YEAR13

THE YEAR 12 SURVIVAL GUIDE

Study tips, exam guides, goal setting + heaps more

YEAR13

A NOTE FROM YEAR13

We're not going to sugarcoat it – Year 12 is a pretty tough ride. Whether you're trying to bang out an assessment in one coffee-fuelled night or freaking out in the middle of exam period, there are going to be times when you wish you had someone around to tell you exactly how to get through it all.

This is why we've created this guide. We're not here to give you stock-standard study tips or tell you that this will be the most important time of your entire life (because it's really not). The Year13 crew is made up of uni drop outs, class clowns, sport jocks and nerds and we've put our heads together to come up with advice that'll actually help, while keeping things in perspective.

So read on to get tips on how to survive this final year of high school, no matter how far along you might be. We promise we won't just bang on about getting good grades (but if that's what you're focusing on, there's some good stuff on that as well).

We'll help you get through with as little pain as possible. Good luck!

♡ the Year13 crew

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PART ONE: STARTING THE YEAR STRONG

We all get that boost of motivation that comes with starting a brand new year. While most of us let this wither and die as the year goes on, you need to grab it with both hands and run with it for as long as possible; use it to figure out your strengths, set goals, look at your post-school options and come up with a Plan B if it all goes sideways.

It might seem like a lot of work to do before the hard part of studying actually starts, but we can safely say it's bloody worth it. Knowing how the year works and where you want to end up means you won't become completely aimless and ready to give up by the time of your first exam.

You'll know what you're working towards, making it easier to keep pushing through when times start getting tough. Trust us when we say staying motivated is half the battle. But we're here to help.

WHAT EXACTLY IS THE ATAR?

The Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR)

When it comes to the ATAR, there's a lot of stuff that's left unexplained. Schools, teachers and parents tend to place an absurd amount of importance on this number, as if it's going to define the rest of your life, but nobody seems to understand *how* the whole system of ranking and scaling actually works (to be fair, it *is* bloody confusing).

At its simplest, the ATAR is the figure that universities use to base their admissions. It's a **rank**—not a mark—that indicates your academic position within your entire cohort (that's everyone who started Year 7 at the same time as you). This means that an ATAR of 80 doesn't mean you got 80%; it means you're in the top 20% of your year cohort (a bit of quick maths for ya).

It gets more complicated when you start looking at how the ATAR is calculated, so we're going to try to break down some of it. Because things like scaling differ from state to state, we can't give you the super specific details. But, there are a couple of main points that apply to pretty much everyone and are worth mentioning.

How Scaling Works

The important thing to remember is that subject scaling is designed to *promote* fairness across a range of subject choices, not prevent it.

It's a process that's designed to respond to current information on student and subject performance to ensure your final ATAR is a fair measure of your academic performance, not just the nature of your

subject choices. Because of this, it's pointless to try and game the system by simply picking highly scaled subjects. There are high ATAR achievers within all subject groups and your final mark will still largely reflect your actual skill in each subject.

The idea that 'harder' subjects are scaled higher is a myth. Subjects are scaled according to the performance of students, not how breezy the class might be. This means there's no guarantee taking something like Chemistry is going to land you with a better ATAR than if you chose a subject like Visual Arts (especially if you suck at science).

So don't freak out if you find out your subjects don't scale well. It's way more important to study things you think will be important later in life or that you actually enjoy. Why pick a subject like Legal Studies when you've spent the last couple of years topping Drama and hate writing essays? If you can't do basic math to save your life (same) then why put yourself through memorising equations and antagonising over numbers when you could be killing it in a class that you actually enjoy?

If you're flunking, no amount of scaling is going to save you and choosing subjects that you enjoy means you're bound to go through Year 12 with less unnecessary stress. Trust us, minimising stress as much as possible and celebrating small wins throughout the year is going to be what gets you through. So, start with your subjects.

ATAR Calculators

First things first–it's probably not accurate to call them ATAR calculators when they're not doing so much *calculating* as they are *estimating*.

We'll admit that they are impressive pieces of technology and that in the process of their estimating, a lot of calculating occurs, but taking the ATAR calculator's word as gospel needs to stop.

ATAR calculators *can* figure out exactly what your ATAR is going to be–if you got your scores *in the year before*. This is because they work with old data, using the marks of students in the previous cohort. This is important because before your marks can be converted to an ATAR, they must first be scaled, and then converted to a percentile.

Since subjects scale differently every year (because it's dependent on

factors like how students go across all their subjects, not just one), it's impossible to calculate how your marks will scale before that information is released later in the year. Instead, ATAR calculators apply the scaling factors from previous years in their estimation.

Basically, there's a whole lot of adjusting of marks to ensure each student is compared fairly to get your ATAR. This adjusting takes place several times throughout the entire process and each time depends on data about *your* specific cohort.

Since that information isn't yet available to ATAR calculators, they can only use old data which won't be totally accurate. Which means any sort of ATAR estimate should only be used as a rough guideline and as a motivator, rather than the opposite.

Be wary of the complacency that can come from a high ATAR estimation, because there's usually still time for you to gloriously mess it all up. Take any high estimations with a grain of salt–you don't want to be disappointed if you end up with a lower ATAR than expected just because you pinned all your dreams on the number from a random calculator you found on Google.

Also don't be disheartened if an estimate says you're heading towards a mystery mark. There's still time to put your head down, work hard and bump up your marks—just read on.

