

ALI CLARKE

My Story



My name is Ali Clarke. I attended Orange High School, a public school in regional NSW, and I achieved an ATAR of 98. I undertook and gained band 6's in 3 unit Maths, Advanced English, Chemistry, German and Music 2 in year 12, having dropped Ancient History in year 11. And for everyone in year 11, that's probably the first thing you need to work out and be comfortable with. Your subjects.

So many people told me in Year 10 to "do physics, chem, bio, extension maths and extension English". You could handle it. You should do it. No. No, you should do what you are passionate about, or love doing. Because there is nothing worse than trying to study for a subject you hate, and it tends to result in exam scores that mirror your attitude towards the class. I had no less than genuine interest in every subject I chose to study and I am so glad I did that because it made studying them so much easier. I *wanted* to get into my space and learn more about how reactions worked, or how to ask someone what cheese they like best in a fantastically hilarious language. It's a huge helping hand to yourself if you can actually care about what you are trying to squeeze into your brain.

Which brings me to my next point.

I aimed to spend 4 hours a night on study; that was my goal. Goals are hugely important in keeping your motivation, but I must admit that moving on into my HSC career, this goal became increasingly more tedious and frustrating. I got bored with it. Start with maths, do an essay, study chem, etcetera etcetera. Routine is important, but if you're like me, routine to the exact detail lacks any kind of interest, and thus, I lose motivation and care. I was forcing myself to study in the evenings, and finding more and more excuses to just stop. You need to change up your study, whether it be by studying with friends, (the ones who don't just want to chat), making songs from your quotes, OR my personal favourite, and one that is proven the best way to memorise and truly understand; teaching. TSFX send out these great little bulletins, with amazing tips and exam techniques, and I received one that claimed teaching had been proven to be the best way to learn. So, I tried it out, I helped out struggling mates in extension maths, and taught my class aspects of chem. You **HAVE** to get over this idea that by keeping your knowledge secret you'll **BEAT** everyone. The better your cohort does, the better you will do. But yeah, I found teaching to be absolutely the best way to learn, and I can further support that after a year of tutoring HSC students. I can do so much more this year in terms of extension maths' difficult questions, than I ever could have imagined last year, and I mean, this year is my gap year. I haven't studied this year. Teaching is powerful. Use it, I wish I'd used it more.

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Now; I live in a town about 254 kilometres west of Sydney called Orange. Ironically named, we are famous for apples and wine, and I love Orange. In Autumn it is that postcard town with perfect tree lined streets, in Spring flowers adorn the gardens of the 20th century houses, Winter equals snow, and Summer is hot, dry days spent at the Lake by the barbecue. But let me tell you something about anyone living this far from the city; the resources are rubbish. But that *does not* mean there's nothing to be done, and give up because everyone else is getting it easier and that's not fair and I'll just get what I get and that's the end. *The internet exists and it is THERE TO HELP YOU!* So many students and teachers have gone through this before; utilise their help! There's way too much out there to cover right now, but a couple of websites that you should definitely investigate are The Board of Studies website for any past HSC's and answers you may need, The School for Excellence's "Free resources" section of their page for all sorts of helpful essays and notes, the TutorTales blog for a bunch of past English essay questions and help, and also Bored, B-O-R-E-D of Studies, not just for forums that'll help you stay sane, but also a TONNE of resources. Free notes, past essays, past assessments; it's all there. There is so much more than this, but once you scratch the surface, it'll reveal itself. All you have to do is look.

One last thing that really, really helped me were the TSFX Chemistry lectures I attended, after discovering they existed about a third of the way into year 12. I had a new grad teacher for Chemistry, and despite the fact that he was and is a fantastic, engaging teacher; he was a new grad Bio teacher. He hadn't studied Chem, nor did he particularly like it at the time, and thus, naturally, our attitude and results suffered. After topping my class with 76% in Year 11, I decided this all needed to change, and got searching. I attended the Half Yearly, and HSC revision lectures for Chem, and they were Ah-mazing. I cannot stress the power of these lectures on my results, and attitude. Chemistry became interesting, and I was solidly achieving over 90% every exam. The lecturer, Mr Hazelton, really made it all easier and more interesting, with little tips and tricks to memorise patterns and rules, and an incredible summary that explained EVERYTHING for all the little nooks and crannies of the syllabus. I strongly recommend them to anyone and everyone. Learning pretty much everything in one to two days is pretty cool.

To summarise, I'd like to give you a short piece of advice for the subjects I studied.

For maths, do a lot, but do relevant questions. Source past papers. Your HSC questions won't be as easy as the ones from the textbook. If you think they will, you'll get a right slap in the face.

For English, practise hard essay questions and short answers. If you can easily answer every question you're attempting at band 6 level, you're not looking hard enough for the gross questions. They're there. Challenge yourself and as a result, nothing in the real exam will surprise you.

For Chemistry, make things interesting, because they really can get boring. Make a rap with your mates out of the functional groups, or use YouTube for easy to understand explanations of tricky concepts.

For Music, practise until you can't play it wrong.

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And for German, or any language, find a friend or teacher you can speak it with on a regular basis. I'm talking every day, or every second. Your grammar will fall into place if you can speak relatively fluently.

The HSC isn't everything of course and everybody has different life goals. But it's pretty fantastic to get straight into Uni without a worry. Study hard, and have a positive attitude and approach, and you'll be rewarded with some pretty great results, and the satisfaction that comes with them.

Ali