Making the most of it!

Enrich your IB experience and make the most of your time, socially, academically and physically.

An experience report for students written by a student

Cosimo Gottschall
To Thames who inspired it
It’s simple! Studying the International Baccalaureate and living abroad for over two years has taught me lifetime lessons and I am keen to share some of those insights with you.

Bear with me throughout this Experience Report and be inspired by the journey of how I made the most of my time in the IB.

I hope that my shared experiences will be of value to you and that you find pleasure in reading them.

Yours,
Cosimo Gottschall
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Opening

I have always been very curious to learn from other students, especially from students older than myself. If I struggled with a piece of writing, I turned to the year above to ask for help. They could always give me advice because they have already gone through what I was currently working on in year 12. They had already experienced what I was experiencing, it was a perfect match. So, when I came into year 13 I was wondering, who would I turn to from now on?

It got me thinking: What if advice was accessible all the time? What if you didn’t only have the year above to depend upon for guidance because you could turn to an experience report?

So here we are, I am writing about my experience in boarding school and you find yourself reading it. Again, it is a perfect match, because a guide
for students written by a student is the best possible way to reach out to one another, besides having a chat!

At the end of the Diploma, friends and I made jokes about what would have been different if we were to do the IB again. We agreed that it would have been far easier academically given that we have learned all the necessary writing and presentation skills over the past two years to score well in the IB. However, instead of me day-dreaming about how I could have had more time to embrace my social life, I want to enrich your experience by passing on personal advice on how I believe you can make the most of your time, socially, academically and physically.

Finally, I am kindly asking you to be critical throughout reading. This experience report represents my point of view! It may differ significantly from yours and others as you will soon find out in ToK.
1. Making the most of it

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.
— Robert Frost

Decision making

It does not matter how often you have experienced it, making a decision is never easy. What about you, have you made the right decision by going to an English boarding school? You and I have taken the road less travelled by, and now it is down to you to turn this opportunity into a life changing experience.
1.1 Embracing the warm community

When going to an English boarding school, you will have to adapt to the place and the people around you. It takes time to familiarize yourself with the new lifestyle. Until you feel comfortable and at home it usually takes 66 days! That's how long it takes for a routine to be established as Phillippa Lally has once researched. In order to help you ease into the new environment and to form a new habit, I would like to present to you a few philosophical approaches towards helping you to embrace the pleasant boarding community.

When beginning the IB program, I grew curious to experience the feeling of being done with school. Generally, all the recent IB graduates I talked to liked their new acquired lifestyle. However a few wondered whether they could have made more of the time living in a boarding
house. In retrospect they told me that they would have appreciated taking part in more activities and events. Looking back, they also would have been more conscious of simply having a good time with their friends. This gave me the motivation to make the most of my lasting time at school. I didn't want to find myself thinking: *If only I had done* or *If only I had the time*. My plan was to invest time into things which really mattered to me. This approach helped me to organize my studies and my social life better and to not get lost in one or the other.

Are you inspired to make the most of your time, too? It’s simple, don’t find yourself thinking *If only I had the time* - Find and invest the time! Life is far too short to make excuses and the earlier you realize this the better. Do you want to learn another language or learn to play an instrument? - Then try to find the time!

Two years go by faster than you expect and you don’t want to waste time and find that the most
amazing experiences have passed by. I am advising you to devote energy into things which matter to you, things that fulfil your desires, things that shape you as a person. This will prevent you from thinking *If only I had done* one day.

Furthermore, in life and especially in a boarding community *it’s always more fun to share with everyone* (Jack Johnson). If you grew up with siblings like I have you will probably be familiar with this idea. Nonetheless, I truly learned to acknowledge to share my belongings when I lived in a boarding house. It’s a fundamental idea which I want to pass on to you. Aim to give more than you receive. Care for others as much as you care for yourself and learn how other people act gracefully in return. Generosity in a community is necessary, and, therefore, giving to receive can be your ultimate guideline to embrace the benefits of a boarding community.
How to make the most of something has become increasingly important in today’s society, because we live increasing busy and hectic lifestyles - juggling many things. Our generation is taught from a very young age to work as efficiently as possible and to the best of one’s ability. It creates an immense pressure on students who cannot handle stress and or failure. Yes, the IB is a tough course, but *if it doesn’t kill you it only makes you stronger.*  
I have struggled myself in stressful situations and it’s natural to have self-doubts at times. However, over the time, I learned to accept it if something didn’t work out the way I imagined. I reminded myself to keep a positive attitude and to stop worrying because most of the time it turned out to be not the end of the world anyway. Accepting failure is so important and definitely something the IB will teach you.