SETTING GOALS

So now you know what this whole ATAR thing is about, it's time to figure out what it can do to help you. For some people, getting a high ATAR is the quickest pathway to land their dream job. For others, it's about as relevant as what you ate for breakfast six weeks ago.

Everyone's journey is going to be different, because everyone has different **goals** guiding them.

Of course, not all of you have figured out what your goals are. Either that or you're constantly changing them which is normal and totally fine. It's hard to decide what you want to do with the rest of your life when you're still figuring it all out, but here's a few tips that'll help get you started.

1. Figure out your strengths

What's most important is that your goals are based on your own strengths and what you enjoy doing, not what other people think you should be doing. Think about the things you like or are good at and write 'em down. Think about what attributes you have that make you good at those things and write those down too.

If you're good at gaming, your strength could be strategic thinking. If you like basketball or soccer, it could mean your strengths are teamwork or coordination. If you're the mum of your group, your caregiving skills must be pretty bloody amazing and if you're the go-to when people want to get their 18th or an after party sorted, your organisational skills are probably a strength.

Everything you're good at is an indicator of specific skills that can guide

you on what to base your goals on. From things like getting everyone in the group chat to agree on plans to always talking your way out of emptying the dishwasher, somewhere out there there's a job, an industry or a field of study that requires exactly the strength that you possess. Aim for that.

2. Have a look at potential pathways

A lot of schools will only push one pathway and that's usually university. Once upon a time, uni probably *was* the safest bet when it came to leaving school, but nowadays there's a lot more to consider when deciding whether you want or need a degree.

For many students uni *is* the best option, at which point it's all about sussing out the different campuses and courses to see which will suit your goals. But, for a tonne of us, uni is just one of the potential choices and everyone deserves to know the variety of options out there before making any massive decisions.

There's a tonne of different ways to continue studying (university, TAFE and private colleges are just a few) but the main thing to remember is that for a lot of careers, there's a lot of pathways you can take to get there–some that don't even need any formal qualifications.

Even areas like legal services don't necessarily require a degree and with VET courses out there for pretty much every occupation, you should definitely take your time exploring your options before committing to a final decision.

In saying that, don't stress too much about picking the 'perfect' pathway. There's nothing wrong with starting a degree and not finishing it, dropping out of uni or heading there later in life, trying an apprenticeship or spending a chunk of your time working or travelling while you figure things out.

After you've done your research you might realise that your dream career doesn't even need an ATAR and you can spend Year 12 relatively stress-free. Whatever happens just remember that your decision now doesn't dictate the rest of your life–there's always the option to change.

3. Work out a Plan B

Coming up with a Plan B doesn't mean you're not backing yourself—it's just a smart thing to do. There's so many unforeseen circumstances when it comes to life after school, so having other goals in mind is definitely worthwhile if something doesn't go to plan or you need to find another passion outside of your chosen pathway for whatever reason.

Sometimes having a Plan B is as simple as finding multiple preferences for the same degree with lower ATAR cut-offs or looking up what VET courses you can study if you don't make it to uni.

Either way, having something to fall back on means it won't be the end of the world if something goes awry. It can happen to the best of us, so getting yourself organised now saves a stressful scramble later on.

PART TWO: KEEPING PACE

The bulk of the school year is spent attending classes and listening to your teachers talk about how you should be regularly revising all your notes at home. It's easy to ignore this advice when exams are so far off (we don't blame ya, there's so many Netflix shows to be watched and naps to be had). But putting in the work–even a little bit of it–is going to pay off in the long run.

We know this is easier said than done and that staying focused and motivated for an entire year isn't an easy thing to do. School can be exhausting and as the year wears on it can be harder and harder to keep up with everything.

But, it's worth giving it a crack and any work is better than no work, so here's some tips for keeping pace throughout the year.

ESTABLISHING A GOOD ROUTINE

They say some of the world's greatest minds got that way because of a good routine. Ernest Hemingway got up at 5:30am every day even if he'd got himself hammered the night before, and Benjamin Franklin preferred to sit in the nude each morning before starting the day.

While these might not sound all that appealing to you, finding a routine that works for your lifestyle is one of the best ways to stay on top of your work throughout the year. Here's a few tips to get ya started.

1. Just do something (anything) each day

At the core of any good routine is **habit** and these don't form as easy as you'd like. It'll feel like pulling teeth at first but the the great thing about routine is that it literally gets easier the more time you spend working at it. That's why it's important you allocate some time every day–or least at very regular intervals–to do some study.

It doesn't have to be heaps; it can be as simple as reading over what you wrote during the day or finishing any questions you might have missed out in class.

Start as small as you like–even if it's 10 or 15 minutes–and soon you can build up to doing a substantial amount each time; the important thing is that you're developing that habit. Ideally you'll use this time to be chipping away at your study notes throughout the term, that way you won't be cramming the night before the exam.

Think of it this way: any time spent studying now is time you won't have to spend on it later.

2. Structure your study time well

It's not simply a matter of blocking out time to sit in front of your books and laptop; you have to make sure you're using that time efficiently.

First of all, make sure you're scheduling study for when you're actually productive. There's no point saying you'll hit the books at 8am when you know you're barely able to keep your eyes open until at least 11am.

What works for one person doesn't always work for the next, so be sure to pay attention to what your own body is telling you. Morning study sessions is what most study guides will advocate, but some of you might prefer coming home from school, having a nap and studying late into the night when you're more switched on. Do what works for you and ignore any advice that says there's only one effective time to study.

