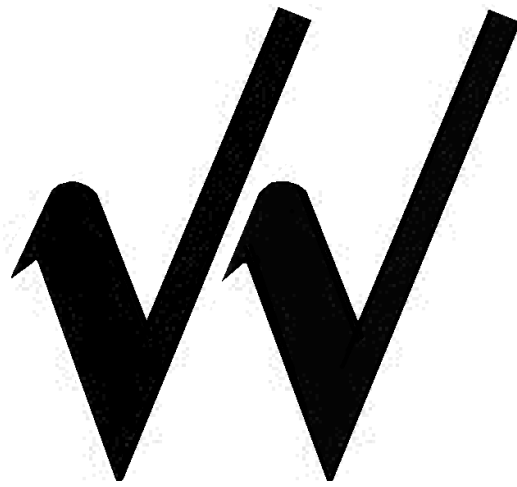


# Wentworth College



## Study Techniques Senior School



B Tong  
S Wackrow

## INTRODUCTION



- This evening is designed to focus on specific skills and techniques that students can develop which will help them improve their grade in CIE External Examinations.
- Very few students coming into the senior school level have been taught, or have acquired, the study and organisational skills that are required to successfully reach their academic potential and achieve excellent results in examinations.

## WHERE TO START?



Careful revision and studying of content and skills is a lengthy process.  
It should begin weeks before the exams start.

We recommend any spare time in the latter half of Term Three be used to start organising notes on achievement standards and recognise where extra help is required

### Preparing to study for the exams:

Before you devise a study timetable and begin the process, you need to organise your notes for each subject.

#### 1. Complete all work

If you have missed, or have not completed work due to illness, sports trips, or slowness in getting information down – photocopy someone's notes you know are of good quality.

#### 2. Assemble your test and assignments

It is very important to go over them. If there are areas you do not understand, ask your teacher to explain.

#### 3. Assemble your notes into units of work or Achievement Standards of subjects



eg, English notes should be organized under sub-headings

eg, Geography notes should be organized under sub-headings

#### 4. Predict likely questions

Ensure that you understand the topics of work to be studied. Ask your teacher to explain:

1. the format of the examination, eg, - three sections  
- topics examined in each section  
check the CIE website for examination information
2. the areas/topics studied during the year that are a must to study
3. explanatory notes
4. Question styles

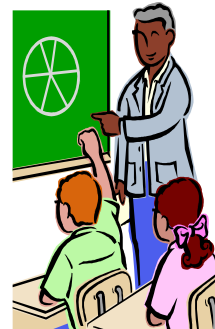


#### 5. Completing Assignments

- In some subjects this is compulsory in order to be allowed to sit the examination.

#### 6. Internal CIE Assessment

- Make a special effort in assignment work that counts towards CIE grades. Give yourself plenty of time to complete the task. If it is assignment work, produce work to your very best ability.
- If you are behind, ask your teacher for assistance
- show your work to your teacher a number of times to be critiqued before you present the final product



### STUDY ENVIRONMENT

Where you study and the conditions under which you study, have a considerable effect on how well you learn.

#### Lighting

- It is obvious that light is essential for effective study, its level and intensity must be appropriate
- Too much light produces glare, which can lead to eye strain; as does too little
- Normally, the best lighting is a moderate centre ceiling light (75-100 watts)
- A desk lamp of low power (40-60 watts) directly onto your work should also be used
- During the daytime, study near a window, but direct sunlight on your work can create glare and make you drowsy



## Ventilation



- During the warmer time of the year, a flow of fresh air into your study place is necessary
- Re-breathing stale air leads to lower oxygen levels, this can lead to drowsiness and headaches
- Another way of getting fresh air is to take 45-50 minutes and go out of the room
- Some mild exercise during your break is a good way to revitalize you, eg, a walk, kick a ball

