



YEAR 12 QUESTIONS FOR DR SALTER

Do you have study skills questions you'd like addressed in your upcoming study skills session? If so, ask your teacher to forward them to me or email them to info@enhanced-learning.net. Have a read through the past questions below first, they may also be things you would like to know. Some of these questions will be addressed during the session and some not, as we only have an hour. Regards, Dr Prue Salter

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1. *How many hours per subject should you be studying each day after school?*

- You can't really do a set amount of time per subject each day as the workload varies. The approach to follow is come home, knock off the homework as quick as you can, then work on any assessments you have coming up, then if you have time you choose one or two subjects each night to focus on doing some 'study' for. This might be making study notes, going over work you find difficult or doing essay or exam questions. For many students just keeping up with the classwork, the homework and the assessments is a challenge. But any study you can fit in before the holidays is a definite bonus and worthwhile.
- The expectation is that during term time most students will be doing this home learning over a period of 2-3 hours per night.

2. *How do I effectively manage technology, a social life, screen time, and part-time work during self-directed study?*

- For technology and screen time it is essential that you keep schoolwork blocks free of personal technology activities. This may mean using blocking tools on your laptop (Self Control, Cold Turkey) or apps on your phone (Stay Focusd, Off Time, Forest, Pomodoro). The idea is you do your schoolwork in distinct blocks of time where you commit to removing the technology and distractions. More strategies will also be on Pg 4 of the session handout.
- The best way to create these distraction-free blocks (and to manage social life and part-time work) is to use a study timetable for the rest of Year 12. You can get these from the [Study Skills Handbook](#) site (access details will be on the session handout if your school subscribes) and when you login click on [Things to Print](#) and go all the way to the alphabetical list at the bottom and click on [weekly timetable](#). Fill in your current commitments of sport, job, social life. Then see if you can fit 14-20 hours of home learning into your week. If you can't, this is a sign that you need to reduce your social life or commitments. Without a timetable, life takes over and you have no idea how to fit in the self-directed study at home or if you are doing enough.
- The reality of this last year of school is that you won't be able to do everything you might have done in Year 11. You will need to cut back on things like part-time job shifts the closer you get to the final exams. And then when the exams are over, yay, you have unlimited free time!

3. How much study should I be doing during the school holidays?

- We will address this in the session. It depends on how hard you have worked during the term, if you are up-to-date on your study notes, how motivated you are, and what marks you'd like to achieve. See Pg 3 and Pg 5 of the handout you will be given at the session.
- But most students in the July holidays will do at least 4.5 hours per day of study.
- Most students in the October holidays will do at least 7 hours per day of study, this could even increase for highly motivated students to 8-9 hours.

4. I have poor handwriting what are some practical tips and techniques I could implement over the next few weeks to improve the readability and neatness of my handwriting, at least temporarily? Are there specific exercises, changes in grip, or adjustments to letter formation that could have a positive impact quickly?

- Handwriting is definitely better for your study notes, so if you type your notes you need to find other ways to practise your handwriting.
- If your handwriting is not great, go to the [Study Skills Handbook site](#) (if your school subscribes), click on [Writing Skills](#), then on the link [Improving Handwriting](#). You may want to try the Ring Pen Ultra but it does take a couple of weeks to have an effect. There are also lots of strategies listed on that page to improve your handwriting.
- Short term? I would go to Officeworks buy 10 different pens and experiment to see which you can write fastest and neatest with. The pen you are using makes a massive difference.
- My writing is shocking. I learnt to print fast for the HSC. I gave up on 'running writing' and would practise at least 10 minutes every day printing as fast as I could as neat as I could. The key is, Every day, **practise writing neatly at speed**. Choose a particular passage and write it out neatly. Time yourself. The next day write it out neatly again but try and speed up a bit and time yourself again. The goal is to get to the point where you can write the passage out quickly but still maintain neat handwriting.
- Get an index card and write on it WRITE NEATLY. Have it on your desk as a constant reminder to be aware of your handwriting. What tends to happen is we get so immersed in the question it just spews onto the page and we completely forget to try and write neatly. So when you are working at home. have a constant reminder to yourself so you can bring it into focus.

5. What are some strategies that students can employ in order to prepare FOR the trial period? At times students just study for the next exam, how can we balance studies during this time?

- The best method is to do a study plan in advance, and to do this you need to start at your last exam and work backwards. When you do it this way (rather than start the planning at the first exam) the study plan falls naturally into place. For example, if you have Mon Hist Wed Maths then Tues you will study Maths, Mon night you will study Maths, and Sun you will study History. You plan all the way up until the day before the first exam. The time before that should be shared equally between subjects. After the Trials/Mocks I will be sending you a video where I show you a very detailed way of how to do this with your own final examination timetable. Also see the [Preparing for Exam Blocks](#) unit on the [Study Skills Handbook](#) (login details will be on the last page of the handout if your school has access).