You should also acknowledge that you won't be 100% focused on your work the whole time you're sitting at your desk. You'll get distracted, someone will message you, you'll want a snack or your mum will yell at you about chores.

Train yourself to work in 5-10 minute blocks without checking your phone and reward yourself with a short break. Work to increase the amount of time you can study without a break–you want to aim for about 20-25 minutes uninterrupted if you can.

3. Establish an effective study space

Wherever you decide to study, make sure your space is clean, organised and free of distractions. If your room is full of clutter, your brain will be too; chuck on a couple of eps of Marie Kondo and get inspired to clean up your study space. If every time you try to study in your room you end up falling asleep, then it's probably time to find a new spot, like the library, a cafe, the park or even just another room in your house.

It's best to establish a few different spaces you can cycle between, since your number one option won't always be available and a change of scenery can be super useful when you're stuck in a rut.

4. Go on study dates

This tip basically operates under the assumption that you can't be trusted to establish good study habits on your own, so you might as well enlist the help of a friend to help hold you accountable.

Of course, you should be cautious about who you plan these study dates with because they can end up being a massive waste of time if you both just chat instead of actually studying. When done effectively, however, you and your friends should be motivating each other and calling each other out when distractions get out of hand.

5. Maintain balance

Keeping pace throughout the school year is more than just studying everyday–it's making sure you're taking care of yourself as a whole and maintaining a healthy balance. This means giving yourself enough time for all your hobbies and interests, whether that's sport, video games or a cheeky gig every now and then.

You should also make sure you're get enough sleep (7-8 hours at the least) and not eating like crap all the time, as these things will all have an effect on your overall performance at school and in your final exams.

HOW TO MAKE STUDY NOTES

Study notes are pretty vital when it comes to getting all that information you hear in class and read in your textbooks to actually stick in your brain. What you might not realise is that there are a few different ways you can approach study notes depending on your learning style.

1. Written study notes

The go-to form of notes is your good old piece of paper with some stuff scrawled on it. But to make it easier on your memory, break info down into dot points. Don't make it harder than it needs to be by trying to remember paragraphs that are a page long. Summarising = success.

Handwriting notes can take *forever*, but it's one of the best ways to ingrain the knowledge in your head. The pen connects your head to the page and if you've got the time, making summary sheets and flash cards is really going to help you in your exams.

There's actually a tonne of ways to take written notes,:

- **Cornell Method:** This is a quick way of condensing your notes. You draw up a notebook with two columns—one side for general notes and the other for a shorter summary of those notes. This system is kind of like when you used 'look, cover, write, check' in primary school to remember spelling words.

- **Mind-maps:** Mind maps are super helpful if you want to organise and connect ideas on the page. Best avoided when you're working with definitions, but great for classes that have lots of overarching themes (like English).

- **Outlining:** This is probably what you've already been doing. Headings are key here and any related information is organised below the relevant syllabus point. This one can take a lot longer than anything else, but if you can get through it you'll have all the information you need in an easy to read format.

- **Charting:** This is especially helpful for classes with essays to help you remember things like quotes and definitions, or for ones that you have to recall a lot of dates and events for. It's essentially just drawing up a table that holds all the key info you need in an easy-to-read way:

Technique	Definition	Example	Explanation
Metonymy	replacing the name of a thing with the name of something else with which it is closely conceptually associated	"The pen is mightier than the sword."	'pen' = written word 'sword' = military aggression/violence

The real key to written notes is to document your content in a way you'll understand. You can copy stuff word for word from the textbook, but if you can't understand something now, it's probably not going to make sense later. While this might help you memorise things in a last ditch attempt to cram, writing your notes in your own words will help you much more in the long run.

2. Visual study notes

Not a fan of writing outlines and pages of quotes and historic dates? Time to get creative. Visual notes can work so bloody well when it comes to making facts stick, especially for those of us who hate re-writing the same thing over and over.

You've got a lot of options when it comes to making visual notes and it's really up to you with how creative you get (which will probably depend

on how late you've left your revision). Try pie or column graphs for stats and numbers, tables for definitions or quote analysis—but don't make them too complex, otherwise you'll never be able to remember them. These sorts of notes are perfect for roughly planning essays too, with dot points and arrows.

If you've got a lot of numbers or info to crunch, try colour-coding. Those rainbow highlighters aren't just pretty, they can be super handy when it comes to organising your study information. Highlight formulas, quotes or dates you need to remember so they'll pop off the page when you're doing a last-minute cram.

3. Audio study notes

When your hand is about to fall off from writing a novel's worth of notes, give audio a go. Recording your own notes are great for memorising quotes and dates, as well as if you're trying to fit an entire essay into your tired brain. They're also perfect if you're feeling super unmotivated and just want to lay in bed—if you're listening to your notes at the same time it definitely counts as studying.

Record yourself reading your notes on your phone when it's nice and quiet, and listen to them whenever you can; in bed, on the bus or the walk home from school.

4. Mixing all of the above

You might be a written kind of person, a visual learner or an audio lover, but a mixture of all three study methods is likely your best bet. When you're knee deep in study and feel like you're just not making any progress, give yourself a break and come back with a new tactic. It gives your notes some variety and you'll be remembering the information in a bunch of different ways.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'RE FALLING BEHIND

We all reach this point where we've screwed up a couple of assessment tasks, our major work looks like a toddler has mashed it together and we're dreading the thought of how much work we need to catch up on to keep up with everyone else.

