

Stage 5 Student Study Skills Booklet



This booklet belongs to

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Introduction

What do I do now that works?

What do I do now that doesn't work?

Thank you to Jim Elliott's *Treading Water while the Sharks are Circling* for the headings that organised this material.

Getting the Most out of Scheduled Classes

Minimise Disruptions

- ❖ At Kandos High, the organisation is set up to minimise disruptions to learning. For example, we have music to signify when the breaks are coming to a close. This is the time to finish up what you are doing, go to the bathroom and then get to class. The idea is to be lined up when the bell goes. Being on time makes it easier for everyone. We are a community of learners and disruptions affect everyone in the room. Stay community minded. Minimise distractions so everyone gets the best chance at success.

Being Away or Missing Class

- ❖ We know events happen in life that mean you cannot attend school. Also, some of you are involved in many of the wonderful projects and excursions that we do at Kandos High. No drama! All you have to do is check in with your friends or the teacher when you get back as to what you missed. Students have rights, which means they also have responsibilities. Checking in what you have missed is on you. It only takes a minute, and helps you win at your study.

Where you Sit Counts

- ❖ We all have preferences where we sit in class. Some places, however, are not helpful when you are trying to learn. Sitting at the back of the class if you find it hard generally to concentrate is not the best move. If you have difficulty hearing or seeing, sitting on the fringes will not be as good as sitting in the centre of the room. Choose your seat based on your learning needs. You may need to break some long time habits, but you can do it!
- ❖ If you have a seating plan then sit where you have been asked, but if you cannot hear or see clearly, tell your teacher!

How you Sit Counts

- ❖ All that stuff your primary school teacher told you about sitting up straight and facing the front was true. Seriously, if you act alert, you will probably be alert. Body language matters and it helps you be ready to learn. Have your pen ready, your book open and your mind focused on the task at hand. You will save time and prevent stress later on if you make the most of your class time.

Be Prepared

- ❖ Make sure you have a look at your assessment schedules and any class materials you are given at the beginning of the year or term. These things are given to you so you have no surprises about what topics you are doing and tasks that are being assessed.
- ❖ Have the necessary equipment to learn. Valuable lesson time is wasted with finding pens and paper if you don't have them, this is unfair to everyone else in the class.

Engage your Mind

- ❖ It is easier to learn if you are actively involved in the class. Joining in class discussions will help you understand the material and clarify your thinking. Valuable stuff. If you are a shy person, at the least take notes of the discussion. Try being curious. You may not like the subject, but you can be curious and think about the material presented to you. Sometimes this is tough, but you've got this!



Review Afterwards

- ❖ This is one part of your study routine. Ask yourself three questions about what you have learned:
 - i. **What was that class all about?** It should be possible to work out the overall learning of the class. Was it about a particular maths problem, or about a particular type of writing? Answering this question will help you remember what happened in class.
 - ii. **Where does it fit into what we have been doing?** Many of the units of work last for at least a few weeks. What you are learning will be part of a wider topic. Was the maths problem part of your unit on trigonometry? Was the type of writing to get you ready for your film analysis essay?
 - iii. **Are there any bits that are not clear to me?** Learning is a journey, we start not understanding or knowing something and then that changes. Along the way some parts will be easy to understand and others hard. No problem! If you don't understand ask your teacher, or a friend. Don't just leave it though – make sure you understand everything!

Don't Leave Empty Handed

- ❖ *Never trust your memory.* We like to think that we will remember everything later, but life is busy. There is the latest stuff going on with friends, the sports competition coming up, remembering to do something for your family, all on top of a bunch of subjects. How amazing hey, that we can learn so much when all of life is going on around us! All of these things make remembering tricky. No problem! Take some notes and it will jog your memory later.

Taking Notes

Here is one suggestion of a notes layout you can try.

Credit to *Treading Water While the Sharks are Circling* by Jim Elliott for this notetaking format.

