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education



# HOLIDAY STUDY

*A letter from one top student to another*



*Dear future top student,*

*I went from being an average student to a top student by making some simple choices. If you're reading this, well done; you've taken the first step. I wish I had someone pull me aside for some advice before the holiday break – here's the advice I wish I had received. When holidays begin the thinking generally goes, "finally, 2 weeks to myself. No more school, no more alarm clocks! I can finally dust off the Xbox and start enjoying myself." The reality is that most students will do no revision this holiday break. The choice you need to make is whether you want to be like most students. If you want to stand out and ace your exams, keep reading.*

*The festive season is one of the best times to break ahead of the pack. The top students around the country aim to achieve two goals over this period: (a) to consolidate their learnings from earlier in the year (looking back) and (b) to plan their next term (looking forward). The rest of this letter shows you how to achieve both of those things.*

### **Looking back**

*Your first job is to consolidate all the information you've learnt since September. If you're doing your GCSEs or A-levels, you're going to need to locate your syllabus/specification. This is the document that outlines every topic and sub-topic that is examinable. If you're in middle school, you should ask your teacher for a list of the key topics that you've covered over the term. Having this syllabus/list is going to give you an overview – a checklist of sorts that tells you the boundaries of your required knowledge.*

*Once you have that list, you want to locate your notes from term. Put them in the order that the topics appear in your syllabus. Now you are ready to begin the actual studying. Don't just passively read over your notes. You want to read them using the 'traffic light system' where you rate your level of comfort/knowledge of the notes. If you read a topic and feel totally comfortable with it, go to your syllabus and use a green highlighter and mark the topic. If you feel 'okay' but could use more work, highlight it yellow. Finally, if you either don't have notes on a topic or don't really like it, highlight that topic title red/pink in your syllabus. By doing this exercise, you expose for yourself which topics require more work and which ones you can leave for now. By reading through your notes, you automatically increase your ability to memorise them – but more importantly you expose your own knowledge gaps. Still not sure whether to mark a topic green yellow or red? Try and teach it to your parent. If you can teach it to someone else, there's a good chance you understand it yourself. If you can't or if you start talking yourself in circles, it's a good sign that you need to brush up on it. Once we've used the traffic light system, we've enabled ourselves to take step 2 of 'looking back'.*

*Step 2 involves focusing on the red light and yellow light information. If you want to do 'high value' study, focus on your weaknesses – the red stuff. If you've read through your notes and marked them red this means that you need to go back to the information source to find the answers/knowledge.*



*If you're doing a science or math subject your best bet is your text book or a reliable source on the internet. Take notes here – don't just read the text book. Pick out the key points and jot them down in your notes until you feel comfortable enough to mark them 'green'.*

*There are 2 more things you can do when 'looking back'. The first is finding practice questions. Think all your notes have the green light? Let's find out. Do practice questions to work out if your knowledge is as sharp as you thought it was when you were reading your notes. As a second tip for holiday study, it can be useful to work with friends. Rather than sitting alone in your room all day, get a friend to come over and both do a set of practice questions individually. Then come back and compare answers. By doing so, it will force you to explain the topics to each other which, as I mentioned earlier, is one the best ways to learn. Once you've reviewed all your key topics from the last term it's time to look forward.*

### **Looking forward**

*I've mentioned the term 'top student' many times in this letter. Do you know what that means? My personal view is that a top student is a person who achieves the goals they set out to attain. This raises the question – what is your goal? You don't need to cast your mind 50 years into the future. Instead, take stock of your current marks and skills and work out where you want to go. Want to improve your marks in English? Drama? Math? By how much and by when? Holidays give you the space and time to reflect and ask yourself where you want to go. Think about which subjects and which skills you want to improve upon and then set yourself specific goals for them FOR THE TERM. For example, you may say "I want to submit every piece of homework 2 days before the deadline". Or you may say, "I want to improve my essay marks by 10% this term". Whatever your goal is, write it down and keep it specific. I've put some resources at the end of this letter so you can find out more about how to set goals that work. For now, just remember that setting goals for your next term will be a key to your success.*

*Once you've set your goals, create an action plan. How are you going to get there? What can you do now to start? Need to write your essays on a book for Literature class? Why not start reading it now? Want to improve your math marks? Why not go through your past tests and isolate all your wrong answers into a revision booklet? Plan a step by step method for achieving your goal and it will make it feel much more achievable.*

### **Finding the right balance**

*Finally, remember that it's still holiday break and you can take time to yourself! A good way to balance your time is to mirror the school week. Study during the hours that you would've been at school and take breaks during recess, lunch and after school. That way you will still have your evenings to chill out. Let me say this again – I became a top student by making a series of simple choices. Yours are in front of you. Use your holidays. Don't overwork yourself, but don't waste the time either. Eat some mince pies, watch some movies, and set yourself goals that will make you better.*

*Good luck and happy holidays,*

*Jason from the Elevate team.*





# One more thing before you go!

If you liked my letter, you're bound to find plenty more useful tips on the following topics:

[Top 17 Apps a student shouldn't live without](#)

[How to become exam 'bulletproof'](#)

[Using a short term planner](#)

[Practice does NOT make perfect](#)

[Why are you studying?](#)

+ plenty more at [ukstudent.elevateeducation.com](http://ukstudent.elevateeducation.com)

