

Do not go straight from study to sleep. Many find it difficult to go to sleep and others do not sleep as soundly as they should. Give yourself at least a half an hour's break before sleep.

## Saturday and Sunday

Yes, you should study at the weekend. A good idea is to do all your study in one big push. Do all your study in the morning or in the afternoon or in the evening. Do not spread it out throughout the day. If you follow this advice you will have long stretches of vital leisure time. It is better not to study on Sunday night. Sunday night for rest so you start your new school week refreshed.

## Taking a Test:



- Do a mind dump. Make notes of anything you think you might forget. Write down things that you used in learning the material that might help you remember. Outline your answers to discussion questions.
- Quickly calculate how much time you should allow for each section according to the point value. (You don't want to spend 30 minutes on a question that counts for only 15 points.)
- Read the directions. (Can more than one answer be correct? Are you penalised for guessing? etc.) Never assume that you know what the directions say.
- Answer the easy questions first. This will give you the confidence and momentum to get through the rest of the test. You are sure these answers are correct.
- Go back to the difficult questions. While looking over the test and doing the easy questions, your subconscious mind will have been working on the answers to the harder ones. Also, later items on the test might give you useful or needed information for earlier items.
- Answer all questions (unless you are penalised for wrong answers).
- Ask the instructor to explain any items that are not clear. Do not ask for the answer, but phrase your question in a way that shows the instructor that you have the information but are not sure what the question is asking for.
- Circle key words in difficult questions. This will force you to focus on the central point.
- Express difficult questions in your own words. Rephrasing can make it clear to you, but be sure you don't change the meaning of the question.