Topic	Notes	Summary
Taking Notes	<p>Here is a sad psychological fact. If you sit in a class and listen avidly, you will still forget most of what was said. You need to take notes of what was said to have a chance of being able to study the material later.</p> <p>Don't Write Down Every Word the Teacher Says</p> <p>Not every thing the teacher says is relevant to the topic. Even if it was, no one can write fast enough to catch everything that is said. All you need are key words and summaries of what is said. If you listen carefully, you should be able to write a brief summary in your words of what the teacher is saying. If not, this just means you need to note down to ask for help.</p> <p>Use Decent Paper</p> <p>You will need at least A4 size paper. You may need to copy diagrams, or to use a margin, or to connect ideas with arrows. Give yourself space to do these things. For Senior students, you will need to file your notes, so use paper that is suitable for this purpose.</p> <p>Organisation</p> <p>One point of the notes is to be able to use them later. Keep your books in good</p>	<p>All notes should be a summary.</p> <p>Use A4 paper</p>

	<p>order and learn to file your notes away at the end of the term. Remember there are yearly exams, so don't chuck them out! Here are some organisational features to ensure they are easy to use.</p> <p>a) Put the date on the top of each page. If your notes ever get out of order, this will help.</p> <p>b) Put the name of the subject, and some brief title of the topic of the class on the sheet. Remember about our memory being unreliable – you need to be clear what the notes are about.</p> <p>c) Write on only one side of the paper. This may seem a bit of a waste, but it helps save time when you are using the notes later.</p> <p>Use Abbreviations</p> <p>There are a range of common abbreviations, and there are no doubt some of your own that you can develop. Some examples are:</p> <p>+ = and def = definition +ve = positive w/ = with e.g. = for example -ve = negative # = number @ = at</p> <p>Numbers should never be written as words in notes – it wastes time.</p>	<p>Organise the notes.</p> <p>Date.</p> <p>Subject and title.</p> <p>Write on one side only.</p> <p>See examples of abbreviations.</p>
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	<p>Your Notes are Not an Exercise in English Expression</p> <p>Your notes are for you and your study, and that of your friends who may miss class. They don't have to be perfect grammatically, you just need to be able to understand them easily. There are many times for correct expression in class, which your teacher will let you know when these times occur.</p> <p>Structure your Notes</p> <p>It is recommended to use the Cornell method or this structure where the topic is on a slim margin in the left, the notes in the main body and a column for the summary on the right. This method allows you to lay out your notes to see the summary very quickly when you are doing revision. Mind Maps are another handy method you may like. Experiment with what works for you.</p> <p>If there are subheadings and other headings off that, include them in the body of your notes to help with your memory connections. You can write the topics on the left later when you revise your notes.</p> <p>Make sure you don't just record the major headings and nothing else. The material you are being given is often complex. You need to include as much detail as you need to understand the work fully.</p> <p>Use lots of space. You want your notes to be easy to look at and understand. Bunched up notes are</p>	<p>Brief sentences or dot points are fine.</p> <p>Use a note taking structure.</p> <p>Use subheadings in the body of the notes.</p> <p>Details matter.</p> <p>Use up space.</p> <p>Teachers let you know what's important.</p>
