Getting the Most Out of the Time Spent at School

Many students make the fatal mistake of daydreaming or tuning out in the classroom, not realising that whatever they miss out on in school will actually take more of their own personal time to work through. Even if there is only 1 hour in total of new content presented across a school day – not paying attention could create an additional 5 hours of homework – which is a complete waste of personal time.

Students spend almost half of their learning time at school and should be maximising these opportunities so as to cut down on after school study commitments. The more you learn and/or complete at school, the less work that you will need to engage in your own personal time.

So what should students be doing to maximise their learning opportunities at school?

- Taking large quantities of notes whilst listening to a teacher and trying to follow/understand the materials being covered is not recommended.

You are likely to miss vital concepts or confuse issues; which will subsequently lead to frustration and stress, resulting in additional study requirements outside school hours. Note: Those students who divide their attention to listening, seeing and writing notes will only remember in the order of 5% of what was presented, whereas those students who listen, watch and absorb can remember up to 50% of what is being presented in a lecture or classroom!

To maximise learning, students should spend as much of the time in the classroom listening and absorbing the information being delivered. Therefore, only copy examples after the teacher has finished explaining concepts and minimise note taking where possible.

- Attempt to keep ahead of the classroom with respect to the material being covered at school.

Know what topic is to be covered in the next class and read through the relevant chapter in your text book. You may even like to attempt some of the exercises in advance (you will have to complete the exercises eventually – so it will not hurt if you try a few problems before they are assigned for homework).

By working through materials in advance of school you will be consolidating this information for the second time in the classroom. Your understanding of examinable materials will be greatly improved, and you will find it so much easier to complete homework, improving confidence levels and dramatically reducing study time.

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“The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty”. Winston Churchill
Working through materials for the second time at school has the added benefit of engraining examinable materials deeper into long term memory, which will decrease how much time you will need to spend preparing for tests and examinations. Your SAC marks (which count for at least 33% of most Study Scores) will also markedly improve, giving you that added advantage in the quest for the highest possible marks.

When working ahead, students will also minimise the need to write notes whilst their teachers are presenting their classes. Even if the topics being presented are difficult, students will recognise those concepts/materials that are already in their textbooks, eliminating the need to write notes in the classroom. In many cases, you will probably find that the majority of what your teachers relay in class is present in your text books! This strategy will enable you to maximise learning in the classroom, and will decrease out of school study commitments!

- **Complete all homework as it is issued.**

  Homework is usually assigned to provide students with the opportunity to strengthen newly taught skills so that they are better able to cope with the next section/topic being addressed at school. Students who consistently fail to complete their homework are more likely to struggle with the materials being covered in class, requiring that they give up more of their personal time to complete homework and prepare for tests and examinations.

- **If you have trouble concentrating in class, sit at the front so that you are removed from as many distractions as possible.**

  Don’t worry about being labelled a “nerd” – improving your concentration will allow you to absorb the information delivered more effectively, and you will spend less time completing homework tasks.

- **Listen to your teachers very carefully.**

  This means that you must stay focused and pay attention at all times. Do NOT day dream.

  If you do experience difficulties concentrating in class, remind yourself that if you do not pay attention now, you will need to spend up to 5 times the amount of time to cover the same amount of work on your own. Then think of all the pressure this will add to your studies, and the amount of personal time you will end up forfeiting.

- **Do not tune out even when you think that you know the material being covered in class.**

  You may just learn something new, pick up some new examination strategies, and at worst, you will have reviewed and further consolidated the knowledge being addressed into long term memory. And this means that you will have less study and revision to complete in the lead up to tests and examinations!

Hope your studies are progressing well.

Regards,
The Team at TSFX.