## Posture and Furniture



- It is best to study seated on a firm-backed chair, at a table or desk of a reasonable size
- You should feel comfortable with the desk and chair height
- Lying on the floor, bed or sitting in a chair are not good studying positions
- It is best to study in a private area, eg, in your bedroom, study, rumpus room, etc. If possible, away from noise of TV and chatter of people.
- Set your study area up for the duration of your pre-exam and exam study time

## Distractions

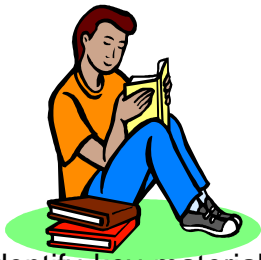


- Family rooms and dining areas are not good areas to study in; people talking distracts your thinking
- Many students prefer to study with music playing. It is true that as long as this background music is relatively quiet it will not affect your concentration. If you have talk-back radio on it will distract your thought process. It is best to study in a **quiet** zone.

## TAKING SWOT NOTES



- This is possibly the most important task in your preparation
- Writing swot notes takes time and should be completed weeks before the examination
- Once the swot notes are completed, the weeks before the exams are spent learning, memorising and understanding content and skills.



## HOW TO WRITE SWOT NOTES

Identify key material that must be learnt and other material that doesn't require detailed learning. Ask your teacher for help in this.

1. Go through your notes, highlight key areas to learn.
2. Taking notes, eg,
  - Get some blank paper, 10-15 sheets, staple them together
  - Take a unit of work. Clearly head the topic on the first sheet
  - Go through your notes carefully, writing down: key ideas, phrases, concepts, skills and diagrams: that require learning and memorising. Supplement your notes with extra material from your text as required.
  - Set out your swot notes clearly. Do not write long sentences, bullet headings are ideal
  - Concentrate on developing understanding of key concepts and themes

eg, English

Headings  
- Novel -

Sub-headings  
- Characters -  
- Plot -  
- Setting -

Students find that using different colours, high-lighters also help draw attention to key concepts.



## UNDERSTANDING

You will not learn or understand your work by just taking notes.  
You must **THINK** about what you are writing

## PLANNING YOUR STUDY TIME

It is imperative that you plan your study time:

- when to study
- what to study
- how to study



## Study Time



- Construct a timetable at least two weeks before the first exam
- On this timetable place the subject you wish to study each night
- Give equal time to all subjects, do not only study the subject you like

Putting off study only makes it all the more difficult when the day of reckoning comes. Arrange your time-table so you study for the exams that you will write last, first. Then, the closer you get to exam time, you will be studying for those exams, eg, if Chemistry is first and English last, start by studying for English and working your way through your subjects until you are studying for Chemistry.

## Breaks in Your Study Time

- Study for 45-50 minutes, then take a 5-10 minute break
- During your break
  - get up and get some fresh air, have a drink of water or snack
  - relax and forget about your books for 5 minutes
- When you return to your study, don't hesitate, be **serious** and **get into it**

## Planning for Study



How to succeed without becoming stressed (or turning into a "Nerd")

Complete the following grid with how you spend your time in an average week, (if you aren't sure what an average week is, write down how you spent last week). This is for your benefit, so be honest. No-one will test you on whether you spend your time well!

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6:00am							
7:00am							
8:00am							
9:00am	SCHOOL						
10:00am							
11:00am							
12:00am							
1:00pm							
2:00pm							
3:00pm							
4:00pm							
5:00pm							
6:00pm							
7:00pm							
8:00pm							
9:00pm							
10:00pm							
11:00pm							

Don't forget to include time spent on all of the following:

Meals, personal (tv) time, sports, regular activities (eg, sporting, social, musical, church groups), friends, chores, part-time jobs, etc, etc.

Look at your complete table – how much time is left for study each day?

If your answer to the above is something like “not much” what things will you have to give up or cut down on? Remember study is something that requires a lot of time just prior to exams, but you should also be building regular study into your time planning.