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	<p>hard to read. Use diagrams and mind maps.</p> <p>Watch for Signals</p> <p>There are cues that your teacher is giving all the time to help you know what information is important and what is not. Paying attention will help you notice the following cues.</p> <p>a) <i>Things written on the board.</i> This is a cue. If something is written, then this is important. Some items would be to write word for word and others you can abbreviate. Your teacher will let you know.</p> <p>b) <i>Keep an ear out for lists.</i> The teacher may say there are three reasons for a certain concept or fact so your notes need to reflect that. Number them to make sure you remember.</p> <p>c) <i>Watch out for formal definitions.</i> These are important and will be included in the range of assessments.</p> <p>d) <i>Pay attention to lines the teacher says that mean the information is important.</i> Examples of this are: “A basic idea is...” “...the main causes are...”</p> <p>e) <i>Verbal cues will help.</i> If something is repeated it is bound to be important. Sometimes teachers also change how they speak when noting something important. They may raise their voice, or</p>	<p>Write what is on board.</p> <p>Listen for lists.</p> <p>Formal definitions.</p> <p>Some phrases matter.</p> <p>Does it <i>sound</i> important?</p> <p>Write all examples given.</p>
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	<p>ensure the class is quiet or have a different tone. Have your pen ready!</p> <p>Take Down Examples</p> <p>For the same reason as why we include details in our notes, examples are important. Do not rely on your memory! Take Notes!</p> <p>Write Down References</p> <p>Anytime other authors are mentioned, or places where the teacher got their information, it is important. Write it down!</p> <p>The Last Ten Minutes of Class Matter</p> <p>The last ten minutes of a class are often a wrap up of important things covered in the lesson. It is a great time to make sure you have caught everything you need to in your notes. Sometimes, it can be a time for reminders about tasks and assessments – again – take notes. And sometimes, it can be the teacher wrapping up a concept quickly including some key information – so you need to catch that too. It is an important time to be quiet and keep learning until the teacher tells you to pack up.</p> <p>Another important thing to note is that the amount of time the teacher gives to a concept does not necessarily hint at how</p>	<p>Record names of other people mentioned.</p> <p>The last 10 minutes of class matter too.</p> <p>Important things can be covered quickly too.</p> <p>Check over notes ASAP.</p>
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	<p>important it is. Sometimes important items can be covered quickly. Pay attention!</p> <p>Check Over the Notes as Soon as Possible</p> <p>Use your notetaking method to read over and summarise your notes as soon as you can. Ask yourself the three questions about what the class was about, what information it fits into and whether there is anything you need to ask for help with. Also there may be information about upcoming assessment tasks that you want to capture. Finally, the summary is one way of changing the material – into your own words – so you can remember it easily.</p> <p>Look after the notes.</p> <p>It is easy to think that there are parts of your notebook that are not important, or parts of your learning that don't matter. Every class you attend is a chance to learn and grow and your notes reflect that. All of the information that you need to do well in each subject is in your notebooks. Your learning matters. Your notebooks matter. Keep them safe and look after them. You will then have all the help you need for assessment tasks and your teacher will be able to see a record of your learning.</p> <p>Take pride in your work. Store them in your study area. This does not need to be a special room, just a space where you can keep all of your school items organised.</p>	<p>Store notes carefully.</p>
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The Cornell Method is another system you can use. We have included a diagram of it on the next page. It is important you find something that makes sense to you, and you like. That is why we have mentioned a few styles here. Experiment with it! Make your notes fun and effective.