I remember that for some of my friends it was particularly hard to accept their university
rejections. Receiving four rejections out of five would take them weeks before they could come to terms with it. Worse than that, they felt embarrassed to tell anyone and didn't want to admit it. However, telling people about your failures can be supportive and actually help you accept it. Don’t feel embarrassed and or worried if something doesn't go as planned. Open up to people and share your feelings as it will help you to tolerate failure. Evidently, it’s all part of a bigger cycle:

Grope, Fail, Adapt. Repeat.
— Ferrazzi Greenlight

When you approach someone for the first time your brain unconsciously judges the other person within seconds. Chances are that if you smile the other person will think you are friendly, open-minded and outgoing. So why not give them a smile? The saying *Smile and the world smiles*
with you by Stanley Gordon West, is so true. If you don’t believe me, give the next person you see a smile, but don’t blame me when the other person smiles back. In a boarding community smiling creates a welcoming atmosphere around you.

Being open, flexible and spontaneous in life opens doors you would never have imagined. Say Yes to experiences when you would normally say No. It forces you out of your comfort zone, and hence you will experience great adventures. The film Yes Man implements this theory to quite a funny extent. Yes, to new opportunities and meeting new people and trying new things but I think it is also important to know what you don’t want to do.

Saying No demonstrates independence and it is also really important to take some time just for you to think and take everything in. In year 12, at the start, I said Yes to everything and everyone
because I desperately wanted to be involved in everything and please everyone. But I did miss my own space and time sometimes too. It was only later in the year that I learnt to say No and regained my own space to find a good balance between saying Yes to new experiences and saying No to find time for myself. Instead of always following the crowd, I did what made me happy rather than trying to please everyone. As a result, I was happier and relaxed and was able to properly help other people if they needed rather than half helping people like before.

Age difference exists in many communities and also in a boarding house. In my house, I lived together with students up to four years younger than myself. Sometimes this age difference created tension between the year groups and led to conflict. One-year group would blame the other and vice versa. However, if you do want to get along with your fellow students I learned to respect my peers. My approach was to show
respect and in return, I gained respect. Sometimes it’s even a polite gesture to offer help which can break the ice.

Finally, a conclusion of several ideas creatively tied together to learn from:
Life is not a race; it’s about being at ease with yourself. It’s about accepting. It’s about failing. It’s about taking risks - All these qualities will get you one step closer to finding out what really moves you in this world, and how you want to make the world a better place. In the end of the day, there is only one life. It’s about embracing the way you are to live who you are! So be vulnerable, be willing to learn, be stupid! Learn more about yourself to come back stronger! There is no reason why you should be afraid.
1.2 How to get active

I have gathered a few examples of how to get productive in and around the school. One or the other idea might inspire you, let’s find out.

The closeness in a boarding house can be very intense sometimes and getting away for a short time for example by visiting a city nearby will draw your focus on other things. A boarding house is a great place, but that doesn’t mean that you will have to stay there all day long. Living abroad gives you the opportunity to visit places you’ve never been to before. Take it. Refresh your mind by seeing a different place and meeting new people. Hockerill, my college, was located in between London and Cambridge. Every so often, I went to London with a couple of friends and it was great to forget everything going on around the school. My advice is that it doesn’t matter where you go as long as you go in the first
place. Enjoy exploring the environment around you.

Think outside the box

It’s easy to come up with projects for yourself, especially if you’re living in a boarding house. If you enjoy literature, for example, why don’t you write some poetry. Get others involved by organizing a poetry slam where people are reading out famous poetry or creating their very own ones. Don’t judge this arguably boring idea too quickly because people are more interested in poetry than you might think they are. For example, I once organized a themed poetry night instead of having another casual social. My year group loved the idea and it turned out to be a huge success. By the end of the night, everyone was sitting on the ground to listen to poetry all night long! We dimmed the light to create a thoughtful atmosphere and only the person reading out loud was exposed. Two weeks later
people were still talking about that particular poetry night, and many more themed socials followed.

Additionally, if you enjoy writing consider publishing articles in the school magazine. I personally like to write a diary. There are many ways to keep a diary. You can find your very own way of writing, however if you have no idea how to get started or what to write, I might have a few ideas for you. My first piece of advice is that you shouldn’t force yourself to write a diary on a fixed time, write whenever you feel like it. Moreover, don’t follow any regulations when writing. Jot down anything that comes to mind and don't worry if it’s grammatically incorrect. If you can’t get started on anything try to find a purpose for writing. For instance, your intention could be to describe memories, whether they are good or bad. Describe your feelings for example or simply relive a situation. Of course, you can also write about anything else that comes to your mind.
Fundamentally, follow a purpose and ideas will spark too. Furthermore, I remember a task I was given in year 9 which I would like to share with you. Our teacher asked us to think about what we imagine ourselves doing in one, three and five years’ time. Each letter was collected and handed out one year later. As you can imagine, it was a really strange experience to read the diary entry again since my perspective on life had changed significantly.

