



8 ways to make the most of Year 12



You have the step up in academic difficulty to negotiate for a start, and a workload that will require good time management to keep on top of. You might be settling into a new school Sixth Form, or getting used to having different people around you in your existing school. Then there's the significant matter of applying to university, and all the build-up that precedes submitting your application. As a good student, you'll probably take all this in your stride; but to make it easier for you to deal with, here is some advice to bear in mind as you enter Sixth Form for the first time.

1. Start as you mean to go on

The start of Sixth Form is the ideal time to get into some good study habits, as these will help you get the best possible A-level grades, as well as standing you in good stead for university. Get into a routine that incorporates plenty of study time, and use 'To Do' lists to help maximise your productivity and prioritise homework tasks. One of the best things you can do when you start A-levels is to revise as you go along, as this will reduce your revision workload nearer to exam time by ensuring that you learn it properly first time round. After a class, read up on what you learned to consolidate your new knowledge, and make flashcards with short snippets of useful information on each topic. These will be useful when you revise, both days and months down the line.

2. Make use of all available resources

When it comes to A-level study, you don't just have to rely on textbooks to get you through your course material. Try to utilise as many different resources as you can, as this will give you different ways of looking at the syllabus that will help you absorb information more easily. For example, YouTube is full of videos explaining A-level concepts. Other kinds of resources you could use might include revision guides, webinars, the library and museums, to name but a few.

3. Make the most of study periods

Study periods in your school timetable will probably be a novelty for you, but you shouldn't waste them. Use them productively to write up your notes from class and get homework done, as this reduces the amount of homework you need to do when you get home, and frees up time to spend on reading more widely and developing new knowledge and skills in preparation for university. You can use lunch breaks productively as well, by going to the library to do some work after a short break to eat. Not only does this give you extra study time, but it also stops you spending money going to the shops or sitting in a cafe during your free time.

4. Applying to university

Your first year of A-levels is when you start thinking seriously about applying to university. You probably already have an idea of what you want to study, but now's the time to firm up your decision and start thinking about where you might want to study this course. Order some university prospectuses (or look through the ones at your school) and attend open days for any you like the look of. Talk to your teachers too, as they'll likely have some thoughts on what sort of universities you should be aiming for based on your academic progress.

Also with your university application in mind, your first year of A-levels is a good time to start building up some more relevant experience and knowledge to talk about in your personal statement. Reading widely around your chosen subject is a must, but there are additional things you can be doing to showcase a diverse set of skills.



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The following are a few of the things you can take on in your first year of A-levels with a view to strengthening your forthcoming university application:

- Take an extra qualification to boost your UCAS points
- Gain relevant work experience in an area related to your chosen subject
- Take up a new hobby, or pursue an existing one to a higher level; ideally one that demonstrates qualities such as teamwork and communication
- Tutor a GCSE student in your chosen subject
- Do some voluntary work
- Embark on a project or challenge, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award
- Think of your Yr12 as laying the foundations for your university application. Do as much as you reasonably can now, and you'll find it pays off next year when you come to write your personal statement.

5. Don't leave past papers to the last minute

Past papers are a really useful way of gauging what level you're working at, and they get you used to the style of questions you can expect in the real exam. They're going to be tougher than GCSE exam questions, so it's a good idea to start getting used to them as early as you can. They also give you practice at working out timings for questions. Try to start taking past papers early on, whenever you reach the end of each module; this forces you to revise what you've done for that module. Ask your teacher to mark it for you and take on board any feedback you get back to help you understand where you need to improve.

6. Build a good relationship with your teachers

Your teachers at A-level may be the same as your secondary school teachers if you've stayed at the same school, but if you're moving schools, you'll have a whole new set of teachers to try to impress. If you're staying at the same school and you previously had a reputation as someone who doesn't work hard enough, or who has the wrong attitude, now's the time to change your teachers' view of you. If you're at a new school, show the teachers from the word go that you're a model student who's determined to get top grades.

In a year's time, your teachers will be writing your university reference for you, and it's vital that you give them a good impression, with an admirable attitude and making a real effort to produce outstanding work. Ask them for extra work, speak out in class with intelligent opinions, and hand homework in early.

7. Get a strong bag and a locker

You're going to be carrying around a lot of books and folders, so you'll make life easier if you have a backpack rather than a bag that has a shoulder strap. If you can get hold of a locker in a handy location, even better, as this means that at any given time, you only need to carry what you need for a particular lesson.

8. Enjoy it

Sixth Form is a time when you've finally left behind the subjects you disliked at GCSE and you're now able to concentrate on subjects that genuinely interest you. What's more, you're working towards studying your favourite subject at university. Although A-levels are harder work than GCSEs, you'll probably find that you really enjoy Sixth Form and the new challenges it brings. It's also a time to make the most of home comforts and spending time with your parents and friends before you go to university. Enjoy it, and remember that all this hard work will pay off, even if it doesn't always feel like it at the time.