Student exercises based on Elevate Education’s "Study Sensei" seminar.

For more information contact Elevate Education on 1300 667 945.
Who is Elevate?

- Originally an Australian company, Elevate works with over 800 schools and 80,000 students every year across the UK and Australia.

- Founded in 2001, Elevate has spent more than 10 years benchmarking the habits of the country’s top students. This research has identified 17 areas where the habits and study processes of the top students differ from middle and lower performing students. Elevate seminars introduce students to these 17 ‘top student’ skills.

- Elevate’s research has been condensed into the *Science of Student Success*, a study guide for senior school students which has now sold over 15,000 copies.

What Makes Elevate Different?

- **Young presenters students can relate to:** Elevate uses recent university graduates that have faced and aced the final years of school themselves. By using presenters that students can relate to, schools have found the impact of the study skills message is increased. Young presenters are perceived as being credible as they have recently gone through the experience themselves.

- **Practical study skills students can use:** Most study skills programmes fail because they are dense on theory but lack the kind of practical skills that students can use straight away. All of Elevate’s material focuses on practical study skills modelled from the top students.

- **Short, high impact sessions:** Research shows that as the length of a study skills programme increases, student implementation tends to decrease. Students are left with an overwhelming list of ‘52 skills’ which is so long that students don’t know where to begin. Elevate focuses on running high impact sessions. These short, sharp sessions maximise student retention rates and isolate a handful of skills to implement immediately, encouraging student skill adoption.

- **More than a 1-off:** Most study skills programmes are ultimately flawed in that teachers are not provided with materials to follow-up and reinforce the skills covered in the programme. Study skills, like skills of any description, are developed through repetition, practice and review. This teacher resource is designed to be used in conjunction with the *Study Sensei Student Implementation Guide* to reinforce the skills covered in the session.

**Teacher Resource:** This teacher resource is structured to provide an explanation of the research behind each skill covered in the seminar, how the students should be implementing each skill, and finally a case study of how this can be reinforced in the classroom.

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The Study Sensei Seminar

The Study Sensei seminar addresses the question ‘what is study?’ This seminar breaks down the study techniques of the top students, providing students with a roadmap for what work they need to be doing across the year and how to get it done.

Skill 1: Use your syllabus

Research: Top performing students use their syllabus to structure their revision across the year, and then as a checklist before exams. The majority of students will walk into an exam with gaps in their knowledge where they simply haven’t revised content. The syllabus provides students with a framework to focus their revision and it gives them confidence that if they have revised every syllabus bullet point they will have covered every topic that could come up in an exam.

Implementation: Students should know which exam board each of their subjects uses and familiarise themselves with the language specific to that subject area. They should ensure that in each subject they have made a set of effective revision notes on every syllabus bullet point.

Teaching Case Study: A lot of the schools we work with encourage their students to use a ‘traffic light system’ with their syllabus. Each time a student finishes their notes/practical work on a certain topic they should tick that bullet point off on their actual syllabus. If they find a topic difficult they should put a red tick, if they find a topic moderate an orange/yellow tick, and if they find a topic easy, a green tick. This gives students an instant snapshot of the topics where they need to spend most of their time. Page 3 & 4 of the Study Sensei Student Implementation Guide contains follow-up activities for students to complete relating to the syllabus.

Skill 2: Take notes during term

Research: On average students will spend between 2-3 weeks revising for exams. Lower and middle performing students will generally spend the majority of this time on rote-learning activities such as reading their textbook, reading over class notes or writing and re-writing summaries. Top performing students finish their exam summary notes as they go during term which frees up time before an exam to spend on ‘high end gains’ like practice papers.

Implementation: Students should try to keep up to date with their notes and at the end of every topic or chapter consolidate what they learned into an organised set of notes.

Teaching Case Study: Conducting book scrutinies or having students hand in their notes periodically will encourage them to work consistently across the year. On page 5 of the Study Sensei Student Implementation Guide are follow-up activities relating to this point.

Skill 3: Use a folder for every subject

Research: Many of the highest performing students we work with use folders rather than exercise books to file their notes. Students memorise information most effectively using a system called ‘chunking’ where similar information is grouped together. The problem with using exercise books is students have information scattered in different parts of their books, and before an exam are forced to either flip back and forth in their books or to re-write their notes (especially the perfectionists!).

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**Implementation:** Students should have a folder for every subject with their syllabus as their cover sheet. Ideally they will divide their folder in sections based on the syllabus topics and when they make notes or receive handouts file them in the relevant section of their folder.

**Teaching Case Study:** Teachers should make sure that the students in their class have a folder for that subject and are organising their notes in topic areas as they go during term. On page 6 of the *Study Sensei Student Implementation Guide* are follow-up activities relating to this point.