Photography is another exciting activity you could practice. If you are as lucky as I was, your school may have a dark room for you to develop photos. And even if not, you could start taking pictures of the place and the people in your boarding house and display them in one of your common rooms. Get others involved to create a picture gallery of recent events for instance. I am sure your head of house will support the idea.
Furthermore, your school might have a 3D-printer which you could use. Again, I was lucky enough to have one at school which enabled me to print small buildings for an art project. Find out what your school offers to get an idea of what else you could be doing. There are many more possibilities, for example, like recording your own song in the music department and or constructing your own desk or chair in the design and technology department. Follow your passion, explore possibilities and get active!

*Special tip:* Organize a table tennis tournament or a pool competition on a weekend! Sports events are always great to bond with other people.
2. Academic advice

Your future is created by what you do today, not tomorrow.
— Robert Kiyosaki

2.1 Personal study tips

The IB is incredibly hard if you aren’t well organized, so let’s get structured before it’s too late.

Studying is a very personal matter and varies from person to person. For example, the way I study might not be the way you study. There is no right or wrong when it comes to learning because it all depends on what works best for you individually. Having said that, I would read
through this chapter and then check if some of the mentioned learning techniques and ideas work for you. Take this chapter as a chance to experiment with new learning concepts.

You either write your own script, or you become an actor in somebody else’s script.
— John Taylor Gatto

Stop living someone else’s dream. Define your dream and turn it into reality without being influenced by what other people think. It might be a certain point score to get into your top-choice university, or your dream might as well be something like making lifetime friends. Consider it as a question: What would you like to take away from the IB? The answer is supposed to be your dream or if you like, your goal. Anything beyond this goal has to be treated with great care and here is why.

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Say for example your goal is to achieve 37 points to get into the university you like. Now, all your friends are aiming for higher results and the environment is very competitive. Suddenly, you find yourself aiming for 39 points because everyone else is too, but what you don’t notice is that you’ve lost track of your personal goal.

I said anything beyond your goals has to be treated with great care, because by pushing yourself harder academically, you will have less time doing the things you enjoy, like seeing friends or doing sport. It might cause unnecessary stress and unhappiness. I definitely think you should push yourself academically and believe you can do more but be realistic as in be aware of pushing yourself beyond what you are capable of. Don’t feel the need to achieve more points than you think is right, not for yourself and neither for your parents. You will come to see the value of this advice as you are in the middle of the IB and some of your friends study harder or
less hard than others. However, instead of being influenced by their goal, you should ask yourself of what it is that you want. Take a second to think about this and then get a piece of paper.

Write down what your personal purpose for the IB is and what motivates you to chase that purpose. Why are you doing what you are doing? It might be in the form of a bullet point list or a mind map, i.e. be creative. Below or next to your illustration, write down your favorite quotation. It might be a peaceful or motivational quotation as long is it has meaning to you, it might even be Get shit done or The true means of success is how many times you can bounce back from failure by Stephen Richards which was mine. Stick this note on the wall where it’s well visible to you, it ensures that you are not distracted by others, but follow your own goals.

Another very valuable asset you can have is to envision yourself winning to win, from the very
beginning to the very end. I know how hard this can be at times, but trust me if you have a positive attitude you will succeed. I always told myself to focus on winning and forget about losing to achieve my personal potential. It helped me to think of the bigger picture rather than worrying about the barriers getting there. In summary, believe in yourself, your strengths and your weaknesses. It’s worth it to believe in yourself because:

You are what you believe yourself to be.

— Paulo Coelho

Special tip: Be independent. Don’t look at your mobile phone first thing in the morning, you will serve someone else’s needs instead of your own ones!

Furthermore, I am mentioning failure again because it’s such an important matter.
Samuel Beckett once said:

Fail, fail again. Fail better.
— Samuel Beckett

and he was right in my perspective. Beckett describes a situation, where learning from failure becomes valuable later on. He implies that when you fail several times in a row there will be a point at which you will fail better. Chances are that if you fail, you are going to try harder next time and get better. If you were to approach failure as a matter to learn and flourish from, you can save yourself a lot of time and stress.

Competition is an influential factor, also in a boarding house. The question is how is one supposed to deal with competition? Can you stop competition from happening? To be honest, I don’t think you can, because it’s in our genes and to some extent it’s how our society functions. We compare oursefsls to others because in the
process we are able to extent the limits of our understanding of the world. Therefore people will never stop contesting against each other. Also, globalisation requires innovation which again is created by competitive environments. Have you ever wondered how to approach someone who is truly competitive? I’ve asked around and discovered nothing unexpected. I gathered that most people would approach the other person personally to ask them about his or her intention. Also, almost everyone I questioned agreed that they would be competitive in return, actively or passively. Clearly, this is a problem which needs to be solved and here comes my solution.

