

THE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

FREE SEMINAR • AUGUST COURSE

Making the best possible start

Getting organised, setting goals,
building a plan, and studying in the
ways that work.

Sunday 23 August, 4.00pm

90 minutes

Online on Teams

BEFORE WE START

How this works

It is being recorded

The recording goes out to everyone, including anyone who could not attend.

Cameras optional

Stay on mute unless you are asked to speak.

Use the chat

Questions go in the chat at any point. I answer them at 5.20pm.

Have paper ready

There are three short points where you will write something down.

NINETY MINUTES

Four parts

01	Getting organised	15 min
02	Setting goals	15 min
03	Creating a plan to achieve them	15 min
04	Study habits and techniques	20 min

00

Where you are starting from

The habits you set in the first six weeks are the ones you keep until Christmas.

Which is why we are doing this in August and not in November.

ANSWER THESE FOR YOURSELF

An honest read of last year

1. Which subject worried you most?
2. Where did your study time actually go?
3. What did you leave until the week before the exam?

Two different problems

A workload problem

There is too much to do in the time available.

A method problem

The hours are going in, but the way they are spent does not build memory.

Most people describe the first. Most people have the second. The good news is that method is fixable.

What this year is for

5th Year

Build the base. Content learned properly the first time, and habits that hold under pressure.

6th Year

Exam technique on top of that base. Papers, marking schemes, timing, and gaps closed early.

01

Getting organised

RULE ONE

One calendar. Everything in it.

- Term dates, tests and deadlines
- Grinds, travel, sport, work
- Digital or paper. Never both.

RULE TWO

One system per subject, filed by topic

Filing by date tells you when you learned something. Filing by topic tells you where to find it in May.

What goes in a subject folder

A contents page Topics listed at the front, ticked as covered.

Past paper questions Filed against the topic they test.

Class notes Dated, but stored under the topic.

Corrected work Kept, with the correction visible.

Three kinds of notes

Class notes

Taken in the moment. Complete, not tidy.

Revision notes

Made later, from memory, condensed to a page.

Worked questions

Your own attempts, corrected against the scheme.

Ten minutes of setup protects two hours of work

- A cleared desk and everything you need to hand
- Phone in another room, not face down beside you
- A defined stopping point before you start

TWENTY MINUTES A WEEK

The Sunday reset

File

Every loose sheet from the week into its topic.

Check

The week ahead. What is due, what is coming.

Plan

Write the study sessions for the coming week.

OVER TO YOU

Which subject's filing fell apart last year?

Put it in the chat. Then set that one up before Friday.

02

Setting goals

Three levels of goal

The long one

Points, a course, a direction. Motivating, but far away.

The term one

A grade, or a topic properly mastered by mid-term.

The weekly one

The work that gets it done. The only one you control this week.

Make it checkable

NOT THIS

“Get better at Maths.”

THIS

“Complete every algebra question on the 2024 and 2025 papers by mid-term, and correct them against the marking scheme.”

Count what you do, not what you hope for

Questions completed, topics retrieved, papers corrected. A grade is the result of those, and it is not something you can practise directly.

POINTS AND COURSES

Useful to know. Not useful to worry about in August.

- Know the subjects and levels your likely courses require
- Check requirements once, write them down, move on
- Then spend your attention on this week's work

WHERE TO EXPLORE COURSES

mycareerverse.ie

Every CAO course written in plain English, with six years of points and a prediction for this year. Use it as your course explorer instead of twenty college websites.

Read the course

What you actually study, without the jargon.

Check the points

Six years of history, not one year's rumour.

Write it into your goal

Subjects and levels the course requires, in writing, tonight.

WHY THIS PART MATTERS MOST

Knowing what you are working towards is what gets you back to the desk

Motivation is not a mood that arrives on a Tuesday night. It is what a specific destination does to an ordinary hour of work.

The work has a reason

An hour of Chemistry is easier to start when it is attached to something you actually want.

Bad weeks stop being verdicts

A disappointing test becomes information about one topic, not proof that the whole plan is over.

Choices get easier

Which subject to give the good hour to, what to drop, when to say no. The destination decides for you.

You do not need certainty. You need one or two courses you can picture yourself in, and enough detail to know what they ask of you.

