



SELF STUDY GUIDE



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Introduction

Dear Students,

Welcome to the Dublin International Study Centre (DISC), DISC staff have come together to create this self-study guide for you to help you build effective study skills, improve your time management, enhance your research skills, and develop critical thinking. All of these study skills are essential for success in your foundation year programme and your future studies.

Participating in an International Foundation Year (IFY) programme is a great opportunity to develop the academic and personal skills needed for university-level studies. Developing strong independent learning skills, especially in academic writing and presentations will help you succeed!

Time and Management Organisation

a) Create a Study Schedule

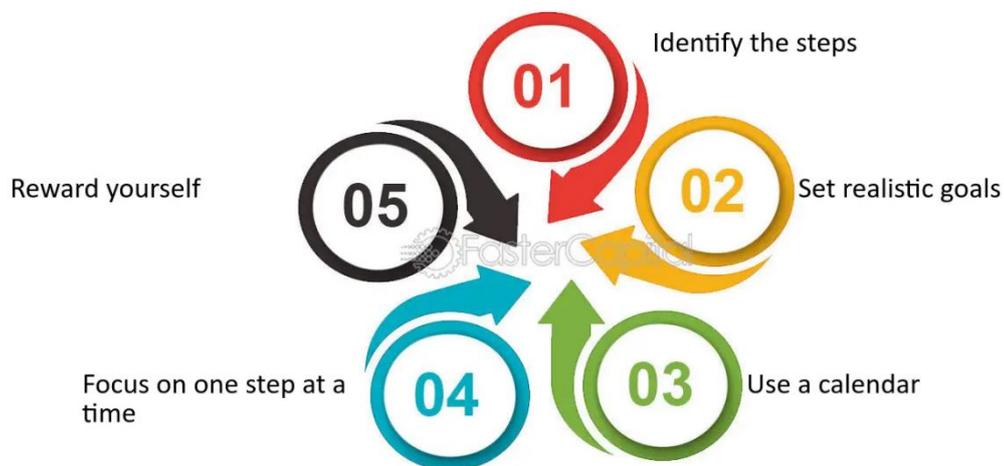
- Use a planner or digital calendar to track deadlines and assignments.
- Set specific study goals for each task.
- Set aside specific times for studying, revision, and coursework.
- Balance academic work with breaks to stay productive and avoid burnout(a state of emotional, physical and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged or excessive stress, often leading to feelings of being overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet constant demands).
- Use digital planners or apps like Google Calendar or Notion to track progress.



b) Prioritise Tasks

- Use the Eisenhower Matrix (urgent vs important) to manage workload.
- Break down larger tasks into smaller, manageable steps.
- Review study material regularly rather than rushing to complete before deadlines.
- Start early to avoid last-minute stress.

Breaking Down Large Tasks



3/ Breaking Down Tasks

c) Avoid Procrastination (the act of delaying or postponing tasks or decisions)

- Set short-term goals with rewards for completion.
- Use the Pomodoro Technique (25 minutes of study, 5-minute breaks).

- Removes distractions (put your phone on silent, use website blockers).



4/ The Pomodoro Technique

Mastering the Harvard Referencing System

a) Why is Referencing so important?

- It gives credit to original authors.

- It avoids plagiarism.
- It demonstrates academic integrity.

b) Harvard Referencing Basics

In-Text Citation

- Author's surname, year of publication, e.g. (Smith, 2000)
- Page numbers must be included for direct quotes from a text. E.g (Smith, 2000, p.20). Page numbers can be included for paraphrased information but is not required.

Bibliography List Format

- At the end of your document, list all sources alphabetically.

The general structure for different sources:

Source Type	Format	Example
Book	Author(s) (Year) Title. Edition (if applicable). Place of Publication: Publisher.	Smith, J.(2020) <i>Academic Writing Skills</i> . 2 nd ed. London: Oxford University Press.
Journal Article	Author(s) (Year) 'Title of Article', Journal Name, Volume (Issue), Page Range.	Brown, L. (2021) 'Critical Thinking in Higher Education', <i>Journal of Learning</i> , 34(2), pp. 45-60.
Website	Author(s) (Year) Title of Webpage. Available at: URL (Accessed: Date).	University of Oxford (2022) <i>How to Reference Correctly</i> . Available at: www.oxfor.ac.uk/referencing (Accessed: 5 th March, 2025).