## **CHECK PREVIOUS EXAM PAPERS WORK OUT HOW LONG TO SPEND ANSWERING EACH QUESTION**



### **Previous question papers**

It is preferable to be able to read through a previous year’s examination paper. You should be able to get these from school or off the internet at [www.cie.org.uk](http://www.cie.org.uk) Get the feeling of the paper by reading it through briefly. This will give you an overview of the layout of the paper and the type of questions that are asked; eg, short answer, multiple choice, essay type questions. Read all the instructions.

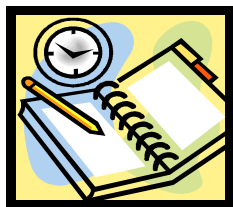
Collect information about the exam itself find out, if you can, the format of the paper.

- how many sections

- what topics are covered in each section

### **Time management**

- Many students run out of time in the exams, they spend too long on some questions
- Before the exam, work out how much time you should spend on each Achievement Standard of the subject
- Keep to this timetable in the exam



## Exam Timetable

- On a calendar or piece of paper mark in the days of each of your exams
- Also mark in if it is a **morning** or **afternoon** exam
- At the bottom of the paper write the times of the morning and afternoon exams
- Every year students turn up in the afternoon for the exam and it was in the morning.  
**TOUGH LUCK!**
- Copy the exam timetable from the official timetable given to you. Don't rely on your friends telling you when they are on
- Read through all your notes before you start studying. Try to work out key themes and concepts that occur through the topics

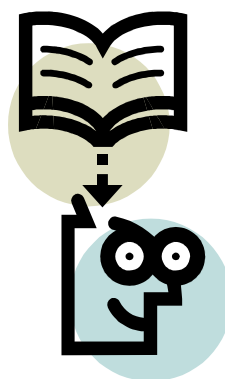
## METHODS OF MEMORISING

- Summarising and writing the main points down. Work through your syllabus and keep your summaries in a notebook for quick reference and as a good check for self-testing later on
- Reciting to yourself as you summarise and learn. (A combination of these first two points is best).

## Overlearning

- Forgetting is most rapid straight after learning. If you can only just remember the work you are learning, you will have forgotten about 50% of it by the next day. Spend an extra 5 minutes "overlearning" (firmly fixing the material in your mind). A brief glance at main headings in the morning may fix work learned the night before.
- Constant self-testing is necessary
  - close your eyes and see how much you can remember
  - take a blank sheet of paper and see how much you can write down
- Mnemonics, or aids to learning, may be useful, eg, acid (red), alkali (blue)

Remember: the main thing is to keep your mind on the job, and  
**READ it, RECITE it, RECALL it, WRITE it**



## WHAT IS BEING ASKED?

Definitions of key words necessary for answering exam questions

analyse/examine

A detailed examination of the area

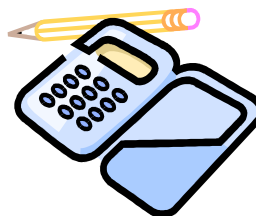
compare/contrast

With two places/people/event describe what they have in common and what differs between them

define	Give the meaning, a dictionary-type definition
describe/discuss/explain	A more detailed account
illustrate	Show with examples
outline	Give the bare essentials of, covering all the essential areas
review/summarise	Give an overall statement
trace	Follow the development of, the progress someone has made; a stage by stage description



## THE EXAMINATION



- Check what materials you are allowed/required to bring.
- Check batteries in calculators
- Have equipment in a clear plastic bag
- Bring your NZQA ID paper with you

### At the start of the examination

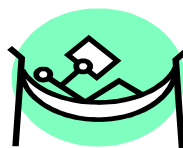
DON'T START ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS IMMEDIATELY! BUT –

**Read the instructions carefully** – several times. Some question papers have quite complicated instructions telling how many questions you should answer from various sections.

**It is vital that the instructions are obeyed.** As examination papers don't vary drastically from year to year you should be familiar with the sort of instructions to expect if you have studied previous years' papers.