This is normal, everyone feels it and there's plenty of time to come back from it. The first thing to do is to admit that you've slipped up and that 'just one more episode' mentality when watching Netflix has finally caught up with you. There's no point stressing about things you can't change; throw that guilt out the window and pull yourself together.

1. Refer back to your goals and routine

If you've been following our advice up 'til now then you should have some pretty solid goals written down and figured out a routine to get some consistent studying done.

Of course, sometimes we lose sight of these goals or get slack with our habits and that's when we start falling behind. This is normal and will probably happen to you several times throughout the year; what's important is how you bounce back from these moments.

Look back on your goals to help you get motivated again and trust that your routine will set you up with enough time to get through all the studying you need. You shouldn't think about catching up as this one huge task, either. Just start with that first day, even if it's only five minutes of work, and the next day it'll be easier. Soon enough you'll be back on your routine and catching up will be a breeze.

2. Take a break

Of course, sometimes the stress of falling behind is too much to overcome with positive thinking or sheer willpower. The more you try to face it, the more you falter until it becomes this enormous thing you're too scared to take on and you fall even further behind.

While it may seem counter-intuitive, sometimes taking a break from work can actually be the best thing to improve your overall productivity.

Find a way to really forget about all the things you need to do and have fun. Hang out with your friends and laugh at dumb jokes until you're crying. Go for a run or kick a footy around until all you can think about is how you're pretty sure your lungs are about to collapse or spend some time with your family and talk about everything except school.

Of course, don't let this eat up all of your time, but when you're ready to hit the books again you should find that you're in a better state to study.

3. Keep your mental health in check

If things are getting bad, please remember that your mental health is more important than a mark. Unfortunately, there's loads of research out there that reveals students are experiencing more mental health issues than ever before and a lot of this is due to the mounting pressure placed on our final exams.

You guys have told us the same thing; when we asked students how they were feeling in senior school, 70% said they felt 'stressed', 66% said they felt 'anxious', and only 30% said they were 'excited' (which we reckon is related to finishing high school more than anything else).

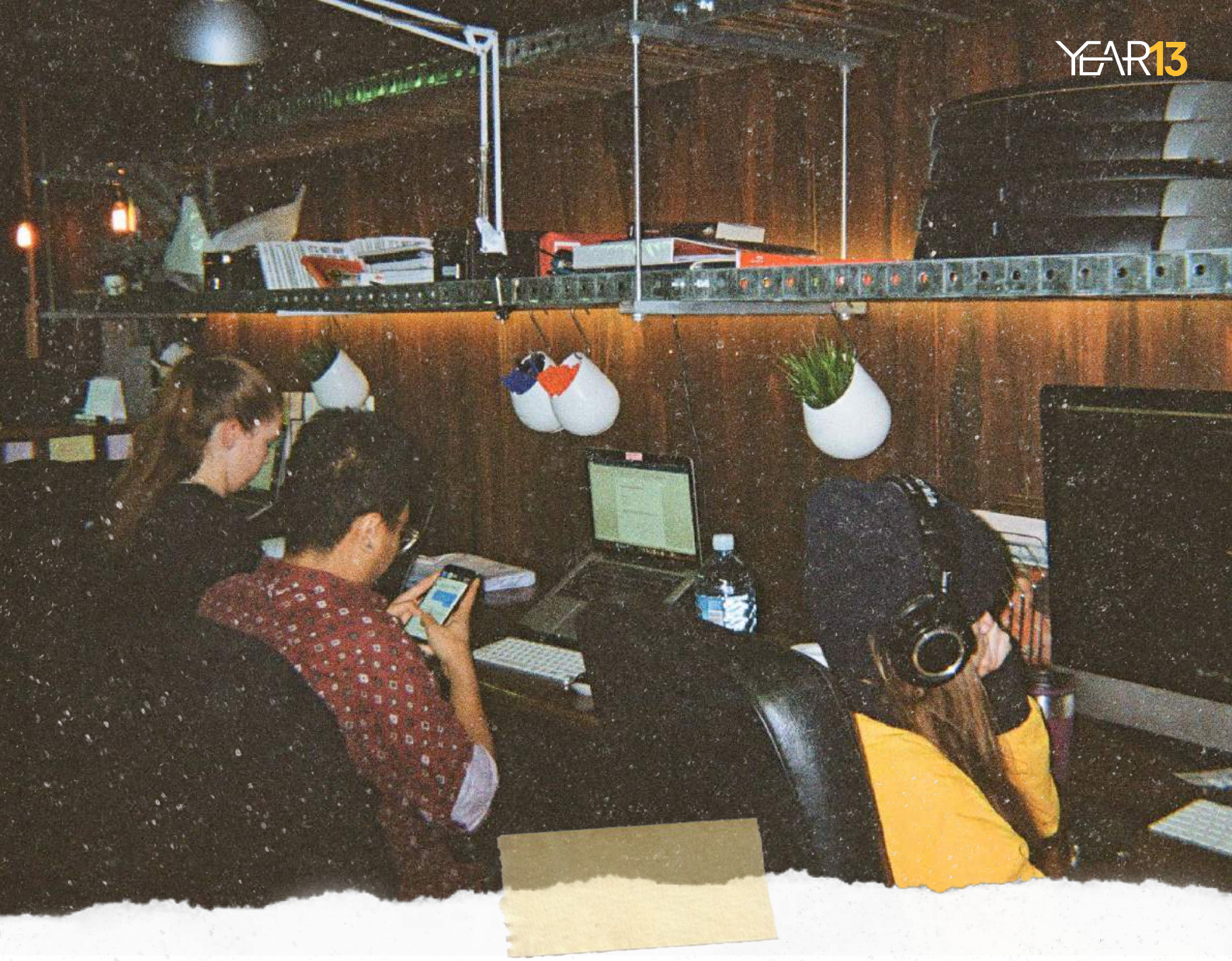
Don't feel bad if you're starting to struggle, because chances are someone close to you is feeling the same. Be there for each other and talk about what's going on. Talk to your parents if you need to, as well your teachers and school counsellors; they're here to help. In fact, talking to anybody you trust who's been through the stress of high school can be beneficial. They'll help you put things in perspective and understand that there's more to life than getting good marks and ways to get where you want without an ATAR.