c) Referencing Tools

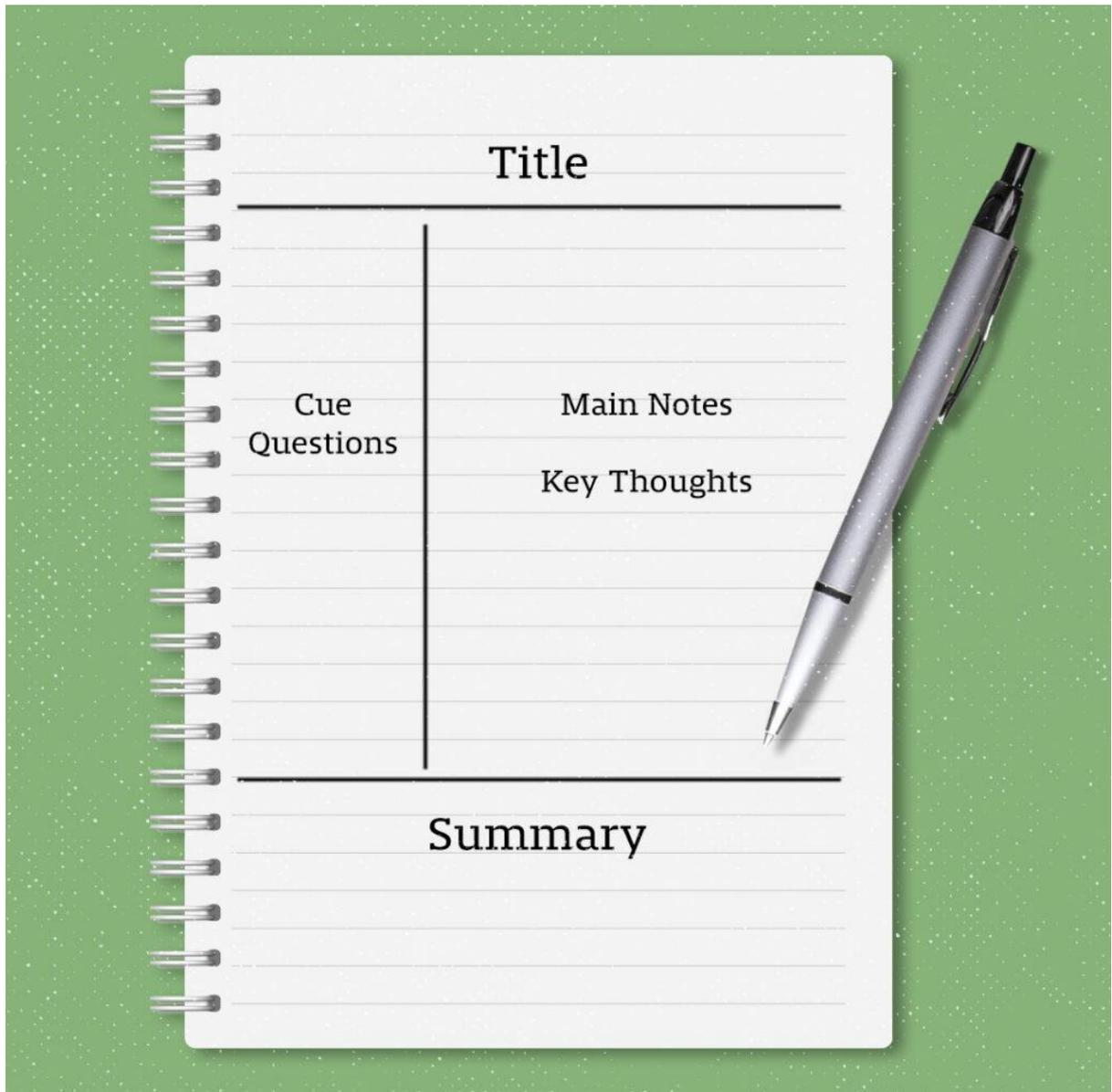
- **Cite This For Me**
- **Zotero**
- **Mendeley**

Use these tools to generate citations automatically but always check for accuracy.