**Scan and then read through the whole question paper.** This is NOT a waste of time! It enables you to

- **become familiar with the paper**
- think about and **mark which questions to do first**
- get an idea of the length of the paper and **see where to spend more time**, based on marks, length and difficulty
- **check its layout.** It might differ slightly from previous papers that you have studied.



While reading through, **mark questions to be done and delete others.** Then re-check the instructions to ensure that you have selected the correct number of questions from the correct sections. You can't afford to leave out questions or answer too many!

Mark **easy questions** or ones you like and **do these first** so that:

- **they are done while you are fresh** – you then perform best on your favourite sections so **you will score the highest possible grade**
- they will be done fast which **leaves time to battle with others** that are not so easy
- **you will gain confidence** from the fact that the initial questions are relatively easy



Once you are into your stride you will be able to handle the other questions with confidence.

ONLY AFTER YOU HAVE DONE ALL THIS PLANNING AND ORGANISING ARE YOU READY TO START ANSWERING AND WRITING. It will have taken only a **few minutes** but is absolutely necessary!



## During the examination

**Do the questions in any order to suit yourself** (unless specifically instructed otherwise) but **number the answers correctly** and distinctly **using the same figures or letters** as on the question paper. **Read the questions carefully** and **understand what is asked for**. Analyse every sentence and **pay attention to every word**, each of which carries a specific meaning. The examiner is asking something specific. **Read the question several times** to ensure that you know what is being asked for. Don't read into the question what you would like it to contain! You get marks for **relevant** facts only!

**Watch the time** and **don't take time from one question to devote** to another. A few extra minutes spent on a nearly complete answer won't push up its marks much but the same time used in starting the next question will earn you far more marks. Remember to have your **own reliable timepiece** – clock or watch.



**Attempt all questions you are asked to do.** Don't leave out a question entirely without trying it in the hope that the time saved can be used to make up elsewhere on other questions. Even if you can't write much for the answer at least put down what you do know.

**Every mark counts!**

Set out your work neatly and write neatly.



Examiners are human and neat work does make an impression. Working neatly also means that you are thinking in an orderly, clear way. Examiners can't award marks for work they can't read, follow or understand. Neat, ordered responses are essential.

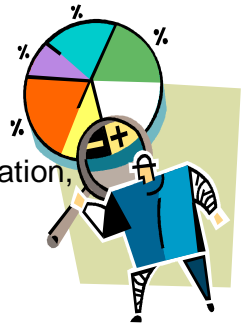
Although you may have been urged to save paper throughout the year, **do not cramp your work during examinations.** Start answering every question on a new page. Leave a couple of lines between subsections and don't forget **clear, bold numbering of papers.** Use extra sheets if necessary but identify the question and label with your name and candidate number.

There is, for example, a big difference between “sucrase” and “sucrose” **so poor handwriting may mean a loss of marks because** of one letter! The more slowly an examiner is forced to read, **by** poor handwriting, the less chance there is they can work out what the answer is saying.

With essays it is especially important to present the piece attractively. This means paying attention to grammar, spelling and punctuation even if you are not taking an English examination. Use short paragraphs and simple, straightforward sentences. Often a rough draft, brain-storm of what you wish to include in your essay is a useful tool to be sure you include every point you wish to make.

## At the end of the examination

Time permitting, read through and check **everything** – facts, grammar, spelling, punctuation, drawings and calculations. Look at each question with “fresh eyes”. Many mistakes/omissions can be avoided with careful re-reading during checking at the end of the exam.



## Rather quality than quantity!

**Always support statements with reasons.** Avoid waffle that tells nothing, eg, saying that a flower is well adapted to wind pollination is insufficient. Say **how** it is adapted.

Essays should have a beginning (introduction), a middle (body) and an end (conclusion). The conclusion draws together all the strands of your essay and explains its overall significance. Do not simply repeat what you have already written in the beginning. Use large labeled diagrams in your answers only if they save words and make your answer clearer.

