



FINISHING LINE

Student Activity Pack

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Activity 1: Removing Exam Blind Spots

In the *Finishing Line* seminar, your presenter showed you how to use the Bulletproof Booklet to find your weakness areas. While everything in the syllabus is examinable, top students spend the bulk of their exam preparation on identifying areas of weakness, and then studying those areas. Below are the 4 steps required:

Step 1 – Do a practice exam or a set of revision questions

The best way to determine your weakness areas is to test yourself. By doing a past exam paper, you give yourself the opportunity to be completely objective and honest in working out your weaknesses. You can also use past assessments that you have completed throughout the year and had graded by your teacher.

Step 2 – Mark the paper or get it marked by a teacher

Depending on where you sourced your questions/exam from, you should use the provided solutions to grade your paper. If solutions are not available, submit the exam to your teacher so that he or she may grade it and return it to you. During this class you will likely be using your past assessments that have already been marked.

Step 3 – Fill out the Bulletproof Booklet

Once you have your exam back from your teacher, or once you have finished grading it – you need to write down all your incorrect responses in your bulletproof booklet. Below is an example of how a student filled out the booklet for Biology:

Exam	Question	Topic	Why was it wrong?	Correct Answer
Biology 2015	Fossil remains found in the Eastern half of Africa are 3-4 million years old. The fossil remains: (a) Are descendants of the <i>Homo erectus</i> (b) Represent the oldest evidence found of primates (c) Show early evidence that hominins were bipedal (d) Represent the earliest examples of the hominoid family	Hominin evolution	Confused the term 'hominin' with 'hominoid'.	(c)
English 2015	"Carver's stories confront the reader with the emptiness of everyday life." Do you agree? (<i>Will you please be quiet please?</i> , by Raymond Carver)	Text response	Lost marks due to lack of examples. Made arguments in the essay, but didn't back them up with good examples.	Example 1: Example 2: Example 3: "Action: Look for 3 key examples in the short stories and include."
Legal 2015	Explain 1 reason why the County Court may not be bound by a decision of the Supreme Court.	Court Hierarchy	Said that the Supreme Court was a lower court. Need to revise the actual hierarchy again and find the limits.	- If precedent in Supreme Court was reversed - Overruled precedent - Abrogation by parliament

Step 4 – Find patterns and fix them

This is the most important part of the process. Once you have filled out your booklet, you should look for patterns in the 'topic' or 'why was it wrong' columns. Do the same topics or reasons for losing marks keep coming up? If so, this is a sign that you need to go and revise these areas. Once you've gone back and revised those areas, do more practice exam papers so that you can continue to improve. The Bulletproof Booklet also serves as a great set of notes to revise in the days leading up to your exam.

Exam	Question	Topic	Why was it wrong?	Correct Answer

Some potential reasons for 'why was it wrong':

1. Didn't know the answer
2. Imprecise definition (missed key term)
3. Didn't follow the command verb (e.g. Description instead of analysis)
4. Didn't provide example
5. Didn't show workings out
6. Mislabelled diagram

Activity 2 – Exam Study Partners

In the *Finishing Line* seminar, your presenter discussed the ‘Rule of 5’ and how you could use exam study groups to implement it. In this activity you will:

Step 1: Complete a past exam paper

Step 2: Get into pairs

Step 3: Mark another student’s paper using the examiner’s report/provided solutions

Step 4: Get your paper back from the other student and discuss the answers as a group

Step 5: Write 1 exam question that *didn’t* appear on the exam

Step 6: Attempt the question written by your partner

Step 7: Discuss the answers to the new questions

Why do it?

Marking exam papers:

Not only will you get familiar with the marking criteria, which will help you give the examiner what they want in the exam, when marking a friend’s exam paper, you will see common mistakes that you would want to avoid allowing you to make a mental note, “never to do that.” In the case of Maths, it is a great way to see how much ‘working’ you need to put into an answer to get top marks. It also tests your understanding as you walk through your friend’s answer to make sure that it is correct.

Writing an exam:

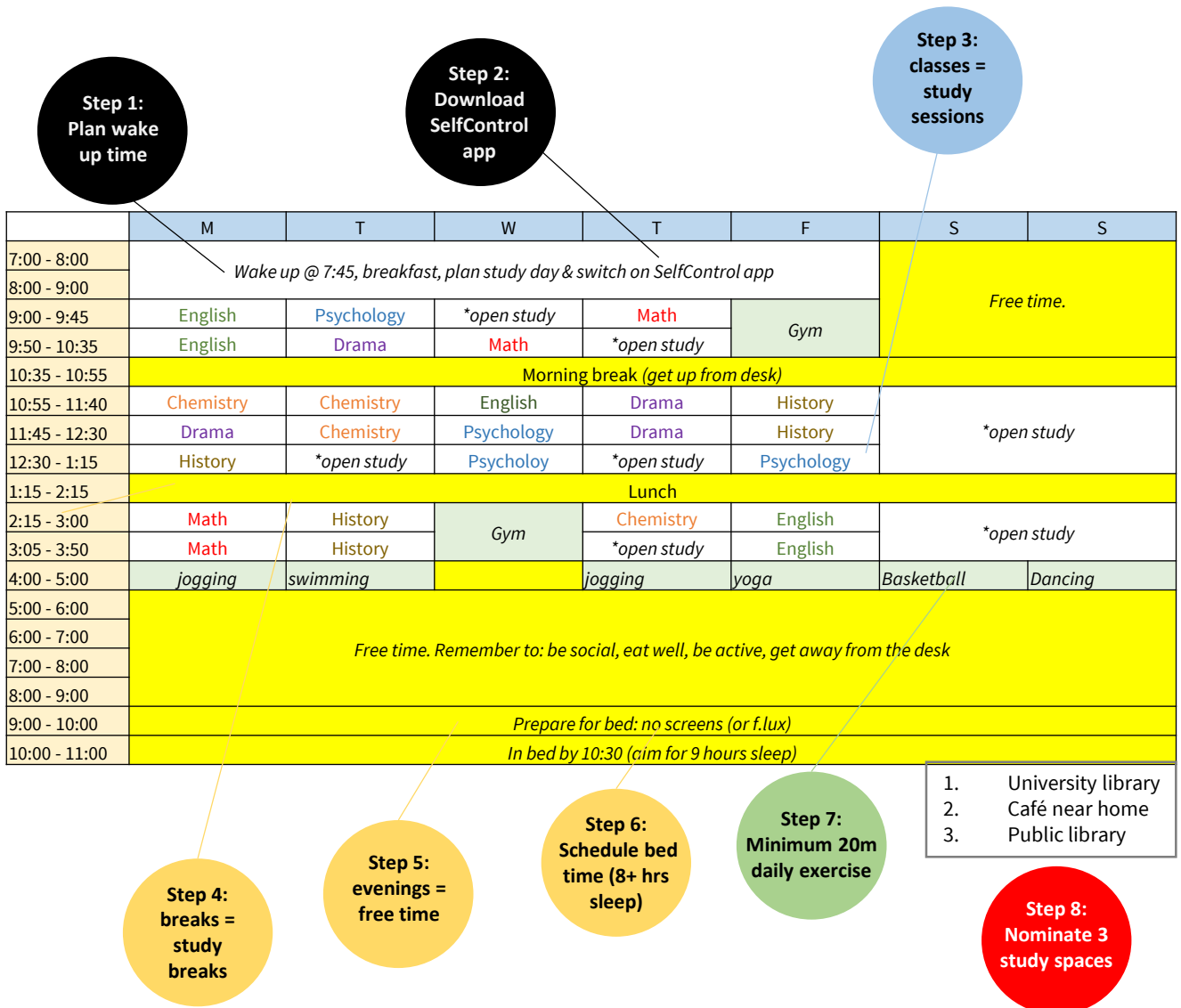
Writing an exam is a great way of actually using the information from a different perspective. Could you create an exam question on each of the topics for your subjects? To write a proper exam question means you normally need to go through past papers and look at how markers ask questions. You begin to break down what the examiner is doing and you begin to think like an examiner. This gives you insight into what the examiner is looking for, and as a result, helps you actually develop the type of answer that an examiner wants.

Talking about the questions/topics:

Once you have graded your friend’s paper, you should discuss the paper and talk about why you deducted marks. This is a great way to learn. By debating and talking about the issues, it forces you to express the information in everyday, simple terms. This will significantly boost your understanding and your ability to express yourself in the exam.

Activity 3: Creating an exam study schedule

In the *Finishing Line* seminar, your presenter discussed the best way to use study leave/holidays in the lead up to exams. This involved creating a routine by mirroring the school week. Below is an example of a study schedule that was created by a student.



Using your own timetable as a template, fill in the empty chart on the following page or use an online calendar such as Google Calendar to schedule your days.

Activity 4 – Mindfulness Techniques

In the *Finishing Line* seminar, your presenter introduced you to the Body Scan technique. This can be a very useful way of calming the mind after a long day of studying. In this session we try a breathing meditation for 5 minutes. Fill out the questions below to debrief the activity.

Using '10' to fully agree and '1' to fully disagree, rate your experience:

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| 1. I am feeling more relaxed after the activity: | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 2. I found it difficult to focus during the activity: | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 3. I was feeling sleepy during the activity: | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 4. I am interested in trying this again: | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 5. I would recommend this to others: | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |

I am most likely to use meditation techniques...