6. In the lead-up to the Trial HSC Exams, what should I be doing study-wise?

- We will look at this in the session but:
 - Finish study notes ASAP.
 - Work on any areas you specifically find difficult so you can ask your teacher for help.
 - Start memorising the content.
 - Do essays, extended responses, exam questions and hand them in for feedback.
 - Do as much practise as possible, revision questions, study guides, past exam papers – it is all about identifying what you can't do yet and fixing it up.
 - The closer you get to exams, the more you should do full past papers under exam conditions, then use that as a diagnostic tool to identify areas of weakness.
 - You will continue with this type of study in the holidays.
 - See Pages 6-12 of the session handout.

7. What are some tips for moving from band 5 to 6. What small things can students incorporate into their study to bridge that gap between high band 5 and 6's?

- Page 13 of the session handout addresses this, also the strategies listed on Page 20. We won't cover this in the session, so make sure you go through it at home.
- Some of the key strategies are getting as many different questions as possible to practise from, asking for and adapting teacher feedback to your responses, and looking at the marker's reports for past exam papers.
- Really the key to moving from Band 5 to Band 6 is about making lots of little changes consistently and being conscientious about chasing up every little thing you can't do or don't understand and using constant feedback to mould your responses into the type of response that gives you a Band 6.

EXAM TECHNIQUES QUESTIONS – also go to the [Study Skills Handbook Site](#) and see the [Test-Taking Strategies](#) unit, plus the material on Pages 14-17 of the session handout.

8. What are the most effective strategies for approaching and managing these gruelling 3-hour exams successfully? How can students optimise their preparation to build the mental stamina required to remain focused for such an extended period under exam conditions?

- There are two main strategies for managing 3 hour exams: repeated practice under exam conditions and mental rehearsal. In order to have the stamina and mental focus needed, you have to do as much practise as possible at home under exam conditions. This means time limits, no notes or answers, simulate the exam conditions as much as possible at home. To start with you may do half a past paper under exam conditions, as there are still lots of issues you have to address after you have done the paper – lots of things you didn't know and will need to go through using your notes and answers. Then you start doing a whole past paper as often as you can. There are no shortcuts to this – practise, practise, practise.
- However, you can also prepare yourself mentally using rehearsal techniques. What you do is last thing at night, or first thing in the morning, you make a mental movie of yourself going into the exam, sitting there writing furiously for 3 hours, coming out feeling happy with your focus. Try and make the movie as detailed and vivid as possible. This is a clever strategy as your brain looks for ways to make the things you imagine happen. The more often you do this, the more confident you will be in the exam.

9. During the actual exams, what techniques can be employed for pacing yourself, avoiding burnout, and maintaining concentration from start to finish?

- The more practise you do under exam conditions the better. This is the best way to deal with all of this as the more you do past papers at home the better your focus and concentration will be in the actual exam and the less likely you will be to experience burnout. Eating well and getting enough sleep will also help.
- Other key strategies:
 - Have a plan before you start of how much time you will allocate to each section, maybe even write the plan down quickly when you first start.
 - Take your watch off and put it beside you so you are constantly aware of the time.
 - Always quickly brainstorm before you start an essay or extended response.
 - Every half hour or so look up from your paper, close your eyes, and take 2 deep breaths.
 - Don't get bogged down on a question, put a mark next to it and come back later.
 - Lots more strategies in the handout and on the [Study Skills Handbook](#) site.

10. How can you break down the question, identify key points, and apply logical reasoning or exam techniques to craft an answer, even if it is imperfect?

- The key is to plan before you start, not just seize on one word in the question and rush in only to find when you get the paper back that you were not answering the question. Instead, you need to underline or circle the key words and phrases in the question first. Then quickly jot down your thoughts and ideas in the margin. Then number your ideas in the order that you should write about each of these so that the content flows in a logical way to answer the question.

11. What are some effective techniques for thinking on your feet during an exam when faced with a question you initially don't understand or have knowledge gaps about? What are specific tips on ways to remain calm, gather your thoughts, and make the most of the information and skills you do have to put together a reasonable attempt at addressing the question prompt?

You are in the middle of the Trial HSC or HSC exam, and you come across a question that leaves you completely stumped. Your mind goes blank, and you have no idea how to approach answering it. In situations like this, where you are under pressure and struggling to think clearly, what strategies can you employ to decode the question and formulate a response?

- The absolute best thing to do is to leave the question and move to the next one. This gives your subconscious a chance to process the question while you are working as well as the central nervous system (which may have gone into flight or fight response) to calm down. After 5 minutes or so come back and look at the question again, underline key words in the question. Then jot down some initial thoughts. If you feel more confident now, go ahead and start the question, but if you are still struggling, then do the strategy again. Go and do another question, this gets your confidence up and gives the brain more processing time. Then come back to the question a second time and see if a response has emerged. You then just have to do the best you can at that point.