Effective Note-Taking

a) Choose the Right Method

- **Cornell Method:** Divide notes into key points, details, and a summary.
- **Mind Mapping:** Visualise ideas and connections for better understanding.
- **Outline Method:** Use bullet points and subheadings to structure notes.



5/ The Cornell Method



6/ Mind Mapping

Outline Method

Heading:

1. Main Topics

a. Sub Topics

- Points under the subtopic
- More points
- Yet more

b. Sub Topics 2

2. Another Main Topic

a. With one Sub Topic

3. ETC

MAKE SURE THAT YOUR NOTES ARE WELL CATERGORISED AND ORGANISED.

USE INDENTATION TO KEEP THINGS CLEAR.

DEVELOP YOUR OWN SYSTEM AND STICK TO IT.

b) Active Note-Taking

- Summarise key points in your own words.
- Use abbreviations and symbols for faster writing.
- Highlight or underline essential information.

Common English Abbreviations

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr. = Doctor• Mr. = Mister• Mrs. = Misses• Ms. = Miss• Ave. = Avenue• Blvd. = Boulevard• Dr. = Drive• Ln. = Lane• Rd. = Road• E = East• N = North• NE = North East• NW = North West• S = South• SE = South East• SW = South West• W = West• BA = Bachelor of Arts• BS = Bachelor of Science• MA = Master of Arts• MBA = Master of Business Administration• MFA = Master of Fine Arts• Asst. = Assistant• Corp. = Corporation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ltd = Limited• Inc. = Incorporated• VP = Vice President• PA = Personal Assistant• brb = be right back• lol = laugh out loud• np = no problem• ty = thank you• yw = you're welcome• sry = sorry• ofc = of course• IMO = in my opinion• tbh = to be honest• FYI = for your information• jk = joking• bro = brother• bros = brothers• sis = sister• etc. = etcetera• e.g. = example gratia• i.e. = id est (that is)• n.b = nota bene (take note)• P.S. = post scriptum (written after)• et al. = et alia (and others)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• C.V. = curriculum vitae• fig. = figure• ft. = feet• hr. = hour• min = minute• sq. = square• St. = street• yd. = yard• tbs. = tablespoon• tbsp. = tablespoon• n/a = not applicable• a.m. = ante meridiem (before noon)• p.m. = post meridiem (after noon)• GMT = Greenwich Mean Time• PST = Pacific Standard Time• EST = Eastern Standard Time• CST = Central Standard Time• approx. = approximately• appt = appointment• no = number• tel. = telephone• temp = temporary• vet = veterinarian
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www.Games4esl.com

Oral Language and Reading	My Thoughts	Instructor - Lecture Notes 10/30
<p>Children's oral language abilities are interwoven with learning to read and write. The oral language children acquire as preschoolers helps them to connect words and sounds with print. Throughout the school years, oral language is both a means whereby children learn about reading and a goal of reading instruction.</p> <p>Children come to school with a great deal of knowledge about their oral language. They know between 3000 and 5000 words which they comprehend aurally and can order into grammatically correct sentences to communicate. They have even learned a lot about the rules that govern conversation: Listen to others when they speak, questions deserve answers, and commands deserve a response of some sort (even a refusal is a linguistically appropriate response). Most importantly, oral language—via conversations with parents, preschool teachers, and peers—is the primary tool they use to discover how their world works. The critical task for children entering school is to learn how to turn inward and reflect on ways they use their language to read and write.</p> <p>Oral language serves two important roles in literacy learning. First, it provides the foundation for reading and writing long before formal instruction begins. Young children's proficiency in their oral language—their sense of words and sentences, sensitivity to the sound system, and understanding of the meanings of words—influences their early attempts to read and write. Oral language provides new information about written</p>	<p>Oral language is the foundations on which reading is built, and helps children develop as readers.</p> <p>I never thought about it but there are rules we use.</p> <p>Linguistics - the scientific study of language and its structure, including the study of morphology, syntax, phonetics, and semantics. So teaching students to think about word choice and HOW to express themselves is important.</p> <p>Just like any language, you must have a level of comfort with speaking and listening first.</p>	<p>Students from lower SES often come to school without this basic knowledge.</p> <p>Unless they are special needs or ELL and then this may not be true</p> <p>Dr. G mentioned this in class</p> 

9/ Highlighting

c) Review and Revise Notes

- Go over your notes regularly, not just before exams.
- Discuss topics with classmates to reinforce learning.
- Use flashcards or quizzes to test yourself.

