

STUDY SMART NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2023, THIRD NEWSLETTER

INTRODUCTION TO OUR PROJECT

Hello! We are Study Smart, and we're here to help you with your studying needs. This is the third newsletter, and all of our newsletters will contain interviews with high-scoring students from Year 12 and Year 13 on how to pass your IGCSEs while obtaining high-scoring marks across all subjects. We provide a student's perspective on the course and also include studying tips proven to help students do the best they possibly can. Additionally, the newsletters will answer any questions submitted to the google form on our website.

The Study Smart team (Eunice, Victoria, Katie, Harrison, Audrey, Angelica & Chloe)

For any more information or if you have any questions, please feel free to contact Eunice Wong (12D) at eunice.wong@online.island.edu.hk!



-INTERVIEW- BIOLOGY

This newsletter will focus on Biology, a subject that a lot of IGCSE students take! We conducted an interview with Ellie Ham (12R) and asked her questions about her journey in IGCSE Biology. Ellie achieved a level 9 in Biology.

Below is our interview, hope it will help with your IGCSE Biology revision!

-INTERVIEW! (1/3)-

Q: WHAT DO YOU THINK STUDENTS SHOULD EXPECT GOING INTO THIS COURSE/SUBJECT?

There's actually quite a bit of theory/content that covers a lot of concepts that you'll need to know and memorise. There are also a lot of questions about data in the exams, which you'll need to explain, analyse and then apply scientific theory to. Biology is mostly about memorising theory and doing practice questions to familiarise yourself with the mark scheme.



Q: WHEN DID YOU START TO STUDY FOR THE SUBJECT BEFORE THE FINAL EXAM IN MAY/JUNE?

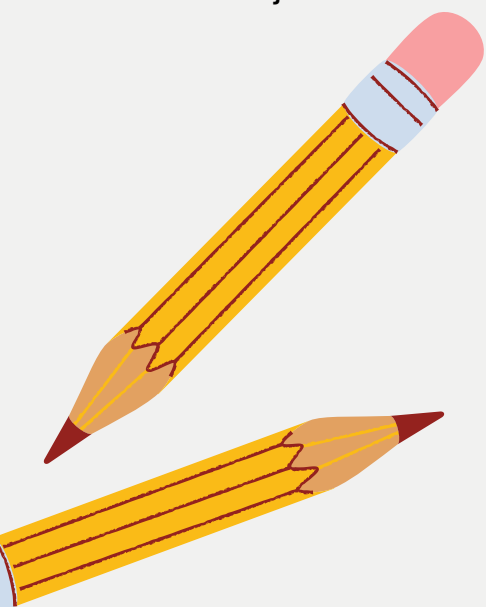
I started studying for the final exam around April, but I already had a good understanding of the individual topics in advance since I did a lot of practice papers beforehand for each unit test. When it came to studying for the final exam, it was mainly just refreshing my knowledge. I would've started earlier, but I was focusing on the other subjects that I wasn't as confident in.

Q: DID YOU USE ANY SPECIFIC WEBSITES OR RESOURCES WHEN STUDYING FOR THE EXAM?

I used past papers I found on 'physicsandmathstutor.com', my notes I took over the course year and the textbook. The notes and textbooks had a lot of details about the topics that were going to be covered in the exam. The past papers helped me gain a better understanding of the mark scheme and how my answers should be structured in order to gain the maximum marks.

Q: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE FOR STUDYING THIS SUBJECT?

PAST PAPERS!!! Past papers were really useful in helping me strengthen my knowledge, as well as find out what I needed to go over again. Also, this is a bit hard because there's so much content, but having a good method to memorise everything from the syllabus statements can really help with getting more marks.



- INTERVIEW! (2/3)-

Q: HOW DID YOU EFFECTIVELY MANAGE YOUR TIME BETWEEN STUDYING FOR THIS SUBJECT AND OTHER SUBJECTS?

I made a studying timetable to help keep me on track during exam leave, but I didn't really follow it since subjects I found harder took precedence. I did end up having to cram a bit a week or two before the exam which I don't recommend at all since it's really stressful and not the most efficient way to study.