4. Dropping subjects

Sometimes the best course of action for you to take when your load is too heavy is simply to lighten it–it's honestly that simple. You should always check if you'll be left with enough units to qualify for an ATAR after dropping a subject (that is, if you want an ATAR).

Some people prefer to have more subjects than necessary to give them some leeway in case they screw up a final exam but, if you know one of your subjects isn't going to count anyway, it might be best to cut it loose.

Less subjects means you'll have more free periods at school which you can use to spend more time on all your other classes or simply relax. You'll also have more time at home to focus on the classes you're still taking. Plus, your mental health will benefit from having less things to worry about, not to mention the peace of mind you'll have from shedding the subject that's been causing you grief.



PART THREE: CRUNCH TIME

Ah, exams, where all your hard work comes together. Where you get the most emotional, get the least amount of sleep and—despite all efforts to avoid it—get the bulk of your studying done.

You could be a model student throughout the whole year and still find exam periods stressful. But don't worry, we've got you. Here's how to get through final stretch. You're nearly there and we know you're going to make it.

WHAT YOU SHOULD BE DOING DURING THE EXAM PERIOD

Everyone approaches exam time differently; you might be pulling all-nighters, procrastinating like crazy or cramming like you've never crammed before. However, there are certainly some techniques that are a little more productive than others. Here's our tips for getting through:

1. Get organised

First up, you need to map out your exam period so you know exactly when each exam is. This will help you prioritise and plan your study so you don't get surprised by a sneaky Biology exam when you've been practicing equations for Maths instead.

It's also a good time to review your expectations and attitude during this period. For example, if you've scheduled your exam timetable and filled in every empty space with study, then you need to re-evaluate–you're never going to be able to survive such an intense study load.

2. Get some sleep

Doing well in exams isn't simply the case of doing as much study as humanly possible; it requires balance. And to achieve this you don't just have to sharpen your mind, you need to stay physically healthy too.

Sleep is a huge factor here, so make sure you're not staying up too late, especially the night before an exam. At that point, being well rested is more useful than a few extra hours of reading and re-reading notes when you're not particularly focused.

If you haven't learnt it by now, chances are it's not going to stick anyway, so just go to sleep.

3. Stop eating crap

It's hard to avoid eating nothing but pizza-flavoured Shapes and mi goreng when you're knee-deep in exams but at least *try* to eat something resembling a green vegetable.

Eating regularly and making sure not everything that enters your body is junk means you'll be able to study more effectively and perform better in exams.

Don't let this stress be the reason you stop exercising or playing sport either. Physical activity improves blood flow to your brain so you'll feel sharper while you study plus, it'll fill you with endorphins and help keep you sane during this messed up period.

4. Treat yo'self

While there's huge benefits to staying healthy during exams, it shouldn't be a reason to completely starve yourself of guilty pleasures. Taking care of your body isn't meant to be torture, so if you feel like you need a treat, then go for it.

Learn to recognise when you're feeling overwhelmed by study and wellness and all that 'doing your best' stuff, so you can counteract it with a slab of your fave chocolate or some phone time.

Take a bath, hang out with some friends, jam to some old school bangers or go see a movie. You'll feel ready to take on some more study again afterwards.

5. Learn when to let go and stop caring about exams

You'll reach a point in your studies when any further effort won't give any worthwhile results. Or the amount of work it'd take to get those extra marks just isn't worth the hell you'd put yourself through to get them.

Everybody has their limits and it's not a sign of weakness to accept that. One of the most important things you can do during your exam period is to acknowledge when you've reached this point and just let go.

Working past this point, you run the risk of coming into exams stressed as all hell and flunking anyway.

Put down the books instead and focus on feeling good about yourself and doing the best that you can do–your mental health is more important than a mark, anyway.

HOW TO CRAM THE NIGHT BEFORE AN EXAM

A cram session should really only be taken as a last resort but we've all been there and—if you're going to do it—you might as well give it a solid go. It's terrible, but sometimes you're just going to have to suck it up and push through the night, bleary-eyed, to get some studying done.

1. Don't fall for the 'I'll do it in the morning'

When you're starting to fall into the gales of sleep deprivation you'll probably start making these sorts of promises with yourself, ones like 'if I go to bed now I'll get up early and finish it in the morning'. You know you're lying—once your head hits the pillow you're down and out, so don't trick yourself into falling for these false promises.

2. Stay away from your bed

It's tempting to set up shop in the middle of bed, cocooned by study notes and blankets, but don't do it—you'll find yourself fast asleep in five minutes. Get out of bed and out of your room if you can. You want to be comfortable, but not comfortable enough to fall asleep because at 3am even your bedroom floor will start to look like a good place for a nap.