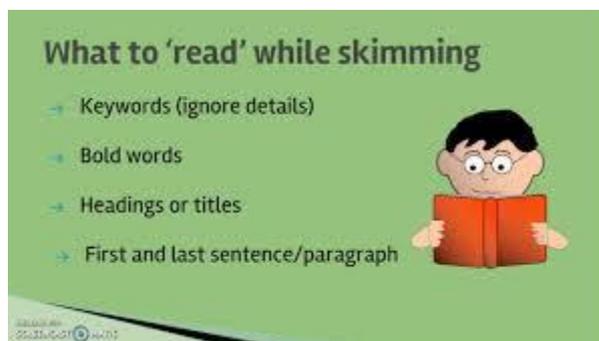


10/ Flashcards

Reading and Research Skills

a) Active Reading Strategies

- Scanning: Look through the text quickly to find specific information such as names, dates, or keywords. Useful for answering specific questions or locating data quickly.
- Skimming: Read the text quickly to get a general overview of the content. Focus on titles, headings, introductory and concluding paragraphs.
- SQR3 Method: A structured reading strategy - Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review. Helps you understand and retain maintain material more effectively.
- Highlight key points and take margin notes.
- Ask questions while reading to enhance learning.



11/ Skimming

b) Research Skills

- Use credible sources (academic journals, university databases).
- Keep track of references using citation tools such as Zotero or Mendeley.
- Look for evidence to support arguments.

Academic Writing Skills

a) Structure Your Writing

- Follow the *essay format*: Introduction, Body, Conclusion.
- Use clear topic sentences and supporting arguments.
- Stay within word limits and focus on clarity.

Essay Writing

Outline

- **Introduction**
 - Hook
 - Background information
 - Thesis statement
- **Body Paragraphs**
 - Topic Sentence
 - Examples, Quotes, Evidence
 - Explanations
 - Transitions
- **Conclusion**
 - Restatement of thesis
 - Thesis evaluation
 - Final statement (figurative language, analogy)

12/ Essay Outline

b) Develop a Strong Argument

- Present a strong argument statement early in your writing.

- Support your argument(s) with reliable evidence from academic sources.
- Use formal academic language; avoid slang or informal expressions.
- Cite all sources properly using the Harvard Referencing style.
- Address counterarguments respectfully and provide a response, and use logical reasoning and supporting evidence.
- Avoid personal opinions.



13/ How to Write an Argument for an Essay

c) Proofreading and Editing

- Read your work aloud to catch errors.

A three-step strategy for checking essay

1. Revising	2. Editing	3. Proofreading
<p>Read for sense and focus.</p> <p>The main concern is what ideas you expressed and in what order.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relevance: Have you answered the question? What should you add or delete?• Logical line: Do your ideas flow? Are cohesive devices used adequately.• Structure: Do you have a relevant introduction, well-developed paragraphs, and an effective conclusion?	<p>Read for accuracy of language use.</p> <p>The main concern is with how you are saying something.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Style: Have you used an appropriate academic writing style• Referencing: Are conventions for citing sources appropriate for your subject area• Grammar: Have you used basic features correctly?• Sentences: Are there instances of sentence failures (comma splices, fragments, run-ons, over-long sentences and incorrect word order)?• Vocabulary: Have you used appropriate words and correct word forms?	<p>Check for surface feature errors, overall layout and appearance or readability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Layout: Are spacing and margins consistent?• Format: Is there a consistent use of headings and font?• Punctuation: Is this correctly used?• Spelling: Is your spelling accurate? (Look for commonly misspelt words like doubling of consonants, words that sound alike, and verb forms.)

Leki, I. (1995). *Academic writing: Exploring processes and strategies* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

14/ Editing and proofreading an Essay

Exam Preparation and Revision

a) Plan Ahead

- Start revising at least 2- 4 weeks before exams.
- Make a revision timetable and stick to it.
- Use past exam papers to practice.

b) Use Active Revision Techniques

- Summarise notes into key points.
- Teach the material to someone else.
- Use mnemonics and visualisation techniques.