**Don't write off the subject** or include irrelevant facts for this:

- wastes time that could be spent gaining marks elsewhere
- gains no marks
- gives the examiner the wrong impression



Refer back to the question after planning your answer to ensure that you are answering the question. If writing a long answer **keep referring back to the question** to ensure that you are still on the right track. One test of a good essay is that the person reading it should be able to work out the original question. If you want to change a word, don't alter it. Cross it out neatly with a single line and write the correct version clearly.

All these points need to be constantly borne in mind while writing an examination. They all amount to a definite technique! So you can't simply write the first thing that comes into your head!

But you have not finished yet!

**Re-read questions** to ensure that you have answered correctly. If **time** is short, **answer in point form** or just give formula or method. **Keep working – fight for every possible mark** as long as you can! If you finish before the allocated time is up, don't snooze!

## Note:

Parents – the following are some Internet Web Sites that may be useful for you to look at



<http://www.cambridgestudents.org.uk>

<http://www.cie.org.uk/qualifications/academic/middlesec/igcse/overview>

<http://www.cie.org.uk/qualifications/academic/uppersec/alevel>

## THE EXAMINATION

Exams are not designed to trick or trap you. The person who sets the exam genuinely wants to know how much you have understood, have you mastered the standards.

This topic aims to identify the mistakes you might make that could decrease your mark and to give advice on how to avoid them.

### Before the Exam

- The day before, study the subject you have the next day
- Remember to take breaks every 45-50 minutes
- Then right before, review your notes briefly then relax!
- Attempt to have a good night's sleep
- Have a healthy breakfast the day of the exam



### Equipment

- Ensure you have all the proper equipment including: pens (and spares), pencils, ruler, pencil sharpener, colouring pencils (if required), compass, calculator, graphics equipment, protractor
- Plan to arrive at the exam centre – well before the starting time; this will give you time to settle down and relax!
- Don't discuss subject material with your friends. This can only increase the anxiety level
- Wear a watch in case you are sitting too far away from the clock in the exam room
- You are allowed a drink bottle with water



### Scared

- Some anxiety is a good sign. It makes you think clearer and you concentrate better, but you should try to relax and keep the **anxiety** under control
- **Remember:** If you have done the work you **will** be able to recall the material in the exam

## In the exam room (quick review)

- CIE: you will be allocated a desk with your candidate number on it
- Check the plan outside the examination room before entering



## Exam starts

Spend the first few minutes familiarising yourself with the paper

Things to do:

1. Quickly check format of the paper to see if it has changed
2. Carefully read the questions to be answered, eg, answer **one** out of three essay choices
3. Check the last page of the exam so you know where the end is!
4. Skim through the paper; this will settle you down once you see that it is not too difficult
5. Decide on the order you will work through the paper

## Planning your time

- This is extremely important – plan your time for each section. This needs to be done well before the exam
- Stick to the time allocation you have established

## Remember

- People create their own luck in exactly the same way they create their own future
- Don't hope for the best
- Go and make it happen. Attack it now!

## Begin

- Read the questions carefully
- What is being asked?
- Underline key words
- eg, List the functions of the Reserve Bank
- Describe the processes of a volcanic eruption



- Do not waffle; give a brief introduction if appropriate and then start right into **answering the question**
- Give examples and diagrams where appropriate
- Write **clearly and neatly**

## Analysing Questions

- What is it intended to discover?
- What content is required
- What skills are?
- What are the key words that guide you?



## Essay Questions

- Before launching into a written answer, plan what you intend to say
- A moment **spent thinking** is not **wasted time**
- In fact, it enables you to write with more confidence and at greater speed and presumably to better effect
- The wording of the questions is important. Words such as: compare, contrast, discuss, summarise, outline. Each requires a different type of answer
- Do not just write down all you know about a topic

## Problems (for example, in Maths)

- Make sure you write down the formulae that you need and which is not given to you in the exam, as soon as you start the exam
- If you cannot immediately see how to do a problem, leave it and come back to it later
- Show **all** working when asked for
- Set out and label your working steps clearly so they can be followed easily by the marker