3. The syllabus is your best friend

Or the 'silly-bus' as some teachers may say in an attempt to get students friendly with it. Trust me though, don't be fooled by this horrible play on words because the syllabus really is your angel in disguise. It is quite literally dot points on all the topics that may be in the exam.

In the context of a late night study sesh, the syllabus acts as a sieve to figure out the important pieces of information. Briefly skim through and highlight any terms that you don't understand, then go back and revise them. This way your brain can grasp the basic gist of the topic while retaining key concepts for the exam the next day.

4. Learn from the past (papers)

Past papers are an excellent tactic for putting your knowledge to the test. It's the perfect way to gain a feel for the exam and the types of questions that could be asked so that you don't totally freak out when you start the paper the next day.

However, if you have left it until the very last minute and don't have time to find/access any, we suggest digging through your desk to try and find your *own* past papers from earlier in the year that are still lying around. It's a good way to digest information that you learnt earlier and your teacher's comments on it will be super valuable.

5. Record, play, repeat

I'd rather listen to nails on a chalkboard than my own voice but desperate times calls for desperate measures. If you want this damn essay etched in your memory then I'm afraid recording yourself is your best option.

Record, play it back to yourself and repeat. Maybe even as you fall asleep. Write it out a million times if you can. It's no lullaby, but hey, it works better than nothing.

6. Know when to call it quits

I know, I know, the plan was to pull a super productive all-nighter but sometimes the best thing you can do *is* sleep. You'll need that precious shut-eye if you are to be raring and ready to go for your exam.

So, say no to that crappy cup of Joe, the Red Bulls and No Doz which will only increase the stress and anxiety of the next day. You are much better off calling it a night ASAP, getting a solid six hours of sleep, and then waking an hour or two before you need to leave for school to jam in some last minute study.

7. Accept your fate

When it all boils down, you put yourself in this situation. Accept defeat and just give it your best shot. Maybe next time, *don't* leave it until the last minute, you fool.

Although it's encouraged that you *do* give Year 12 a red-hot crack, it's also important to remember that life beyond school is not determined by the results of your final exams. There will always be other options and alternate ways of doing the things that spark your passion.

It's not the be all and end all and once it's all over you'll be able to take a step back and see the bigger picture.

TECHNIQUES TO GET YOU THROUGH AN EXAM

Alright, so you've made it through your last ditch efforts to study and now you're facing the actual exam. You want to make sure that all that time spent cramming your notes doesn't go to waste, which means you need to get into the exam, get it all onto the paper and get out of there without having a total mind blank or breakdown. You got this.

1. Use the reading time effectively

The reading time at the beginning of an exam is best used to get a general understanding of all the questions. That way, you can identify which questions you can answer quickly and thoroughly, knock them out early and build up your confidence for the harder ones.

In English, use the reading time to start skimming through the unseen texts and work on this section straight away (then go onto your essay and creative writing), otherwise you'll be wasting precious writing time just trying to digest the texts.

2. Make sure you answer the question

It seems really obvious, but the pressure of exam conditions can knock you off your course and make you write a response that doesn't actually answer the question at hand.

Try and mirror the vocabulary used in the question or even refer to the question directly in your answer if you have to, but be constantly checking that every point you're making is relevant.

3. Be concise

Despite what you may think, there is such thing as writing too much. Waffling on won't always get you extra marks and doing so takes time that could be spent giving solid answers. Be sure to stick to just the important stuff and, if in doubt, refer to the number of lines provided to you in the answer booklet as a guide, as well as the amount of marks the question is worth.

4. Know your keywords

Each question will start with a keyword that reveals how you should write your response. Pay attention to these; knowing the difference between *explain* and *evaluate* will be the difference between getting full marks and getting the bare minimum. There's a list of keywords you're probably going to come across at the back of this guide.

5. Know your English literary techniques

Knowing your metaphors from your similes is important for every English module, but more than just knowing their names, you should also learn what their literary function is across different text types. The most common techniques can be found at the back of this study guide too.

PART FOUR: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

You made it!

The late night study sessions, tired mornings, boring classes and stressful exams—all done. Now comes the fun part. The part where you celebrate the end of an era and go to formals and schoolies and think about taking a gap year. Year 12 isn't just about the marks, it's about enjoying the freedom that comes with finishing and celebrating the fact that you made it through. Congrats, we're proud of ya.

With this freedom can come a bit of anxiety too. You're worried about your marks, what you're going to do next year and whether all the hard work will pay off. There's the potential for disappointment and, even if you do end up getting the mark you wanted, the future can still seem pretty bloody terrifying.

That's why we want to remind you that no matter what happens next, you're going to be okay. We don't say this just to make you feel better about leaving all your study to the last minute—we're serious when we say these exams won't dictate your entire life.

WHAT I ACTUALLY USED MY ATAR FOR AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

Absolutely nothing. Kidding...kinda.

Let me start off by saying that the ATAR isn't all it's made out to be. Don't get me wrong, if you do end up smashing your ATAR, kudos to ya—you deserve to be proud. It's not easy and we know that a lot of hard work went into it.

But, it is worth remembering what you actually use your ATAR for: **to apply to universities.** That's it.

It's literally a number that determines one particular pathway of entry into a uni course. What's great though is that there are actually heaps of alternative ways into uni, even if you never actually got an ATAR.