**Skill 4: Take effective notes**

**Research:** The most common note-taking technique we see used by students is to write everything down on the page in full sentences in black pen. The problem many students then have is firstly processing such a large amount of information, and then establishing what the most important information actually is. The top students reduce the amount of words in their notes by 80% to just focus on the key words or ‘memory pegs’.

**Implementation:** We encourage students to start by drawing a vertical line down the middle of the page to act as a barrier and to prevent students writing in lengthy full sentences that blur together. Students should focus their notes solely on ‘trigger words’; that is the key information and ideas that trigger more information about that topic. They should use a colour-coding system to facilitate visual processing and to ensure that key words and phrases stand out.

**Teaching Case Study:** One school we work with gets students to hand in their notes to be marked before an exam. They then highlight to students on a graph the correlation between how effective a students’ notes were and their performance in that exam. On page 7 of the *Study Sensei Student Implementation Guide* is a note-taking activity for students to go through focusing on how to take effective notes.

**Skill 5: Use a system of review**

**Research:** The first thing most students do after writing notes is to walk off and have a break. Research shows that just by reading over what you have just written your memory retention can increase by 80%.

**Implementation:** Every time students write information down in class or take notes they should read what they have just written down straight away.

**Teaching Case Study:** A lot of the teachers we work with give the students a minute or two at the start of every lesson to scan over the notes they made in the last lesson. This way the information is constantly being reviewed and reinforced which helps it to become entrenched in the students’ memories. On page 9 of the *Study Sensei Student Implementation Guide* is a tip for students relating to this point.

**Skill 6: Use mindmapping**

**Research:** When you ask a group of students who has heard of mindmapping every hand goes up. Usually when you ask them who actually uses this technique, in any given room it will be between 10-20%. However mindmapping is one of the most effective conceptual learning tools for students to process information.

**Implementation:** Students should turn their notes into mindmaps and use pictures and images as memory pegs. At the end of a chapter or topic they should try to summarise the key information into an A4 mindmap. They should start by writing the main heading or topic.
in the middle of the page, then have sub-topics coming off the centre and finally their trigger words as branches off the sub-topics.

**Teaching Case Study:** Students should make their notes visual and stick them up around their room or somewhere they can be easily seen. Students should practice drawing links between different content areas, and practice the 'recall' element of revision by trying to re-draw their mindmap from memory. On page 10 of the *Study Sensei Student Implementation Guide* is an example of a mindmap and a follow-up activity on mindmaps.

**Skill 7: Do practice papers & practice questions**

**Research:** We found the biggest difference between top performing students and lower performing students to be the number of practice questions and past papers they did. Whilst the majority of students are spending time on rote-learning techniques before exams with an emphasis on 'do I know it or not?', the top performing students are far more focused on the application of their knowledge. Practice papers give students an opportunity to practice applying knowledge in different ways, and also allows them to see what they don’t know.

**Implementation:** Students should be encouraged to do as much practice as possible to consolidate the skills and information obtained. The primary reasons we found in our research that the majority of students don’t do enough practice is the fear of making mistakes and the idea of doing a 2 hour exam under exam conditions being overwhelming. To overcome this, students should be encouraged to wait until they have covered a topic before doing practice questions. Past papers should be broken down into sections and students could even start them with their notes open next to them and then wean themselves off their notes the closer they get to an exam.

**Teaching Case Study:** The most crucial part of the process of practice is to get specific feedback as to where improvements can be made. As well as teachers marking 20 practice papers (and our aim isn’t to create more work for teachers!) this could be done through setting students the task of marking their own papers with the marking matrix, or marking other students’ papers. On page 11 & 12 of the *Study Sensei Student Implementation Guide* are tips for how students should approach practice papers.

**Skill 8: Independent Learning:**

**Research:** Our aim at Elevate isn’t to turn students into exam machines. One of the greatest skill students can learn at school is the ability to think independently and to become confident in their own learning style. Invariably the students who do the best at school are the ones who have gone beyond the syllabus and beyond the information given to them in order to stand out.

**Implementation:** Students should be proactive and go above and beyond what is simply given to them in the classroom. This may be through asking for extra readings around the topic, doing more practice questions or finding unique information and case studies.

**Teaching Case Study:** Sometimes not giving the students the answer is the best way for them to learn! Using a ‘hat draw’ system is a really effective way to generate discussion and debate and to ensure everyone in the class is engaged. Instead of asking students to volunteer if they know the answer, this system encourages students to be drawn at random to give their opinion or to answer a question. From the second class onwards you will never have a student come to class unprepared if they know they might be put on the spot!