Mnemonic for the Planets

My → **M**ercury

Very → **V**enus

Educated → **E**arth

Mother → **M**ars

Just → **J**upiter

Served → **S**aturn

Us → **U**ranus

Nine → **N**eptune

Pizzas → **P**luto

urlmemory.com

15/ Example of Mnemonics

c) How to Manage Exam Anxiety

- Get enough sleep before an exam.
- Practice relaxation techniques like deep breathing.
- Read all questions carefully before answering.

HOW TO DEAL WITH EXAM STRESS

Don't let the stress of exams overwhelm you. Stay in control with these top tips.

EXAM SUCCESS



BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

If you work hard and stay focused with positive energy, stress will be reduced. Believe in yourself and have the confidence to succeed.



GET ORGANISED

You'll feel more confident and in control if you make a list of everything you need to study and create a schedule.



MAKE SLEEP A PRIORITY

Without getting the proper rest it will be even harder to retain information. A good sleep of between 7-9 hours every night helps you have a relaxed and well-rested mind and body.



OVERCOME PROBLEMS

If you find you don't understand some of your material, getting stressed out won't help. Instead, take action to address the problem directly by seeing your teacher or revising on GCSEPod.



FIT EXERCISE IN EVERYDAY

It's easy to put off exercise but remember a healthy body = a healthy mind. Doing at least 20 minutes of physical activity a day can help to improve focus and keep you relaxed.



EAT RIGHT

Eat three healthy meals a day and limit your consumption of caffeine and sugars. Power foods for your brain include blueberries, salmon and nuts.



TALK ABOUT YOUR NERVES

Nervousness is a natural reaction to exams, but bottling it up will only make it worse. Talking to your friends and family about how you are feeling is a great way of alleviating stress and worry.



KEEP THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE

The exams might seem like the most crucial thing right now, but in the grander scheme of your whole life they are only a small part. Just concentrate on the actual exam as hard as you can and not what may or may not happen after.

16/ How to Manage Exam Stress

Box breathing

Hold for 4 counts

Inhale for 4 counts

Exhale for 4 counts

Hold for 4 counts

Benefits of box breathing:

1. Brings balance to your mind and body
2. Regulates your natural rhythm
3. Effective in dealing with stress, anxiety and anger

17/ Box Breathing Technique

Participation and Communication Skills

a) Engage in Class Discussions

- Be confident in sharing your thoughts.
- Listen actively to classmates and teachers.
- Ask questions to clarify any doubts.

b) Improve Presentation Skills.

- Practice speaking clearly and confidently.
- Use slides with minimal text and lots of visuals.
- Maintain eye contact with the audience.

theknowledgeacademy



18/ Presentation Skills

Digital Learning Skills

a) Use Online Learning Platforms

- Familiarise yourself with DISC's VLE called Studysmart
- Submit assignments on time and check feedback regularly.

- Participate in online discussions.
- b) Utilise Educational Apps

- Quizlet - For creating flashcards.
- Evernote - For organising notes.
- Google Scholar - For finding academic articles.

c) Stay Cyber-Secure

- Use strong passwords and enable two-factor authentication.
- Be cautious about online sources and phishing emails.
- Keep backups of important work in cloud storage.



19/ Two-Factor Authentication.

 <p>PHISHING ALERT!</p> <p><i>Beware of suspicious emails... Don't take the bait!</i></p>	<p>Sample phishing email:</p> <pre>To: member@temple.org From: sketchy@bogue.us</pre> <p>Please contact me, I need your help. Email only for discretion.</p> <p>Sincerely, [A minister name]</p>
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20/ Phishing Emails

Well-Being and Motivation

a) Maintain a Healthy Routine

- Get 7-9 hours of sleep each night.
- Exercise regularly and eat a balanced diet.
- Take regular breaks to refresh your mind.

b) Stay Motivated

- Set realistic goals and celebrate small achievements.
- Surround yourself with positive and supportive peers.
- Keep a growth mindset - learn from mistakes.



Develop a Strong Argument - Follow These Academic Conventions:

- Present a clear thesis statement early in your writing.
- Support your arguments with reliable evidence from academic sources.
- Use formal academic language; avoid slang or informal expressions.
- Cite all sources properly using the Harvard Referencing style.
- Address counterarguments respectfully and provide rebuttals.

- Maintain logical flow and coherence throughout the text.