

Life After High School

A Guide to Your Choices

presented by

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What Comes After High School?

SE By Student Edge

It may seem a while away – what with all the homework and assignments and exams still to come – but before you know it, your time at high school will have come to an end. Congrats!


But... then what? After the celebrating dies down, that's the question that strikes most students. You're about to enter the world outside of school and start making moves towards your dream career. However, a lot of students

find themselves overcome with the burden of choice, because there are just so many options suddenly available.

Should you go straight to university or TAFE? Is it worth taking some time off to travel for a bit? Maybe you'll be tempted to start working and earn money. The choices are seemingly endless.

First of all: Don't panic. Having heaps of options is actually a good thing, because each of them can be considered a pathway to get you wherever it is you want to go.

Student Edge has compiled this guide to help explain what those options are, exactly, and



what each can offer you, including university, bridging courses, vocational education and training at RTOs and TAFE institutions, apprenticeships, the Australian Defence Force, gap years and employment.

We've also thrown in some articles from fellow students who've taken this journey already (and have some handy tips to assist you on your journey).

As with most things in life, each option will appeal to different people for different reasons. But all of this is exciting. All the highs, all the lows, all the challenges, all the triumphs. No matter which pathway you choose, you'll meet new people – your people – gain independence and learn fascinating things.

There's no right or wrong way to get from point A to point B in your life. It's even okay to change your mind and change track midway through one particular pathway. You're not expected to know everything right now, or even later on.

Hopefully though, this guide will help you start carefully considering what the next best step for you is.

Good luck! Life after high school is rapidly approaching, and the best is yet to come.

If you want to know whether or not you're on track for uni, you can estimate your ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admission Rank) [here](#).



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Student Edge is Australia's largest member-based organisation of high school, TAFE, VET and university students in Australia, with more than 850,000 members nationwide.

By allowing students to form and feel part of a larger collective, Student Edge is able to harness the power of the student community to support each other and give Australia's youth an advantage.

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Student Edge seeks to empower and support students to make great life choices, offering job listings in addition to career and pathway tips.

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The Exam Lowdown

 By Brittney Rigby

Exams are tougher than resisting a fifth helping of Christmas lunch, even for the smartest of cookies.

They're pesky and difficult and stressful, and simply being intelligent doesn't cut it. You need to be mentally healthy and prioritise self-care to get through (kinda) unscathed.

But I've learnt some tips and tricks along the way to make exam time that little bit easier, from high school finals to that darned closed book law exam that I'm not quite over (RIP me).

Here's some advice that will guarantee you top marks and a top time. *

*Guarantee not guaranteed. Author accepts no liability.

1. Start Early. Pls.

You've heard this time and time again. Trust me, it works. Starting early gives your brain time to properly process and absorb information and has a huge impact on your wellbeing and mental health.

Anything to minimise extra stress at an already anxious time is a winner. So get goin' – future you will be grateful.

2. Study Groups Are Your Friend

Do me a favour? Please don't get sucked into the toxic idea that everyone is an enemy who you have to beat at all costs.

While a little bit of competition is healthy, unnecessarily rivalry and tension doesn't help anyone. Sure, make your own notes, but meet up with friends to study together or just to unwind.

3. Treat Yo' Self

My favourite tip of all. Practice and prioritise self-care - your results will be better for it.

Whether it's going for a run or having a long bath, taking some time away from the books to look after yourself is beyond important.

Meditation and mindfulness can also be really helpful and there are some great free apps out there with programs. I find listening before bed super relaxing.

4. Memory Games

Finding a helpful learning technique is easier said than done.

In my experience, flashcards work, if you prepare them in advance and use them regularly.

I also use rhyme or narrative to remember lists. Hear me out. In high school, I memorised every syllabus for every topic in Business and Legal studies by making up a funny, memorable sentence from the first letter of each line. It sounds lame, yet almost four years later, I still remember some.

Talking to yourself may seem silly, however you'll quickly figure out what you actually know, and what you're pretending to know. If you can't effectively explain a concept aloud, you won't be able to answer a question on it. #realtalk

5. Time Management? LOL

Study plans are great if you stick to them and find a time when you're most focussed and use it productively.

And remember: Study smarter, not harder.

Take regular breaks – ideally 10 minutes for every hour. I use the 25-5 method, setting my phone's stopwatch and studying hard for 25 minutes, then taking five minutes to stretch, grab a glass of water and rest my eyes.



6. Perspective: It's Important

Stop. Breathe. Life will go on, regardless of your exam results. A percentage cannot tell you how funny, caring or vibrant you are.

