

# REBECCA BREADMORE

## *My Story*



Hi, my name is Rebecca and I graduated last year with an ATAR score of 99.50. The marks I received were:

- English = 50 (All SACS were A+)
- Literature = 50 (All SACS were A+)
- Classics = 45 (SAC marks were – A, A+, A+, A+, (A+))
- Design Technology = 47 (A+, A+, A+)
- Geography = 38 (B+, A, A+, A+, (A))
- Further Maths = 39 (B+, A+, (A))

The most vital piece of advice I can give you, before I get stuck into any other tips, is that you must play directly to your strengths. For me, my score was not obtained by undertaking the subjects that were scaled the most dramatically, or considered the most difficult, but rather, subjects that I was passionate about. Four of my six subjects were actually scaled down – Further Maths, Geography, Design Technology and English – and the other two, Literature and Classics, increased only marginally. So the one preconception I urge you all disregard immediately, is that only Science, extended math and Language subjects result in scores above 99. I did none and I still achieved. As you are fully aware, Year 12 is a difficult year, and you will come to resent subjects that you hold no real passion for.

For me, VCE was a true learning experience, one that really encouraged me to change my approach to my studies. However stressful the year can be, it is also one of the most rewarding experiences, so make sure you give it your all. Many are surprised to find, myself included, that the year gets easier as you go along, and that even though the work load increases, you fall into a productive and positive rhythm.

I know you will hear this a million times over the next few months, but you must not underestimate the importance of sleep this year. I should really be a case study for the benefits of an organised and effective sleeping pattern! In terms one and two I had extremely high stress levels, mainly due to a serious lack of sleep, as I would stay up working, extremely unproductively, until the early hours.

A tutor of mine suggested the idea of a sleep/study timetable that involved getting up earlier rather than staying up half the night, and consequently, getting less done. At the start of term 3 I got a group of girls in my boarding house

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together to start a 6am routine, which involved waking up at six, doing an hour of study, followed by breakfast and another hour of study before heading to class. The best thing about the routine, was that we had completed two hours of study before even attending our 6-hour school day, and had done so at a less distracting part of the day. Because of these extra two hours, we found we had the advantage of taking a break after school so we could remove ourselves from study, and take some time to relax up until dinner. After dinner, we would commence another 3 hours of study, making sure that we had completed all that was required by 10pm. The key to the whole routine was the earlier sleeping time of 10:30, which ensured that we could get a full night sleep before waking up early the next morning. Whilst this may not suit everyone, it works as an example for the benefits of productive time management – after implementing this timetable, I found myself less stressed, less tired and more comfortable in my organisation.

Everyone learns differently, so effectively, everyone must find the most appropriate way in which to study to ensure they work both efficiently and effectively.

As a visual learner, I found the use of timelines, mind-maps and colour-coordinated quote sheets to be of great assistance. Another great way of memorising quotes, ideas and essays is to record them. I used to pre-write a lot of my literature essays and then commit them to memory by making recordings on my computer and transferring them to MP3 format and playing them on my Ipad before I went to sleep, or when I went for a run. I know this might sound a little over-the-top, but it was a really good way of trying something different – which is extremely important over the course of the year.

You really need to shake things up in terms of your revision; otherwise, things become far too repetitive and stop having the desired effect. A range of study techniques must be utilised in order to remain fresh and allow you to continue to develop a positive routine.

Another hugely important factor about Year 12 is about having a support network, and not isolating yourself in an attempt to stay ahead. Group discussions and the sharing of ideas is the key to success – don't be afraid of giving others an advantage – the more you talk about a concept or a process the stronger you build it. Actually 'buddy up' with someone for certain subjects, have a friend who you bounce ideas off, someone who studies in a similar matter to you. For example, in the weeks leading up to exams, I had a friend who I would go for a morning walk with – during which we would discuss the texts we were studying in English, and recite quotes to one another. It was a good form of exercise too, as I was playing no sport by this stage and I was still managing to study, a little, whilst doing it.

Make sure you utilise your teachers – they are your strongest allies this year, especially as they are the ones who set your SACS. With this in mind, however, make sure you source second opinions – other teachers, past students, tutors and programs such as TSFX in order to have your work examined from a different perspective. For me the English Master-class Program was an extremely effective resource, most particularly due to its continuity. The master class was a 5-week program in which you spent two hours on 5 consecutive Saturdays with the same teacher, covering the entirety of the course. One of the best things about the sessions were that they were on the weekend – a time where it was easy to become distracted – and therefore, I knew that I would have at least two hours of dedicated, focused and productive study under my belt for the day. The notes and guidance provided was unbeatable – placing you ahead of the game, and setting you up for well deserved

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success. If you're willing to put in the time and effort and attend TSFX programs, it will be of great benefit to you – they are here to help, so make the most of it, trust me!

You must ensure that your personal life is not sacrificed during Year 12, as sometimes your social life is the only thing that keeps you sane! Catch up with friends on the weekend, go to all the 18ths that pop up over the course of the year, have fun and remember its only natural to need to blow off some steam.

The most effective way to balance your work and your personal lives is to enforce a strong time management plan – block your weekends, put aside time to be a bit crazy with your friends, don't crawl into a VCE cave and let it rule you. I found over the course of the year, that I bonded moreso with my friends that had a similar perspective of the VCE – I encourage you all to surround yourself with people who also wish to do well as they will both encourage you and provide a healthy sense of competition.

Unfortunately, the VCE works around a ranking system, so naturally it becomes a very competitive year. Speaking as an extremely competitive person it is important to watch that your competitive streak doesn't turn relationships sour ... instead, channel it positively. I, for example, would sit down and do practice exams with fellow students, because I knew that I would have to complete them by default – I didn't want to fall behind.

VCE is a matter of taking what you have – your skills, your passions, your personality – and channeling them in a positive and productive manner. Play to your strengths, keep perspective and try your hardest to remember that, however stressful, this year, you will learn an unbelievable amount – especially about yourself.

Enjoy!!

Rebecca