Reflection: What Note Taking Method do I like so far, and why?

I like the _____ method because _____

Cornell Notetaking Method

Cue Column

Notes Column

2.5 Inches

6 Inches

- Main Ideas
- Questions that connect points
- Diagrams
- Study prompts

When?

After class
During review

- Main lecture notes here
- Use concise sentences
- Use shorthand symbols
- Use abbreviations
- Use lists
- Put space between points

When?

During class

Summary Column

- For top level, main ideas
- Use as a quick reference area

When?

After class
During review

2"

Active Study – General Study and Exam Tips

So many students ask “How do I study?” Reading over notes is a strategy you use once as soon as possible after taking them. During your reading is the time to do your summaries in the margins or at the bottom of your note taking method.

After that first read you must *do something with them*. Every time you work with your notes in a different way, it helps them stay in your memory. It also helps you see if you understand the material or not. If you don't understand – don't leave it there – get help pronto!

Here are a variety of ideas to try to help you understand and remember your work.

Summarise Topics

Every so often you get to the end of a major topic in a subject. An important task (that should be part of your regular study pattern) is to make a summary of the whole topic. This has two important benefits:

First is to make the summary in the first place, you will need to think very clearly about what the essence of the topic is about. Your summary must be shorter than the original notes.

Think of the summary as a “cheat sheet”. Imagine you are putting together as small amount of information as possible to sneak it into a test.

Second is that in revising your summary later you will have a much shorter amount of material to read before you use that information to change it in some way.

Practice Examples

For English this is doing some writing. Come up with a question and then answer it. For Mathematics and Sciences, work through

some problems. For English this would be writing a short answer question or an essay.

Make Definition and Formula Cards

Creating flash cards with definitions and formulas on them either on card or on computer will help you twice. Once in creating the cards and again when you use them for revision. If you test yourself on them, or have a friend or family member test them, then each time you use the information in a different way it cements the learning in your mind.

Note quizlet can be incorrect. Making your own from scratch helps you learn them all over again.

Practice Drawing Diagrams

Practice drawing the diagrams you have in your books on scrap paper to help put them into your mind. You can also try a different forms of the diagram that represents the information without changing the meaning. We call these graphic organisers and there are a range of them at the back of this booklet.

Go over Assessed Work

When you get an assessment back, whether it be a formative or formal assessment, you can use these for your study. In senior school or in any subject that has exams, this is important. Use the comments of the marker (if there are any) as a guide to study those aspects of the subject where you lost the marks. This includes times when you got a high mark and your not really sure how you got it. It is just as important to work out why you do well as why you do badly.

Say Things Aloud

The people you live with may think you have finally flipped when you start talking to your text books but don't underestimate the value of reading aloud. This includes when you edit your work and when you are reading at home. Even try reading to your dog, cat, horse, cow, lizard or fish. They won't correct you either, but you will be able to hear how what you have written sounds, or the rhythm of the work if it is English or you may hear parts you missed in Maths. Good stuff. Give it a go.

Do Some Active Reading

Most reading that you do for school should be active reading. This is where you take notes, or write down questions you may have, highlighting if it is a copy, or discussing it with a study partner. Remember doing something with the material helps you remember it.

Do a Daily and Weekly Review

A brief but useful task is to quickly go over the days classes to refresh in your mind what you have done. This cannot be passively reading the information but you have to do something with it. So, look at the notes you have made and ask yourself four questions:

1. What was this about? (simply go over the content and see what it is).
2. Where does it fit into what we have been doing? (place the material in some context. You never get a class in isolation – it is always part of some greater topic).
3. Are there bits that need special attention? (it may be that you understood the whole lot perfectly. If not, you may need to look at elements of it in greater depth).

4. Is there work that should arise from this material? (check your notes for any work that must be done, such as preparation for classes, lab classes, writing up reports, useful references for assignments and so on).

Doing this active review means that you will look at your materials three times. Once on the day you saw it, another on the daily review and again the end of the week.

Reflection

Write which of these study techniques you currently use here: _____

What study technique am I going to try this term? _____

Note Maintenance

Make sure that your notes are kept in order. This can get out of control if you don't pay attention to how you have organised your materials. At least a couple of times a term, make sure your study desk is organised and you have places for everything. An easy guide is making sure things are easy to find and hard to lose.

Your Study Environment

Having a special place to keep your work is ideal. Space can be a premium in a household however so sometimes you have to be creative. Just having a folder or tub in one spot where everything is in the one place is a good start. A dedicated spot at the kitchen table or a desk in your room or in another space in the house. Whatever works for your situation.

Wherever you do study, try to minimise distractions. The best place to start here is making sure your phone is nowhere near the place you are working. 😊

Choose one aspect of your study environment you can improve and write it here: _____

Tackling Assessment Tasks.

The usual approach is to leave assignments until the panic sets in a few days before they are due. The result of an assessment ends up like an under cooked pizza – lots of half baked ideas, soggy around the edges and hard to digest. There is a better way, and if you are following the time management suggestions we have given you, it makes life so much easier.



Give Yourself Time.