Q: WHAT DID YOU FIND MOST ENJOYABLE AND CHALLENGING ABOUT THIS SUBJECT?

I enjoyed most of the topics, apart from the plants topic, I honestly didn't like the way the questions were structured. I also found the data-based questions to be the most challenging, as I sometimes failed to catch details and would lose some marks. For other students, they might find the amount of content they need to remember to be quite difficult, but that wasn't really the case for me.



Q: WOULD YOU CONSIDER THIS SUBJECT TO BE EASIER OR MORE DIFFICULT?

Compared to my other subjects, I think Biology was quite easy. Although there was a lot of content covered, I practised a lot throughout the course from revising for unit tests and was very familiar with the subject.

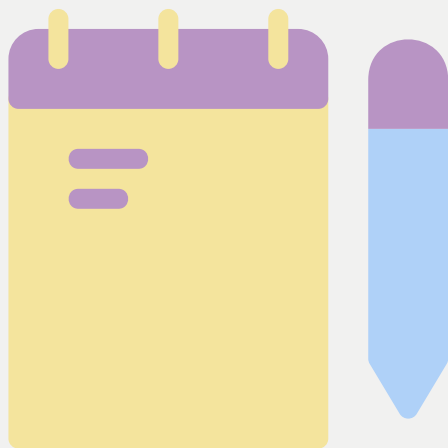
Q: ARE YOU STILL TAKING THIS SUBJECT IN IB? WHY OR WHY NOT? (GOOD GRADE/CAREER/OTHER)

Yes, I do. I currently take HL biology, since I wish to pursue pharmaceutical science in university. This is a necessary subject to get into the course, and I also enjoy this subject a lot.

-INTERVIEW! (3/3)-

Q: WHAT IS YOUR GO-TO STUDY METHOD FOR THIS SUBJECT? (E.G. POMODORO)

My go-to study method for this subject is doing past paper questions. They help me gain a much better understanding of the type of questions that will be asked in the final exam and allows me to get the maximum amount of marks needed in my answers.

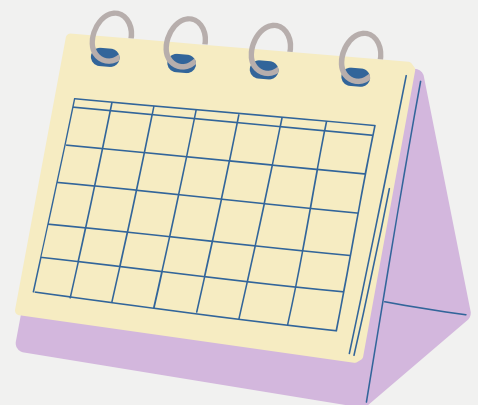


Q: WHAT IS YOUR GO-TO NOTE-TAKING METHOD? (E.G. CORNELL NOTES)

In terms of making good revision notes, I write down the syllabus statements and then note down all the relevant information according to what the statement requires. This allows me to memorise all the relevant information the exam board might put in the exam.

Q: HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU SPEND STUDYING PER DAY OR PER WEEK?

Since I like having a fixed routine/system, I study for an hour and a half, take a 15-minute break, and then repeat the cycle.



- Q & A -

Q: IF A STUDENT IS UNSURE ABOUT WHICH PATH THEY WANT TO TAKE IN THE FUTURE, WHAT SUBJECTS SHOULD THEY CHOOSE FOR THE IGCSES?

If you're unsure what to do for university or what career you want to pursue, just choose your IGCSE subjects based on what you enjoy currently. If you want to be safer with your choices, it's best to choose a wide range of subjects, so try to include some sciences and humanities in your choices. It is usual for students to select the subjects they are best at and that they enjoy or show interest in as their HL subjects. You can take pretty much any subject at SL, even if you've never taken it before.

Q: ARE THERE ANY EXAMS IN Y10 OR DO WE DO ALL THE EXAMS NEXT YEAR?