TWO MINUTES, ON PAPER

Write two term goals

- One for a subject you are strong in
- One for a subject you are worried about
- Each with a measure and a date

03

Creating a plan

STEP ONE

Put the fixed things in first



What is left is your study budget for the week. It is usually smaller than people assume, and that is fine, once you know the number.

EVERY WEEK YOU GET 168 HOURS

Where the week actually goes



Twelve to fifteen of those 53 hours is a serious week's study. That still leaves you most of two full days. Adjust the numbers to your own week and see what your real figure is.

STEP TWO

Give the best slots to the hardest subjects

The subject you enjoy will get done anyway. The one you avoid needs the hour when you are actually awake.

What one session looks like

40–50

minutes of work on one defined task

10

minutes of a real break, away from the desk

1

task written down before you sit: a topic and a question set

STEP THREE

Map the term backwards from Christmas

Sept Set up, first topics, habits bedded in	Oct Mid-term is your catch-up week, not a blank one	Nov Revision of September topics begins alongside new work	Dec Christmas exams. Nothing new, only retrieval
---	---	--	--

Rest is scheduled, not what is left over

- Two evenings off, written in before study goes around them
- One empty slot each week for the session that gets missed
- Review the plan at the Sunday reset. Revise it, do not abandon it

The weekly timetable, built live

	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
3–4pm	School	School	School	School	School		
4–5pm	Homework	Homework	Homework	Homework	Homework		
5–6pm						Match	
6–6:30pm	dinner / break	dinner / break	dinner / break	dinner / break	dinner / break	Match	
7–8pm	Maths differentiation		Maths algebra, past paper		Irish poetry, unseen		off
8–9pm		Chemistry bonding		Chemistry mole calculations		off	Sunday reset, 20 min

School finishes at 3, homework straight after, weak subject gets the best study hour, one evening is fully off. Write in the topic, not just the subject — "Maths: differentiation", not "Maths". Now do the same for your own week.

Your weekly timetable template

THE INSTITUTE
OF EDUCATION

WEEKLY STUDY TIMETABLE

Your week, on paper

Put fixed commitments in first: school, grinds, travel, sport, work, sleep. Write in the topic, not just the subject — “Maths: differentiation”, not “Maths”. Give your weakest subject the best remaining hour, not the last one. Put at least one past-paper session in every week. Leave at least one evening fully off.

	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
4:00pm							
4:30pm							
5:00pm							
5:30pm							
6:00pm							
6:30pm							
7:00pm							
7:30pm							
8:00pm							
8:30pm							
9:00pm							
9:30pm							

Fixed commitment

Weakest subject

Past paper session

Off, on purpose

This week's weakest topic

Past paper question set for this week

Sunday reset done by

The Institute of Education · Study Skills

Review and rewrite every Sunday

OVER TO YOU

Fill in *your own week*

Use the blank template you were sent. Fixed blocks first. Then two study sessions you are confident you will actually do.

04

Study habits that work

Four things that feel like study



Rereading notes



Copying notes out neatly



Highlighting



Working with notifications on

All four feel productive. None of them make it harder to remember, which is what actually builds memory.