7. Netflix And Chill?

Keep your sanity intact by binge-watching something. We know you were going to anyway. Study will still be there in the morning.





What You Really Need To Know About University



By Louie Zhu

So, you've finally finished high school and you're just about to start university. You probably have a few questions you're asking yourself. Like, how is uni different from high school? How will I make friends? How can I maximise the time I spend achieving the ideal state of a university student (which is to sit on your bed all day watching Netflix on your laptop)? Okay, these questions might not be in your head right now, but they definitely will be once you start.

Class

Class at uni is a lot like class in high school except you get a lot more free time. You might have classes in the morning and in the afternoon but usually these come with a big break in between or no break at all (though the latter means you get to go home early). For those of you lucky enough to be able to create your own timetables, make sure you fit classes around your schedule – it can be annoying to go all the way to uni for just a single one-hour class.

Classes generally are flexible and there are multiple times for the same class, so you should be fine if you schedule it right. However, be warned that classes at convenient times (i.e. ones that don't start at 9am or 6pm) usually go quick, so, to get the optimal timetable, make sure you enrol in your classes as soon as you are able. And I don't mean on the same day as class begins: I mean the minute you are able to enrol.

Study

Studying for uni is a lot like a Rocky movie. You start off making friends and before you know it you're in your training montage mode, ready to face the final exams. Except the training montage lasts for ten weeks. Make sure you study every week and keep up with all your readings and homework. Falling behind one week can be really tough if you want to catch up.

Unlike high school, there's no one around to make sure that you do all the work every week; therefore, a lot of self-discipline is required. Pretend there's someone watching you do your homework each week and you should be fine. There really isn't that much extra study that you can do; just make sure you do all the assigned work.

Extra-Curricular Activities

Uni is a time for you to explore who you want to be and the type of people you want to spend time with. You're not being forced to hang with anyone you don't really want to, so use that time to be around people with similar interests to you. There's no better way to do that than by joining a society at your university. There are a lot of different societies around, so as long as your interests are within the bounds of human decency, there's bound to be a society for it.

Don't be afraid to join societies that might be a little bit out of your comfort zone either. Typically, societies don't require a lot of time commitment and if it doesn't turn out to be your thing, just quit. No judgments from anyone.



Lastly, make sure you take part in the orientation camps that are exclusive to your degree. Not only are the people you meet there going to be helpful in the future (by providing notes), but they're also probably going to be the people you see the most of during class.

And that's it. Uni is really just about having a fun time. Yeah, you have to study, but at least now you're studying something that actually applies to your future life and hopefully you actually find it interesting.



What if I Don't Want To Go To University (Or Don't Have The Marks)?

SE *By Student Edge*

If you are interested in going to uni but are worried you don't have the marks to get in, there is a second chance available to you through bridging courses.

'Bridging courses' help students transition from high school to uni without them missing a beat. If your ATAR score isn't high enough for the uni course you're interested in, a bridging course – which can range from a few weeks to a full year – can offer you an alternate route back to uni.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) covers the different pathways that can help you get skilled up for a range of industries and careers without university. That includes TAFE, where you can get certificates and diplomas, Registered Training Organisations (RTO) and apprenticeships, which offer you hands-on experience in your chosen profession.

There are certain jobs for which you'll require a certificate or diploma not available at university, and this might be the only way to learn about – and get qualified for – certain trades, whether it be plumbing, electrical work, hairstyling, IT, or even nursing.

As with uni, you'll work with experts who've been professionally practicing out in the wild. In fact, with apprenticeships, you'll get on the job training alongside those practicing professionals. You'll also get to earn while you learn, taking home a payday for your study.

Certificates and diplomas usually take between one to three years, meaning you can enter the workforce sooner, if that's what you're hoping to do.

If you're still not sure what job you want after you've finished school, you need to consider that TAFE, RTOs and apprenticeships train you for very specific trades; you might not want to rush into a course straight away, unless you think that's the trade for you.





How To Have ‘The (Pathway) Talk’ With Your Parents



By Anthony Pearce

Figuring out what you want to do with the next stage of your life can be pretty hard. For some of us, it's made all the more difficult by the massive difference between our own goals and our parents' expectations.

We might not be so sure what we want to do with our lives, but they seem to know exactly what we should do. You want to be a writer; they want you to be a dentist. You want to be a taxidermist; they want you to go into finance. Heck, maybe you want to become a lawyer, but your family thinks you'd be better off as a roving circus performer.