12. How do you prevent study burnout?

- **Use a “Less but Often” Study Model:** Instead of cramming, spread your study into shorter, regular sessions. Don’t try and do large blocks of study in one go.
- **Build in Guilt-Free Downtime:** Actively schedule fun: sport, music, walks, gaming, hanging with mates. If rest isn’t part of your plan, burnout will be.
- **Change the Study Scenery:** Mix it up, library one day, home desk the next, café for a read-through. Changing locations helps your brain stay alert and reduces fatigue.
- **Rotate Your Subjects:** Don’t grind one subject for hours. Swap every hour or two. This keeps you fresher and lets tired brain circuits recover.
- **Have a Weekly “No Study” Day:** Choose one day (or evening) where you deliberately don’t study. Your brain needs reset time to consolidate and recharge.

13. How do you come back to study after burnout?

- **Do a ‘Reset Day’:** If you are exhausted and not achieving much, stop everything for one day. No guilt. Sleep, eat well, walk, clear your space. Think of it like rebooting your brain, not “wasting time.”
- **Start Small: 15-Minute Sprints:** Just begin. Set a 15-minute timer and pick one tiny task: reread notes, review a past test, open your textbook. Success builds momentum—don't wait to “feel like it.”
- **Switch to Low-Effort Study First:** If you're drained, avoid intense writing or analysis. Try flashcards, watching summary videos, or highlighting your notes. Do study activities that are useful, but not too taxing. Warm your brain up before diving deep.
- **Replan, Don’t Panic:** Burnout usually means your old routine wasn’t working. Rebuild your study plan with more balance, flexibility, and breaks. Use this moment to rethink what’s realistic.
- **Connect Before You Recommit:** Talk to someone: friend, teacher, mentor. Verbalising burnout can lift its weight. You don’t have to power back alone. Others can help with strategies or just listen.

14. *I was just wondering if you could give me some tips on gaining and maintaining motivation throughout Year 12. Up until this term I was fine, but this term I've just lost all motivation to study and I get so bored so quickly, and it leads to less work being done and it being really difficult to study.*

This is a common feeling at this point in Year 12. Motivation often drops now as the year starts to feel sooo long, and repetitive, or as you say, just plain boring. The key is not to wait until you

“feel motivated” again as our feelings are hard to control, but instead to create small systems that help you keep moving even when motivation is low.

Here are a few strategies that may help:

1. Make the first step VERY small and easy to tick off

When you feel bored or unmotivated, don't aim to “study for two hours”. Aim to start with something tiny, such as:

- 5 multiple choice questions
- one paragraph plan
- 10 minutes of flashcards
- correcting one past paper question
- making one summary table

Once you start, it is often easier to keep going. The hardest part is usually the first few minutes.

2. Use short, active study blocks

If you are getting bored quickly, your brain may be telling you the study method is too passive. Remember to try to avoid just reading, highlighting or rewriting notes for long periods. Instead, use more active tasks such as:

- testing yourself
- doing practice questions
- blurting everything you know on a blank page
- explaining a concept out loud
- making a quick mind map from memory
- marking and correcting your own work

Active study is less boring and usually much more effective.

3. Rotate subjects and task types

If you are tired of one subject, don't force yourself to stay on it for too long. You could do a rotation like:

- 25 minutes: practice questions
- 5 minute brain break
- 25 minutes: memory work
- 5 minute brain break
- 25 minutes: planning or fixing mistakes

Changing the task type can help your brain stay more engaged.

4. Focus on “minimum viable study” on bad days

Some days will not be high-output days. Instead of writing the day off, decide on your minimum. For example:

- one 25-minute study block
- one past paper question
- one topic revised
- one small piece of homework completed

This keeps momentum going and prevents the guilt spiral that comes from doing nothing.

5. Build in some rewards and variety

Try attaching small rewards to completed tasks, such as a walk, a show, a snack, music, or

time with a friend. The reward does not need to be huge; it just gives your brain a reason to finish the task.

Really you need to shake up what you are doing and do different things instead to add a bit more variety.

I think you will find things are a bit different anyway when the holidays start. These last few weeks of term you feel like you are in a holding pattern, when the holidays start it's like ok, time to get cracking.

15. Do you have any suggestions or strategies for memorising essays effectively, especially with exams coming up soon?

Memorising essays by key points and ideas is a way better strategy than memorising whole essays.

Memorising requires two things – testing yourself, and repetition. There aren't really any shortcuts to that.

This means you have the essay structured in dot points for the key ideas, you read it through then see what you can write down without looking. You do that over and over until it becomes automatic as it is embedded in your memory.

Make sure you have the framework of the essay broken into:

- the thesis or main argument
- the key paragraph ideas
- the order of the points
- the best examples or evidence
- a few strong topic sentences or linking phrases

Ideally you want each essay reduced to a 1 page plan. Putting this in table format also helps.

Consider also making a list of useful adaptable sentence starters, such as:

- “This suggests that...”
- “This is significant because...”
- “The composer positions the audience to...”
- “This reinforces the idea that...”

Once you feel you have committed lots of these to memory, upload them to AI get it to create other essay questions for you so you can practise adapting your essay plans from memory.

You can also use mnemonics as memory aids to remember themes and key points.

Dr Prue Salter.

info@enhanced-learning.net