Tips from scholarship recipients

TIME FOR STUDY AND PLAY

From making to-do lists and carving out time for interests, these students prove it is possible to juggle school, CCA and volunteer work.

I am busy, I have no time. It is a common refrain among teenagers – and understandably so.

Schoolwork can be overwhelming, especially when students are taking around 10 subjects in secondary school. Add to that co-curricular activities (CCAs) and other school events.

How do some youth excel in their academics and CCA, and still find time to do volunteer work? And without sacrificing sleep and the use of social media?

Ms Gowidian Sola Valli, 18, is one of them. The top arts student at Anglo-Chinese Junior College (ACJC) in 2020 and 2021, she was elected to the Principals’ Honours Roll in her second year.

She was also the captain of the college’s softball team and volunteered as a youth mentor at the Singapore Indian Development Association (SIdA).

In August, she received the Singapore Armed Forces Scholarship and the President’s Scholarship. What are the habits of effective students? The Straits Times asks Ms Sola and other scholarship award recipients.

GET ORGANISED, SET PRIORITIES

Students should know when to prioritise and have clear limits and boundaries. It is important to understand yourself, and assess how much time and energy you have to complete each activity, says Ms Sola. Then you can plan your commitments and work more effectively.

A study by Mr Mohamed Na- shir Ali Fabrick, 20, shows it to make a list of things to do and prioritise them according to due dates.

For example, you should not jump on the essay mathematics paper that is due later than the challenging English essay, says Mr Da- niel, a recipient of the Prime Minis- ter’s Book Prize in 2020 and SPH Media journalism scholarship in 2022. He is now studying at the College of Humanities and Sciences at the National University of Singapore (NUS).

Mr Ethan Keanthan, 18, who re- ceived the Public Service Commissi- on (PSG) Scholarship for Teaching Service, usually breaks up tasks into smaller ones, making them easier to cross off from his to-do list.

“This helps me to stay motivated and plan my time more realistically,” says the former Victoria Junior College and Anderson Secondary Student. He is now taking geography at the University of Oxford in Britain.

And Ms Shaun Qian Ling suggests estimating the time needed for each task. To avoid wasting time be- believers in spending too much time on preparing for an exam – an Anglo- Chinese-Junior-College-Scholarship recipient: “I aim for the greatest yield in the shortest possible time.”

But do not beat yourself up if you take longer than expected. Instead, take time to evaluate why that hap- pened and constantly refine your methods.

Ms Shaun, who is studying com- paring in information systems at NUS, says: “Examinations do not only test you on content, but also your ability to find out what works best for you in stressful conditions.”

REVISE CONSISTENTLY

When she was in Nan Chiau High School, Ms Wong Shu Jia recalls she would revise only a few weeks before examinations. “My attitude was: if I started too early, I would forget the con- tent by the time assessments come around,” says the 18-year-old, who took up a Singapore-Industry Scholarship to study psychology at NUS.

But she has since found that it is much better to study consistently and review material at systematic intervals.

“This helps me to manage the content much better without having to cram and possibly face burnout,” the former able student argues.

PSG scholar Venjie Lin, 18, plans her revision schedule at least two months in advance. She can study the subjects at a more re- leased pace.

“I usually begin by going through all the deliverables, then planning what to study each week on an Excel sheet,” says Ms Lin, who is now taking human, social and political sciences at the University of Cambridge in Britain.

She would aim to finish context revision ahead of study breaks, such as the September school hol- idays, to ensure she has sufficient time for timed mock examinations.

A common trend she has observ- ed is how some students sacrifice their sleep the night before an ex- amination because they could not finish their revision in time.

“I feel this can backfire as the brain ends up being too fatigued to function optimally during the ex- amination itself,” Ms Lim says.

FIND A STUDY METHOD THAT WORKS FOR YOU

Ms Sola was introduced to the ac- tive recall method from YouTube All About how during her junior col- lege years at Durham High School.

The concept, she says, is to make up questions on the topic you are studying, based on past-year pa- pers or learning objectives.

The process of generating questions and adding the help of some notes in memorisation, while the active recall strengthens the thinking part of the question to answer.

“During revision, I would go through the list of questions, while covering the answers, and try to get the main points.

“I can also go through each topic when on the commute, which saves me a lot of time.”

Ms Wong and Ms Lim also prac- tised spaced repetition, another popular study method, which requires one to systematically space the revision over a period of time and helps in storing information in the long-term memory.

“This method, combined with regular revision practice, added me in forming up more time for other non-academic commitments since the time I spent revising dur- ing much smaller was reduced,” says Mr Fabrick.

Ms Lin, who received the Prime Minis- ter’s Book Prize in 2020, took up the Prime Minister’s Book Prize in 2019.

She also recommends practising papers under timed conditions. “Mark yourself and keep track of your grades. So approach your teachers for consultations if you run into problems,” Ms Sola adds.

Reading books and making notes were in no way enough to do well in school. Understanding concepts and putting them into practice – either through problem sums or short essays – were crucial in helping me tackle my subjects.”

“MS GOWIDIAN SOLA VALLI,
Recipient of the Singapore Armed Forces Scholarship and the President’s Scholarship.”
Tips from scholarship recipients

Take control of social media use

FROM OI

LEARN FROM YOUR MISTAKES

Mr Ong suggests creating an organized system to record your initia-
tives and initiatives to promote new views.

"If we make mistakes, we are not only not to be afraid, but to learn
to take care of second chances."

This would result in securing opportunities or career milestones.

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FROM CHYE

I did not quit-trip myself. I had to take a whole day to relax
and spend time with friends and family. The education
journey is supposed to be a holistic one –
and that includes having a fair share of
fun.

Ms Melva Karmi
a member of the Public Service Commission Scholarship

Find out what motivates you

Knowing what would make your learning experience the best
helps in building a solid foundation for the future.

Ms Chye says that she was motivated by the desire to
actively engage with people and participate in community
service activities.

"I also volunteered in schools,
where I taught children how to
read and monitor at-risk students,
and besides other activities.

Ms Chye recalls how,
being aware of the role that
volunteering plays in helping
those in need, she was able to
find her own motivation.

Her advice to students

"I suggest creating a culture
of volunteering with Dedo.

Through this, students can
build on their own interests
and learn from one another."

KEEP A ROUTINE

From having a revision timetable,
to limiting the time spent on
social media, students should
keep a routine to improve
productivity.

"It helped me avoid getting
too stressed out and also
made it easier to manage
my workload.

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taking a more systematic
approach to his studies
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RE-EVALUATE HOW YOU SPEND YOUR TIME

Cut out unnecessary activities
that take up your time but do not
contribute to your goals.

Mr Ong does not watch
Facebook or YouTube content.
Instead, he follows his diet plan
and keeps his body healthy.

Mr Ong also finds that
limiting his social media
usage has helped him stay
focused and productive.

"I find that a period of
being busy is a sign of time
management, and being too
busy can actually do more harm
than good."

Mr Chye emphasizes the
importance of having a
routine, as it helps in
managing time effectively.

"It's important to
avoid procrastination, but it's
also important to make sure
that studying is not
overwhelming."

Mr Chye suggests
studying a subject that
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TAKE CONTROL OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE

Although TikTok and Instagram are sources of fun and
information, students should be mindful of their usage.

Mr Ong says that he limits
his usage of social media
on weekends and
focusses on his studies.

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BE KIND TO YOURSELF

Taking breaks and having fun are as important as studying,
and it's important to "relax and recharge."

Mr Chye encourages students
not to be too hard on themselves,
and to take things one step at a
Time.

Mr Chye emphasizes the
importance of taking care of
one's mental health,
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