Other than the English first and second language exams, there will be no final exams for any other subject. However, there will be plenty of unit tests for most subjects, so you will be able to familiarise yourself with concepts and how questions are asked in the real thing. These tests will also help teachers gain a better understanding of certain areas you're struggling with, so they can help you do better in your final exams in Year 11. At the end of the year, there will be a practice mock exam, where you will be tested on all units learned over the year. This is also a good opportunity to revise areas where you're not so sure about, as well as get a feel for what the real exam will be like



Q: DO ALL EXAMS REQUIRE WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS OR IS IT SIMILAR TO YEAR 7-8 ASSESSMENTS WHERE IT CAN BE A PROJECT

Typically, most courses in IGCSE will have at least one written exam (most have two). However, many courses do have a coursework aspect that will be accounted for in your final grade, such as Global Perspectives. It has a team project and an IRR essay you need to complete, worth 35% and 30% respectively. The grades you receive in the coursework will be added to your grade in your final exam (worth 35%), which will then determine your final grade. Some subjects do not have any exams requiring written answers such as art and theatre. Instead, your grade will be determined by your overall coursework and a final non-written examination. Finally, your grade in subjects like mathematics and sciences will be determined solely through the final written exams.

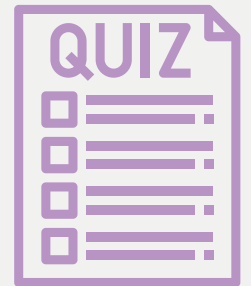
Q: HOW WOULD YOU RECOMMEND STUDYING FOR EXAMS QUICKLY. IN CASE THEE EXAMS ARE PACKED IN ONE WEEK

In general, you should've started studying on and off for a few months before the exams even start, as there is a lot of content you'll need to remember. The first two weeks of your exams will be the most packed, with up to 5-6 exams in a week. You should be using your study leave before this period to revise, make notes, practice and familiarise yourself with all the content in these subjects (you'll receive an exam timetable so you'll know which subjects are first). It's recommended that you make detailed revision notes for each subject, so you can have a quick look at them and refresh your memory of everything that you've revised a few days before the exam.

STUDY METHOD: RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

Retrieval practice is a learning strategy and study method that encourages students to engage with the material in an active way, rather than passively. Flashcards are a great way of practising retrieval, and when paired with past papers, they make an efficient way of studying smarter. (These work better with subjects that require memory, such as sciences or languages.)

1. WORK ON A PAST PAPER ON WHATEVER SUBJECT. WHILE YOU WORK ON THE PAPER, KEEP NOTE OF ALL THE QUESTIONS YOU ARE UNABLE TO SOLVE (QUIZLET IS GREAT FOR CREATING FLASHCARDS EASILY ACCESSIBLE ON YOUR PHONE). PUT THESE QUESTIONS ON ONE SIDE OF THE FLASHCARD.



2. LOOK AT THE MARK SCHEME FOR YOUR PAPER. NOTE DOWN ALL THE KEY TERMS REQUIRED IN THE ANSWER, AS THESE WILL BE ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW. THE GAPS CAN BE FILLED IN WITH CONTEXT SURROUNDING THESE KEY TERMS. PUT THESE TERMS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FLASHCARDS.

3. REVISE! USING FLASHCARDS HAS BEEN PROVEN TO BE A FAR MORE EFFECTIVE FORM OF STUDYING THAN JUST STARING AT YOUR NOTES, AS THEY FORCE YOU TO RETRIEVE INFORMATION FROM YOUR BRAIN TO REMEMBER ANSWERS INSTEAD OF BLANKLY READING.



A QUICK TIP: DON'T DEDICATE TIME FROM YOUR DAY TO STUDY THESE FLASHCARDS – YOU'LL GET BORED. INCORPORATE THEM INTO YOUR DAILY ROUTINE, WHETHER IT'S ON THE BUS, OR THE TRAIN, OR WHILE YOU'RE EATING BREAKFAST. IT DOESN'T TAKE A LONG TIME AND TRAINS YOUR BRAIN TO REMEMBER IMPORTANT DETAILS :)