

How to Study for a Test in High School

There are many different types of assessments in high school. One of the types that you may not be familiar with is a topic test. This is more than just learning a list of spelling words or having a test on what you have been learning in Maths.

A topic test may be testing you on a few weeks' worth of work, and may even cover more than one topic! You will have material in your exercise book to learn, worksheets, your textbook – all sorts of things that you did on that topic over a number of weeks.

Unfortunately many students do not know how to study. They think you just read through your book a few times and hope you remember everything. That is not an effective way of studying.

So here's a big secret to success in high school:

Reading is the SLOWEST most INEFFECTIVE way you can study. It will work if you are pretty clever, but it will take much longer to learn everything. And here's the thing, it definitely does not work in the senior years. There is way too much content to just read it through and remember it. So you may as well learn how to study properly now!

We all learn in different ways and within each of the following steps there is much scope for individual learning differences. The way to find out what works best for you, is to try as many different techniques as you can during the early years of high school.

Here's the short version of how to study for a test:

1. Make study notes.
2. Learn the notes by testing yourself on them.
3. Do lots of questions as practice.

But you need a bit more explanation than this! So when you are told about a test or exam, follow the steps below.

1. FIND OUT EVERYTHING YOU CAN

Find out everything you can about the test. What topics are being tested, what types of questions there will be (multiple choice, short answer), how long the test will be, how marks are allocated.

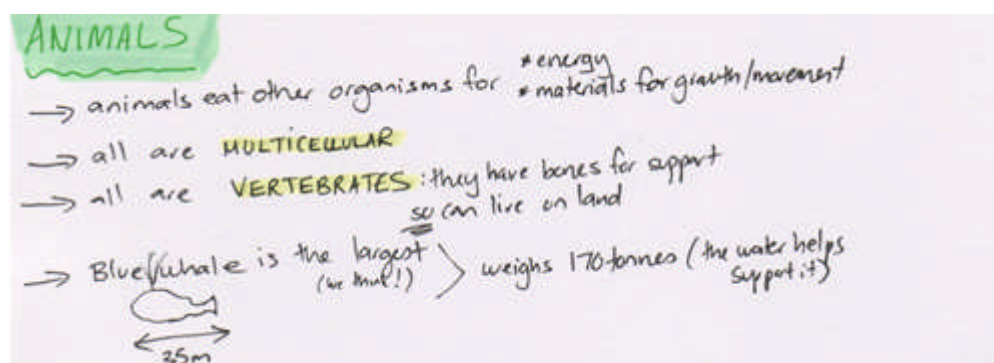
2. ASK IF UNSURE

If you are not sure what you need to study or how to study make sure you ask your teacher until you are clear. If the opportunity arises, then ask in class, otherwise ask your teacher if you can see them before or after class sometime. If you are still not clear, ask your parents to give your teacher a call to clarify things.

3. MAKE SOME STUDY NOTES/SUMMARIES

As you begin to study for a test or exam in secondary school one of the first things you need to do is to make some study notes or summaries.

- Get some paper, ruled or blank is ok.
- Look through your exercise book, your textbook and any sheets.
- For each heading or section, start making point form notes about the main things you will have to remember for the test.
- Don't write great big long sentences.
- Try and keep the points short and put things in your own words.



The reasons we make study notes/summaries are:

- When you just read through things they don't stay in your head very well. Even if you read through them over and over this is a very inefficient way of studying.
- By thinking about what is important and how you can write it down in a condensed form the info starts to move into your memory.

- This also helps you ensure you understand what you need to learn. When you start trying to reduce information to the key points you will quickly discover when you don't understand something.
- Sometimes the information will be spread out over many many pages in your textbook or be spread across a number of different places like sheets and exercise books. Making summaries allows you to reduce the amount of pages you have to keep reading over by bringing everything you need to learn together in one place in an organised and easier to learn way.

4. ASK FOR HELP

If you came across things you did not understand or were not sure of when making your notes ask your teacher or parents for help. You may also like to show your teacher and parents the notes you have made to get some feedback from them about what you could do to improve.

5. LEARN THE NOTES

The next stage is to start getting the information into your memory.

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Do you get what we are saying here???? The biggest mistake students make is they think study is just reading things over and over until hopefully some of it sticks in their head. The right way to study involves extra steps after reading. What you do is read a section of your notes then TEST YOURSELF on what you have just read.

You could test yourself in the following ways:

- Seeing what you can write down without looking at the notes and then checking to see which bits you got wrong.
- Seeing what you can say out loud without looking at the notes and then checking to see which bits you got wrong.
- Getting someone to test you.
- Making flashcards on things you need to learn in your notes and testing yourself on these.
- Writing a list of questions as you read your notes then seeing if you can answer them after you finish reading.
- Remember this great technique: look, say, cover, write, check!

Which is correct? When studying.....

- Just read your notes over and over.
- Don't just read your notes, test yourself on them!

6. REPEAT STEP 5 OVER AND OVER AND OVER

Repetition is the key to remembering things. So test yourself over and over and over on your notes until you find that you are starting to remember the information easily. This is why it is a good idea to start early and spread your study out over all the time before the test.

7. DO LOTS OF PRACTICE

This means you need to do as many different questions as possible to see if you can apply what you have learnt to different types of questions.

Ways you can practise:

- Your teacher may give you a revision sheet or a past examination paper to do.
- You could go back in your textbook and pick out questions to re-do, particularly ones you found hard.
- Your school library may have another textbook in a different brand or a study guide for that subject and you can do the questions in that book.
- You can re-do any exercises or activities you did during the topic.
- Some schools will put extra revision activities up on the school website for you to download.
- Some textbooks come with a CD with extra questions or a supporting website with extra questions.
- If you feel you have nothing to practise from (ie no questions to do to see if you understand the work) ask your teacher, or even ask your parent to buy you a book you could use to do questions from - most of the big bookshops will have an educational section.

8. ASK FOR HELP

Throughout this whole process, anytime there is something you don't understand you must ask for help. Don't ignore any problems, or let them build up, see your teacher and ask about them as quickly as possible.