## Multi-choice questions

- Mark sheet exactly as instructed
- Take care to mark your answer opposite the correct number
- Even if the answer is obvious, look at all the alternatives before making a decision
- If you have to guess, eliminate as many wrong answers as possible
- Make sure you give an answer to every question



## Analysing Questions

- Make sure you have attempted all questions
- If time, read through answers, check for **glaring errors** or **misspelt words**
- if time, improve the legibility of your writing
- **Do not** leave the exam room before the time is up. Continually check through and think about how you can improve your answers
- Number your questions carefully



## After the exam

- One down ?? to go!
- Do not discuss the exam with your friends in great detail

## HOMEWORK V STUDY

### What's the difference?

How long do you spend a night (on average) doing homework? .....

How long do you spend per night doing home study? .....

The difference between homework and home study is that homework involves .....

.....

.....

and home study involves .....

.....

Once you have decided you want to improve your percentage marks by doing some home study, you need to know HOW!

## HOW TO STUDY



### Success through a system

Before studying you need to

1. Decide your aim is to achieve with merit, excellence?
2. Allocate your time to make room for study
3. Arrange the physical environment (room, pens, desk, etc) for study
4. Get all other commitments out of the way to avoid distractions or interruptions

## CIE External Examination:

- know what is to be examined
- discuss this with your teachers



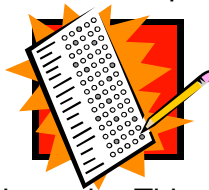
## Starting to Study

### Order your notes

The first part of studying is really quite painless and helps you get into the habit of sitting down to work – it is to make sure your notes are complete and in order. You should be keeping your work up to date regularly but if for some reason you have missed or lost some, find gaps and sort them out. It's vital that you do this a long time before exams so that you have time to fix up any errors.

### Split your notes into content and skills

There are two types of study: study of content and study of skills. Different subjects will have more or less of these two types of study – for example, English, Social Studies, Economics, etc, will have a lot of content and some skills whereas subjects like Maths, Science, Graphics and Design, etc, will have a lot of skills and some content. To revise content, you will be summarising key points. To study skills you will be practicing examples. At this point of your study, simply divide your notes into things to summarise and examples to practice. Maybe use a highlighter in the margin to show the two.



### Make sure you understand your notes

Up until this point, you haven't had to think much. This stage is a gentle progression from there – simply read your notes and anything that you don't understand, put a mark next to it so you know to come back and spend time on it later – DON'T try to figure it out now, just make a note of it. This is called revision! You might like to make a list of the things you need to come back to so you can cross them off as you complete them.

## Skills Study

This covers Maths examples, statistical skills, drawing types, etc. The best way to study these is to do lots! Start with ones you can do easily and work up to harder ones. If you can, get hold of old exam papers to show you what level to revise to. Remember to take regular breaks and to study a variety of things so it doesn't get too boring. If you get stuck, don't give up – get help!

## **Content Study**

This is for all the information, facts and theories you are taught. Old exam papers are not much use for studying this – the best way is to do three summaries of your notes.

**First Summary** This is fairly broad. Write down key details. Look to chop out descriptions but aim to reduce your notes to about 20% of the size they are now, eg, if you have 50 pages, aim to end up with 10. This is time consuming but doesn't require too much brainpower so it doesn't hurt too much!

**Second Summary** Take your first summary and summarise it. This should be done a week or two before an exam while the summary is fresh in your mind. Try to cut your first summary by about 50%. Get key words and ideas.

**Third Summary** This should be done just before an exam. Take your second summary and condense it down to 1 page. On this summary one word becomes a memory trigger and should remind you of lots of content you have studied.

## Examination Study Timetable



Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6:00am							
7:00am							
8:00am							
9:00am	SCHOOL SCHOOL SCHOOL						
10:00am							
11:00am							
12:00am							
1:00pm							
2:00pm							
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## Examination Study Timetable



Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6:00am							
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