Beyond that, there's not many other areas of life that will require you to whip out your ATAR. Here's a list of things your ATAR will likely have zero influence on:

1. Travelling

Travelling is one of the best things you can do in life. Cheesy but absolutely bloody true and a perfect way to spend your time after you've graduated.

It doesn't take a 99.95 ATAR to hop on a plane, ditch your worries and have an experience of a lifetime. The locals won't care about your results and nor should you.

2. Landing a job

Sometimes it can feel like everyone is telling you that you need to go to uni and get a degree to make sure you'll earn the big bucks one day. Truth is, an ATAR isn't going to ensure that you start raking in the cash.

There are a bunch of jobs out there that you can nab without ever stepping foot in a uni and chances are, your employer is never going to ask what your ATAR was anyway.

Pay rises, promotions and bonuses aren't based on what percentage of the state you managed to beat in your exams and no one is going to tell you to hand in your resignation because you got a mystery mark.

3. Your relationships

There's no dating app out there that demands you chuck your ATAR in your bio. Asking someone on a date isn't prefaced by your Year 12 exam marks.

Your best mate isn't your best mate because of how good you are academically. Your true friends care about things like how kind you are and how much you make them laugh. Your relationships, romantic or platonic, aren't going to change because of your ATAR.

4. Your family

Even though it might feel like your ATAR is going to affect how your family sees you, the reality is that they're going to love you regardless of whether you top your class or come last in the year.

It might feel like there's a lot of pressure to prove something to people like your 'rents with your final ranking, but all they really want is for you to be happy and turns out, your ATAR doesn't determine that either.

5. You

The ATAR only tests very particular academic skills. It doesn't consider your ambition, resilience, creativity, generosity and kindness. There's so much that the ATAR can't measure and there's no way your ATAR has any influence over what makes you *you*.

That number doesn't define you and as time goes by, you'll realise that there's so many other things that make up who you are.

The verdict?

The ATAR is good for applying to uni... and that's about it. Despite being told it's the be-all-and-end-all, remember the experiences you'll have after school can't be quantified by one little number.

IT'S BEEN A YEAR SINCE I GOT MY ATAR AND HERE'S WHERE I'M AT

I got my ATAR a year ago. I remember being half-asleep, perched on the edge of my bed, waiting for that doomed number to come through on my phone. When it appeared, I was swept with instant relief.

My 82.75 ATAR was nothing for the history books, but it meant that I was safe. I had the choice of going to my preferred university and doing a course that I wanted to study. There was to be no change in plans from that point forward. I really thought I had the next few years completely planned.

I was completely wrong.

All through high school, you're told two different messages about your ATAR. On one hand, you're told that it's the most important number to exist and that if you don't ace it, you're doomed for failure. On the other hand you're told to stop stressing about it, that it doesn't mean *that* much and that you don't need it to succeed.

Juggling these two completely different ideas can throw you into a downward spiral and when you're actually sitting those exams it's hard to focus on anything but how crucial it is to your future. But, a year on from getting my juicy number, I can tell you this: it really doesn't mean anything.

Okay, that may have been a stretch. If your passion is Medicine or Law, you'll probably need it a

‘lil more so than I did. *But*, there actually is a tonne of different options that, in my opinion, supersede what the ATAR can offer, if you’re ambitious enough or have got a bit of passion.

I was at uni for just a week. I made the rash decision to take a late gap year and see whether or not I could hustle a writing career. One year, two overseas trips and 50-ish articles later, I can safely say that ditching my ATAR was one of the best things I’ve done; but being thrown into the deep end was wild.

I didn’t do a lot of sitting around after I dropped out. I knew that I had to prove myself in some way if I didn’t have a degree to back me up. This led me to sending emails to anyone and everyone who’s email existed on a public platform, begging with them (professionally, of course) to let me write something for their website.

Turns out, if you’re confident enough, people are nice! People want to give you a shot! Obviously, not everyone has a weird writing passion, but, the same mentality can be applied in most fields; you’ve just got to make an effort.

Talk to people in your dream industry. Remember their names and network. Volunteer for things, pump up your resume. Ambition is a trait and a skill; use it to your advantage.

Just know that once you get your ATAR, you’re going to be okay. If things end up a little pear-shaped, it isn’t the end of the world. A motto that has sincerely helped me is, fake it till you make it. You are completely capable of making the world your own, you’ve just got to remember your ambition.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES - KEYWORDS

Knowing how to identify the keywords in a question is super important in exams and when you're writing essays. The keyword tells you exactly how you need to be structuring your response to the question.

Account - account for, state reasons for, report on. Give an account of, narrate a series of events or transactions

Analyse - identify components and the relationship between them; draw out and relate implications

Apply - use, utilise, employ in a particular situation

Appreciate - make a judgement about the value of

Assess - make a judgement of value, quality, outcomes, results or size

Calculate - ascertain/determine from given facts, figures or information

Clarify - make clear or plain

Classify - arrange or include in classes/categories

Compare - show how things are similar or different

Construct - make, build, or put together items or arguments

Contrast - show how things are different or opposite

Critically (analyse/evaluate) - add a degree or level of accuracy depth, knowledge and understanding, logic, questioning, reflection and quality to (analyse/evaluate)

Deduce - draw conclusions

Define - state meaning and identify essential qualities

Demonstrate - show by example

Describe - provide characteristics and features

Discuss - identify issues and provide points for and/or against

Distinguish - recognise or note/indicate as being distinct or different from; to note differences between