As a relatively stable ~~roving circus performer~~ writer and editor whose family wasn't always so sure about my career, I've found that this difference in opinion isn't insurmountable. Put on your pinstriped suit and don your most suave toupée: We're headed to the negotiation table.

1) Hear Out Your Parents, Then Make Your Case

Ask your parents why they want the things they want. It's possible they actually see law school as an excellent basis for a career in international espionage, not the courts. Or, more likely, they do want you to be a lawyer, but only because that's their way of trying to make sure you never have to go hungry.

Then, make sure they know what your ultimate goals are. Perhaps you want to have a boring but stable part-time career to make room for more fun (but not profitable) hobbies. Maybe both you and your parents think money is super important, but you just don't think being an international spy is right for you.

Make sure you're both very clear on the 'why'. Sometimes, this can solve the whole problem when you realise you're both aiming for the same goals.

2) Consider Compromise

If you agree on goals but not the method, you're more likely to get what you want if you accept a small, safe compromise. Your parents have been around for a while and unfortunately they will be right about some things.

An accounting course, for example, is boring (to some) but universally handy. Plus, it'll reassure your parents that you're taking things seriously, even if you do just use it to balance the books at your startup company selling novelty dog hats.

If Doggo Hats PTY LTD takes off, great! If not, you've still got a lot of options and a lot of knowledge you'd otherwise not have. Prove to your parents that you understand the risks and you have contingency plans. Everyone wins.



3) Deliver The Goods

If you and your family disagree on goals, a reliable way towards gaining acceptance is to prove you can apply yourself. 'Hardworking yet misguided' is better than 'aimless and lazy', and nothing looks lazier than skipping out on your own aspirations.

If you say you'll knit a hundred scarves before Christmas, do it. At best, it will convince people that your plans are viable and you'll stick to them. At worst, you'll have a hundred scarves. That's not a bad deal.

4) Don't Lose Sight Of The Big Picture

In the end, your life is about meeting your own goals, not anyone else's. If you still can't see eye-to-eye, perhaps the only solution is time. That's okay. People change and the expectations of others don't define you.

As long as you're still striving towards your goals and clinging to opportunities thrown your way, you'll be okay. And that's what your family really wants for you. They care: That's why they give you a hard time.

I'm Still Not Sure What I Want To Do!

 By Student Edge

Still not sure how you want to spend your days after graduation? We get it. You might be so overwhelmed with your high school workload, you'll want to take a break and decompress before plunging into the next stage of your life. That's why a lot of students consider a gap year after high school.

You could travel, using an organisation to help plan your trip, or, you could backpack around the world by yourself, or volunteer abroad. You could work; save up a bunch of money at a casual job, or gain some experience. Otherwise, you could chill: Catch up on reading, watch a bunch of movies, learn a new language, donate your time to different organisations, or, simply, unwind.

Gap years get you out of the study bubble and help you gain some life experience, either by leaving home to see the world, or by putting others first through volunteering.

Still, if you're not working, a gap year can be expensive. Also, when it comes to working, your options will be limited without a qualification. You might also find yourself a year behind your peers when it comes to study, if that is the pathway you want to return to afterwards.

Though this may sound very, very tempting, a lot of thought and certainly some deep discussions with your parents need to take place before you agree to a gap year. No matter what, use your gap year productively. (Chilling can be productive!)

For some, the transition to work right after high school will be a permanent one, and that can be another pathway to your dream career.



You may start casual, which means flexible, usually minimal hours. Then there's part-time, which is for roles that only require you to work a few hours or days a week, and full-time, which means you'll be working around 38 hours a week in your role. Some contract positions will limit the length of time you're employed.

There are also Fly-In, Fly-Out work opportunities, usually on mining sites, and shift work, which can mean work for multiple days in a row or at unusual hours.

There are plenty of benefits to working: You get to start earning money immediately and begin building your superannuation, which is money set aside from your pay to help you later on in retirement. (Yes, you have to start thinking about that now!)

You'll gain some great experience and learn how to navigate professional environments, which is its own very valuable skill.

No further study also means... no further study. Also: no HELP debt or study loans.

Of course, some employers – like the Australian Defence Force and plenty more – offer their own pathways towards qualifications, so you can start work and still be on track to get a degree or diploma. It's a great option for those who don't want to accumulate a HELP debt.

If you work first and decide to study later in life as a mature age student, you'll be bringing some very valuable, practical knowledge with you.

By jumping straight into work, however, you might be limiting your opportunities for structured, formal learning later on.

Your routine may not sync up with your studying friends and impact your social life. You also won't be able to take off months at a time for travel.