Spreading the work out over the time you have to do it will ensure you have chosen good ingredients for your pizza, had time to make your own dough and cooked it for plenty of time. If you know you have commitments on during that time plan around them. If you are having trouble fitting everything in talk to your family. Of course, your teachers are always here to help.

Consider the Question.

Ask yourself “What does this assignment want me to do?” Look carefully at the wording of the question. Underline anything you do not understand and clarify with your teacher the next time you see them. Once you have worked out what the question is asking you to do, now you can put all your effort into achieving that goal.

Do Some Reading.

Read over your notes and the readings you have been given. You can also do your own reading. If you are unsure what to look at, ask your teacher. It is important to find the balance between enough of the right articles; not too little, not too much. Make sure you reference according to the system taught in the subject.

Do Some Thinking and Talking

Before you start working on the task, allow yourself to think about the ideas. After you have done some reading, look at the question again. Talk about the task with your friends who are in the class. Remember you can always check in with your teacher to see if you are on the right track.

Make a Plan of the Structure of the Assignment

Make a plan that includes all the aspects that you know you need to mention in the task. For example, if you have to do a science project, create a plan of all the parts of the topic you need to include and write an idea of how you need to represent them. Is it a powerpoint presentation that will need pictures or is it a report that will need headings? Each subject has its guidelines for different types of tasks, and the assessment sheet will include all of the instructions you need.

There are some aspects though, that will help every task.
Read on!

Drafting your Task

Spend time putting it all together without worrying too much about the editing. Put all your ideas down and make sure you refer to the assessment sheets often so all the components are included.

Editing your Task

This is where you go over your task and bring clarity to your writing. Rearrange things if you need to and check your spelling and expression. Expect to do more than one edit to get the best result. Good expression and analysis take both time and thought.

Get someone to check over your task.

During the editing process, read your task to someone or get them to read it over. This can be someone in your class who is doing the same task, or someone else in your family or in homework club. Your teachers are always there to help too. Remember if you share the task with a teacher for editing include your name, class and the date you need the feedback by.

Final draft

This is the final stage where you polish it up and make sure every box is ticked. Be careful to make sure you follow the directions in terms of layout, labelling and submitting your task. Assessment tasks are an exemplar of your best work. Be proud of what you do! This is your learning journey and your learning community will celebrate your efforts with you.

Hand it In

This may seem blindingly obvious, work submitted incorrectly or the day after the due date happens more than you think. Often this late work will get zero marks. Make sure you submit in the way that the assessment has specified.

Reflection

Which of the areas of assessment work listed above do I need to improve?

What technique listed above am I going to give a try? _____

A Little Warning

Your thinking about a topic is your own but we are inspired by other people, and this informs our thinking. The correct thing to do is acknowledge the origin of your ideas. It doesn't make the work you hand in any less yours.

When students cut and paste information on a topic and then change some words, it is called patchwriting. "When you alter a sentence that you didn't write and pass it off as a paraphrase, you are implying it is original work when it is not." You only altered something created by something else, therefore it is plagiarism. (James Cook University Website)

Plagiarism is a serious offence according to NESAs and will lead to N warnings in Stage 5 and 6. At University plagiarism or collusion has penalties such as failing subjects or being kicked out.

Teachers check work that does not sound like how their students usually express themselves. At university they even demand you run it through a special program before submitting to prove that it is your own work.

Time Management Strategies

Audit Your Time

- **What to Do:** For a week, track your daily activities. Use a simple chart to log time spent on various tasks including school, homework, work, sports, and relaxation.
- **Tips:** Be honest and detailed. Include even small activities like scrolling through social media or chatting with friends.
- **Outcome:** Identify where you may be losing time and which activities are taking more time than necessary.

Setting SMART Goals

- **What to Do:** Define clear goals for academics, work, and sports. Use the SMART framework to ensure each goal is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.
- **Example:** Instead of "get better at math," set a goal like "improve math grade to B+ by the end of the semester through weekly practice tests."
- **Benefits:** Provides clear targets and helps prioritize tasks related to your goals.