Evaluate - make a judgement based on criteria; determine the value of

Examine - inquire into

Explain - relate cause and effect; make the relationships between things evident; provide why and/or how

Extract - choose relevant and/or appropriate details

Extrapolate - infer from what is known

Identify - recognise and name

Interpret - draw meaning from

Investigate - plan, inquire into and draw conclusions about

Justify - support an argument or conclusion

Outline - sketch in general terms; indicate the main features of

Predict - suggest what may happen based on available information

Propose - put forward (for example a point of view, idea, argument, suggestion) for consideration or action

Recall - present remembered ideas, facts or experiences

Recommend - provide reasons in favour

Recount - retell a series of events

Summarise - express, concisely, the relevant details

Synthesise - putting together various elements to make a whole

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES - LITERARY TECHNIQUES

If you want to nail any English essay then you want be making reference to a variety of different literary techniques in relation to a text. There's the old favourites like metaphors and similes but there's also a few others on here that might help you impress your English teacher.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Metaphor
Metaphors compare two seemingly unrelating things, drawing upon a similarity that may not be obvious in order to highlight this quality and describe it in an exciting way.

E.g. "*The exam was a dark stain on the fabric of his memory."*

There are also ***extended metaphors***, in which a comparison is sustained throughout multiple lines (poem) or sentences (prose) to add layers of complexity with additional metaphors.

E.g. *"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts."*

Simile
A simile is a type of metaphor. It again uses comparison to describe something, this time saying it's 'like' or 'as __' the other thing.

E.g. *"Finishing the exam was like waking up on Christmas morning."*

Metonymy
This is when a word is subbed out for another word that shares an association with the original. Again, it's used to make speech and language that bit more engaging and it's so common in everyday phrases that we don't really realise it's being used.

E.g. "*Lend me your ears,"* (ears meaning attention);
E.g. "*The pen is mightier than the sword,"* (pen meaning knowledge or written word and sword meaning violence)

Synecdoche
A bit like metonymy, synecdoche subs out a word, but this time replaces it with a part of the whole or the whole of a part.

E.g. "*A room full of faces,"* (part represents whole here, with faces meaning people) "*The police are here!"* (the whole represents the part here, with police meaning individual officers, not the entire force)

Personification
This is when human qualities are given to non-human objects, creating an interesting image in our minds and describing an object or action more vividly.

E.g. *"Sleep cradled me in its sweet embrace."*

Symbolism
This is the use of an object that carries more meaning than its literal definition and is a good way to pack extra significance without explicitly stating it.

E.g. A country's flag can represent national values or pride and patriotism. Watching birds can represent a character's desire for freedom or escape.

Imagery
This is actually separate from figurative language because not all imagery uses figurative language but good imagery uses figurative language devices to be effective. Basically, this technique uses language to evoke our senses (sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste) and create vivid representation of the scene in our mind.

E.g. "*The sea was black,"* (simple imagery for sight)
E.g. "*The sea was as dark as the night sky,"* (uses simile to render vivid imagery of sight)

RHETORICAL DEVICES

Allusion
An allusion is a reference to an event, person, or literary work. The reference isn't made explicitly but if the connection is made, it carries the weight of an entire other story without actually having to spell it out.

E.g. "*Be the Jay to my Bey.*"
E.g. "*She's my kryptonite.*"

Anaphora
This is the repetition of the first part of a sentence for dramatic effect. It also creates a sense of rhythm that's pleasing to read or hear which makes it more likely to persuade or resonate with the audience.

E.g. *"It was the best of times, it was the blurst of times."*
E.g. *"We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets..."*

Antithesis
Antithesis puts two different ideas together in a sentence with parallel structures. This highlights the contrast and lets you make your point more emphatically.

E.g. "Easy on the eyes but hard on the heart."
E.g. "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

Chiasmus
Chiasmus involves two phrases with repeated concepts in an inverted structure. The actual words don't need to be repeated; what matters is that their grammar is reversed.

E.g. *"Love without end, and without measure grace."*

Antimetabole
This is often mistaken for and used interchangeably with chiasmus, though there are differences. Antimetabole involves reversing the actual order of words in consecutive phrases.

E.g. *"It's nice to be important but it's more important to be nice."*

Oxymoron
An oxymoron is an intentional pairing of contradictory words or phrases to make a point. They can be used to highlight the conflict or contradiction underlying a certain situation, or even just to entertain.

E.g. "*Parting is such sweet sorrow.*"

Rhetorical question
This is a type of question that isn't actually looking for an answer; instead, asking the question creates an effect. It can be to challenge the reader, raise doubt, or to emphasise an obvious point.

E.g. *"If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh?"*

Hyperbole
Hyperbole is the deliberate use of exaggeration to make a point. It is also a type of figurative language because the statement isn't meant to be taken literally, and is a rhetoric device because it is often used to emphasise and persuade.

E.g. *"I get more ass than a toilet seat."*

Asyndeton
This device involves intentionally omitting conjunctions (and, or, but, so etc.) to speed up the rhythm of written or spoken text. It also engages the audience to fill in the spaces.

E.g. *"He came, he saw, he conquered."*

The opposite is **syndeton** in which additional conjunctions are added to slow down the pace and make it sound drawn out.

E.g. "At school he sat and worked and wrote and answered questions and learnt very little."

YEAR13

GOOD LUCK LEGENDS!