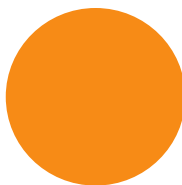
- When I get home from school
- Before a study session
- At the end of a study session
- Before bed to clear my mind
- When I'm feeling stressed

Record anything else relevant to the experience:

For more information and free 'learn-to-meditate' programs, check out:



elevateeducation.com



headspace.com



1giantmind.org



Activity 5 – 3 Steps to dealing with stress



Step 1: See the stress warning signs

The first step in dealing with stress is to **acknowledge** that you are stressed. It goes without saying that we need to first be aware that we have an issue before we can solve it. The best way to quickly identify that we are stressed is to be aware of the symptoms of stress. Below is a list of the symptoms of stress. Tick the boxes of the symptoms that you have experienced in the last 3 weeks:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Irritable/moody | <input type="checkbox"/> Upset stomach | <input type="checkbox"/> Anxious/worried |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hyperventilating | <input type="checkbox"/> Sadness | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling tired |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Headaches | <input type="checkbox"/> Sore muscles | <input type="checkbox"/> Can't focus |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of appetite | <input type="checkbox"/> Can't sleep | <input type="checkbox"/> No motivation |
| Other | | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | |



Step Identify the event /trigger

Once we have recognised that we are feeling stressed, the next step is to clearly identify and name the cause of the stress. Unless we know what is causing the stress, it is difficult to find solutions to it! Below are some common causes of stress – tick any of the causes you have experienced in the last 3 weeks.

- Feeling overwhelmed by the workload and that you can't get through it all.
- Feeling like you're running out of time to exams and won't be prepared.
- Getting feedback showing that you don't understand a topic and feeling like you can't "get it".
- Feeling under pressure to get good grades.
-
-

Activity 5 – continued



Step 3: Pick a response

Now that we have identified the symptoms of stress and their causes, we can now begin to look for appropriate solutions. Choose an option below that would best align with and solve the problem you identified in Step 2.

Option B: Calm the mind

Another very simple technique involves using mindfulness techniques to calm the mind. Instead of ruminating on negative thoughts, mindfulness practices allow us to shift our focus to the present moment and simplify some of the negative thoughts that, if left alone, can spiral out of control. Use the apps mentioned above!

Option A: Channel stress

The most practical way to deal with stress is to use it. In order to channel stress we need to first, identify the cause (as shown in step 2). We then need to create a 3 step action plan: 3 simple actions that can be taken on the day to alleviate the stress. For example:

Cause = Got Trigonometry answer wrong and feel like I just don't "get it".

Actions

- 1 = Call a friend who is doing well and ask for advice
- 2 = Revise Trig section in text book
- 3 = Get a short-term tutor and revise issue topic.

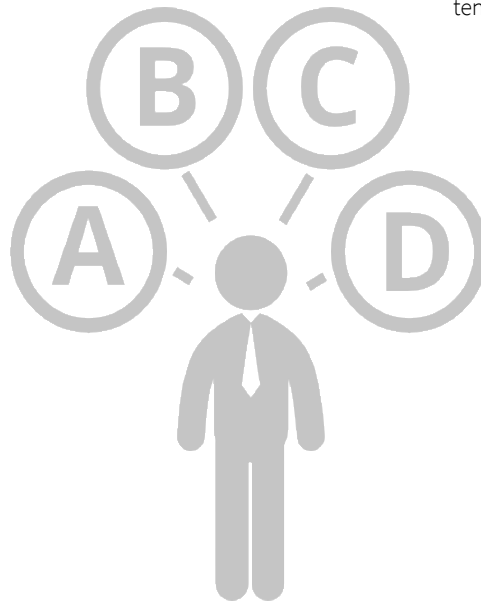
By creating 3 simple actions that can be achieved, **on the day**, we are choosing to take control of the situation.

Option C: Move the body

Stress is not only mental – it's physical too! One of the best ways to reduce stress is to get up from your desk and go and do 30 minutes of exercise outdoors. It will help release endorphins, oxygenate your blood and release tension.

Option D: Talk it out

Sometimes it can be difficult to solve a problem on your own. Simply talking it through with a parent or friend can help bring some perspective and help give you guidance.



The don'ts of stress management:

There are many *ineffective* ways of dealing with stress, including:

- **Procrastination:** Occupying yourself with menial tasks or 'fun' things to distract yourself.
- **Ignoring stress:** "Carrying on" when stress is at a level that it is impeding your ability to concentrate.
- **Avoidance behaviour:** Putting the work off to try avoid the stress that comes with it.
- **Panic:** Getting yourself worked up but not trying to find a solution.
- **Staying silent:** If you are experiencing severe stress, don't keep it in! Talk to a parent, teacher or medical professional.