Prioritize Your Tasks

- **The Eisenhower Box:** Urgent/Important tasks are done immediately. Important/Not Urgent tasks are scheduled. Urgent/Not Important tasks are delegated if possible. Not Urgent/Not Important tasks are eliminated.
- **The 80/20 Rule:** Identify tasks or subjects that have the most significant impact on your goals and allocate more time to them.

Plan Your Week and Day

- **Weekly Planning:** Dedicate time each Sunday to outline the week ahead. Factor in fixed commitments like school and work hours, and then fit in study sessions, sports practices, and leisure time.

- Daily Planning: Every evening, prepare a to-do list for the next day. Rank tasks in order of importance and urgency.
- Visualization: Use colour-coding or symbols in your planner for quick reference.

The Pomodoro Technique

- What to Do: Work in focused bursts of 25 minutes, followed by a 5-minute break. Use a timer to keep track.
- Variation: Adjust the length of work/break periods based on the task or your concentration span.
- Goal: Helps maintain high levels of focus while preventing mental fatigue.

Balance Work and Sports

- Communicate: Regularly update your employer and coach about your academic schedule. Seek understanding or flexibility during exam periods or major projects.
- Integration Tips: Look for overlaps between work and sports commitments, like working out as part of your job or incorporating physical activity into your work commute.

Embrace Technology

- Recommended Apps: Examples include Google Calendar for scheduling, Google Keep for task management, and Be Focused or Toggl Track for Pomodoro-style focus sessions.
- Physical Tools: Use wall calendars for a big-picture view and a daily planner for detailed scheduling.

Beat Procrastination

- Strategies: Set small, achievable targets within larger tasks to reduce overwhelm. Use positive reinforcement like small rewards for completing tasks.

- Mindset Shift: Recognize that starting a task is often the hardest part. Commit to working on a task for just 5 minutes to get started.

Self-Care is Essential

- Key Areas: Emphasize regular sleep patterns, healthy eating, and physical activity. Include mental health activities like meditation or hobbies.
- Time Allocation: Schedule these activities like any other important task to ensure they are not overlooked.

Resources

Extra tools and websites to help you on your study journey.

- Toggl Track – an online timer that helps you keep track of your time. It also has a Pomodoro Timer – which breaks time into chunks of 25 minutes with a timed 5 minute break. Perfect for students of all ages. <https://toggl.com/track/> The basic timer is free and has everything you need.
- Study Skills timetable. There is an excellent example of this on the next page. It allows you to write in all of your commitments outside of school work such as chores, sporting events and even leisure time. Make sure your timetable is balanced.
- Clickview. <https://www.clickview.com.au/> You just need your @education.nsw.gov.au to access Clickview online from anywhere. Educational videos and videos used in class at your fingertips.
- Your teachers and SLSO's! Remember there is plenty of help for you at school. If you are feeling shy about talking to them in class then send an email or arrange a time to speak to them at lunch.
- Check out Daniel Willingham's shorts on Youtube. So many great study tips and tricks. Some here on exam stress to get you started.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4iM7LForhNM>
 - How to Study for Exams Part 1
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V_4ufi--b8A
 - How to Prepare for Exams Part 2
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WRpDh4eHC-4>
 - How to Prepare for Exams Part 3
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBTJ_dS5seM
 - How to Prepare for Exams Part 4

Sample Study Timetable for Week Beginning

TIME	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
4.00						<u>morning</u>	
4.30							
5.00							
5.30							
6.00						<u>afternoon</u>	
6.30							
7.00							
7.30							
8.00						<u>evening</u>	
8.30							
9.00							
9.30							

This timetable is from the excellent Study Skills text *Treading Water While the Sharks are Circling* by Jim Elliott

Reflection

Which of these hints and tips are the most useful for me now?

What one item from this booklet could I implement this term?