177 UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, ASKED WHAT THEY DO WHEN THEY STUDY

Almost nobody tests themselves

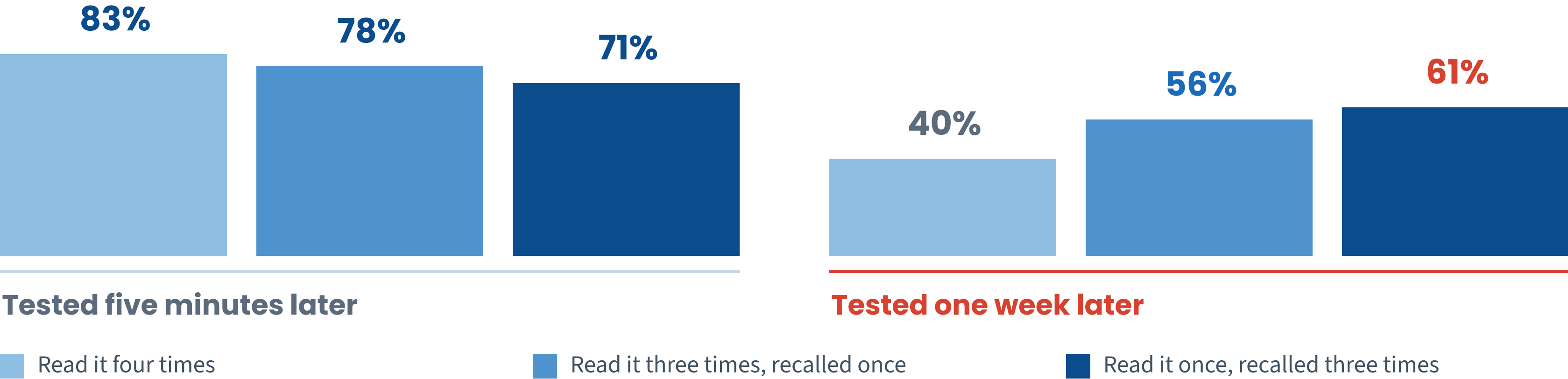


Asked to choose between rereading and self-testing, 57% still chose rereading and 18% chose testing. Rereading feels like learning. Testing is what produces it.

Karpicke, Butler & Roediger (2009), *Memory* 17(4), 471–479. Survey of 177 undergraduates, Washington University in St Louis.

SAME UNIVERSITY, SAME RESEARCHERS: WHAT ACTUALLY WORKED

How much they remembered a week later



Rereading wins the test five minutes later and loses the one that counts. The students who tested themselves forgot almost nothing over the week.

Roediger & Karpicke (2006), *Psychological Science* 17(3), Experiment 2. Washington University in St Louis.

TECHNIQUE ONE • THE BIG ONE

Test yourself first. Read afterwards.

Active recall means pulling the topic out of your own memory before you open the notes. Write down everything you can, then read to fill the gaps. Reading first feels easier and teaches you far less.

The order matters

01

Name the topic. Close everything.

02

Write or say everything you can recall.

03

Now open the notes and mark what you missed.

04

Answer a question on the gaps, not on what you knew.

NINETY SECONDS • NOTHING OPEN

Try it now, before you look

Pick a topic from last year. Write everything you remember. No notes, no phone. Whatever is missing is your study list for that topic.

TECHNIQUE TWO

Come back to it three times

A day later

Five minutes of recall, no notes

A week later

A question from a past paper

A month later

Condense the topic to one page from memory

Every week has new work and old work in it

If your plan only covers what was taught this week, September's topics will be gone by November and you will be learning them twice.

TECHNIQUE THREE

Use past papers to learn, not just to test

Start a topic by reading the questions that have been asked about it. You will study differently once you know what is wanted.

Read the marking scheme

See the marks

Where they are awarded, and for what.

Correct your own

Mark your attempt honestly against it.

Write the fix

One line on what you would do differently.

TECHNIQUE FOUR

Make your notes do something

- Condense a topic to a single page
- Turn every heading into a question
- Explain the topic aloud as if you were teaching it

SET THIS UP THIS WEEK

NotebookLM, as a question machine

01

One notebook per subject.

02

Upload your own notes, handouts and a past paper.

03

Ask it for ten questions on one topic.

04

Answer them from memory, then check its sources.

It is a recall tool, not a summary tool. If you read its answers instead of writing your own, you are back to rereading.

If you cannot explain it, you do not know it yet

The sentence where you stumble is exactly where to go back to the notes.

Phones, and music

The phone

Another room, on silent, for the length of one session.
Checking it is the break, not the background.

The music

Fine for questions you can already do. Not for learning something new, and never with lyrics you know.

FIVE MINUTES • OPEN MYCAREERVERSE.IE NOW

Work out which subjects your courses actually need

01

Shortlist two courses you can picture yourself in.

02

Write down the points, and what they have done for six years.

03

List every subject those courses require at higher level.

04

Tick the ones you are already strong in. Circle the rest.

Whatever you circled is the honest gap between where you are now and the course you just picked. That list, not a feeling, is what your year should be organised around.

Now you know which subject is standing between you and the course

There are three honest ways to close that gap this year. Pick one before September and put it in the plan.

Fix it in school

Talk to the teacher in the first two weeks, not in February.

Fix it in your own plan

That subject gets the best hour of the week, every week, from now.

Get extra teaching

If the gap is a full grade or more, one subject taught properly is worth more than four skimmed.

BEFORE FRIDAY

Three things to do this week

- 01** Set up your calendar and one subject folder.

- 02** Put your two term goals somewhere you will see them.

- 03** Decide how you are closing the subject gap you just circled.

Questions

Put them in the chat. The recording, the weekly grid and the one-page summary will follow by email.