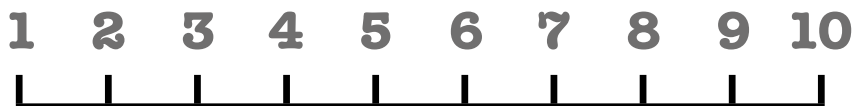


9. Effort Activity: The 1–10 Scale

On a scale of one to ten



Look back at the work you've done so far this term and think about the levels of effort you've put in to your studies. Use the scale above and the following guideline to choose your number:

- » 1: Little or no effort.
- » 5: Some effort – you're working quite hard.
- » 10: High levels of effort – the hardest you've worked.

Be honest with yourself, choose your number and record it in the box.

What Are Other Students Doing?

The problem with making a judgement about your own levels of effort is that scales can be subjective. Here are some of the issues:

- » The numbers mean different things to different people.
- » Students tend to surround themselves with people who do either similar or less work than they do. This means they 'normalise' the amount of work they are doing, even feel good about it, because they can point to someone doing less than they are.
- » Students don't have a clear idea of what the hardest working students are doing.
- » No one can know what students are doing in other schools and colleges.

The answer is to get some concrete figures so the choice of number is a more accurate reflection of your levels of effort relative to other students.

Take another look at the 1–10 scale.

On a scale of one to ten



Look back at the work you've done so far this term and think about the amount of effort that you've put into your studies. Use the scale above and the following guideline to choose your number:

- » 1: 0–2 hours' independent study a week.
- » 5: 10 hours' independent study a week.
- » 10: 20 hours' independent study a week.

Be honest with yourself, choose your number again and record it in the box.

We got these hourly figures by interviewing students, so we know that A level students who end up with three A's or A*'s tend to be doing at least twenty hours of independent study a week by the spring term. Questionnaire results show that the twenty hours tend to be spread across three or four subjects and equates to about four or five hours per subject per week outside of class. Some high performing students who have submitted applications for very competitive university courses (medicine, for example) even declare they are doing thirty hours' work by the spring term of Year 13.

What Can You Do?

Very high levels of effort often seem ridiculous or impossible. It's important to build up gradually like a marathon runner might in their training sessions, and to acclimatise to the additional load before increasing it. So, if you are only used to working for five hours, first, put a timetable in place that takes you to ten hours of independent study per week, and live with it for a few weeks. Use the space below to record your plans for stepping up your levels of effort. Shade out the times you're in class or otherwise engaged. Then examine how you might use the remaining time:

| | 9–10 | 10–11 | 11–12 | 12–1 | 1–2 | 2–3 | 3–4 | | 6–7 | 7–8 |
|----|------|-------|-------|------|-----|-----|-----|--|-----|-----|
| M | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tu | | | | | | | | | | |
| W | | | | | | | | | | |
| Th | | | | | | | | | | |
| F | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sa | | | | | | | | | | |
| Su | | | | | | | | | | |

Go with this plan for a period of time! Studies say it takes thirty days to establish a habit. Start by aiming to make ten hours a week your habit for a month.

Then, in consultation with your tutors or teachers, step it up gradually. Go for twelve hours next, then fourteen. If you're doing twenty hours a week by the spring of AS or A2, you're in a really good place.

Effort

Final Thoughts

It's unlikely your teachers will be setting you work that will total twenty or thirty hours. The key to reaching this level is to set yourself independent study tasks. It might sound crazy but this is what the high effort students we've met and interviewed tell us they do. Here are a few examples of these activities:

- » Handing in homework early to get extra feedback.
- » Rescuing a project that's behind schedule.
- » Asking a teacher five questions to help clarify a problem.
- » Seeking a book/study guide recommendation.
- » Completing a one-hour reread and reorganise of notes on a topic.
- » Sending five emails asking for support, help or advice.
- » Talking through a topic with another student.
- » Borrowing someone else's notes.
- » Attending a support class or revision session.
- » Handing in an edited piece of work.
- » Reviewing a teacher's feedback to look for patterns.
- » Tidying resources and summarising a topic on one sheet of A4.

You could choose a couple of these to get you started. Just remember one final thing: don't fall for the myth of the brilliant, talented student who does superbly in every test without putting any effort in. We've never known it to be true – and we've worked with thousands of students. The ones with the best grades always turn out to be doing the most independent work!