Competition is a big factor, however, not if you are not influenced by it. Yes, it’s that simple. Use competition to your benefit to take advantage of it. *It is about working with people, not against them*, as quoted by Ferrazzi Greenlight. The principle is, you can either work by yourself or if
you are intelligent you can work with others together. Working with people not against them is really helpful when it comes to studying. Fortunately, you are in the best environment to do so, because in a boarding house there is always someone to work with. The danger of studying on your own is that you are not honest enough with yourself to identify your weak spots. However, by working with someone else you can challenge each other and this way you are going to be aware of what you don’t know. Create small study groups to make the best use of this technique and test each other. There is no better feeling than working hard and then sharing a good grade together. In summary, be open and critical towards competition, however, don’t let it influence you so that the two of you can still work in a study group to improve your individual skills.

You are going for a run. Someone is challenging you by running ahead and you find yourself behind that person. You know, that if you take
part in this competition you will lose track of your own course. So you reflect and conclude: I won’t be distracted by other runners, but focus on my own track.

Be honest with yourself. Who are you doing all this for if not for yourself? Don’t fool yourself, and yet as obvious as it might seem, people are still doing it.

I got to realize this issue because a teacher of mine has explicitly pointed it out to me. He said and I quote Every year you get students who are just not honest enough with themselves. Students always study what they are good at and forget to study what they are not good at. Don’t trick yourself, work on the topics you don’t know well, and I guarantee you, that’s how you get the good grades. Personally, this is one of those lessons I would have liked to be told earlier, because by knowing your study inconsistencies and admitting them, you can really change your grade significantly. It doesn’t matter if you are not
the brightest student in the room, but as long as you don’t lie to yourself about how much you actually know on a certain topic, you will be fine. If you admit that memorizing specific information isn’t your strength then why are you leaving it to the last minute. Start early instead and admit your weaknesses to solidify your learning.

My teacher also believed that people do not have talents, it is simply hard work he claimed. His point is that if you practice something over and over again you will eventually get better and better. For example, if you play the piano every day and you practice very hard on a daily basis you will improve gradually. Having said that, you don’t necessarily have to be talented in order to make progress.

However, if you go based on this then if everyone works the same then they will all get the same grade and yet this isn’t true. There have been many students in my year who didn't work so
hard and did well. Therefore talent, in my opinion, does exist because although two individuals study together their learning outcome can be significantly different. For example, one person might be better at remembering facts than the other. So be careful with comparing yourself to others, because the amount of hours studied don’t necessarily reflect your learning outcome. It depends a great deal on how efficient you work too.

All in all, practice, repetition and consistency are the principals for success in studying. Repeating a task over and over again will sooner or later help you to remember study materials.
2.2 How to rock your upcoming presentations

The following paragraphs will give you a structure on how to rock your upcoming presentations so that your classmates say *well done* after the lesson and you get to be proud of yourself too.

In school you will have listened to dozens of presentations and speeches, and so have I. Yet, so often I find myself not participating, not because the topic is boring, but because of the way it’s being delivered. To give a presentation in the TED format, you will have to convince the audience. Win the spectators by interacting with them. No interaction equals no listeners. Let’s get into what I mean by that.

▶️ How to prepare properly?

A prosperous presentation is not down to the presenter, but how well the speaker is
prepared. Preparedness is crucial for an excellent speech, and, therefore, you should aim to plan your presentation a week ahead, at least. Intend to practice early, get feedback from others and then finalize your speech a couple of days beforehand. Early action will demonstrate how well your arguments go with actual speaking and give you the opportunity to adjust your points, if necessary. Furthermore, practice in front of friends and family to get helpful feedback and to improve your work. Practice speaking the presentation over and over again to make you feel comfortable, and you are good to go!

Remember, it’s the talk that matters not the topic. If your presentation skills are trained you can present a boring subject and your audience is still going to pay attention. That’s supposed to be your aim.
How to structure your presentation?

You might have heard of The 10/20/30 rule of PowerPoint, which offers great advice on structuring a PowerPoint presentation. The basic principle is that a PowerPoint presentation should have ten slides, last no more than twenty minutes, and contain no font size smaller than thirty points. If thirty points, is too dogmatic, I offer you an algorithm: find out the age of the oldest person in your audience and divide it by two. That’s your optimal font size as claimed by Guy Kawasaki. The 10/20/30 rule of PowerPoint is applicable for any presentation and of great value to rock your upcoming talk.

How to present yourself?

Use your body language to engage with your audience. For example, walk from left to right and back again from time to time. Don’t hide your
hands, use them to point things out and or gesticulate examples. Not to forget, eye contact is essential, don’t read of a piece of paper! If you are struggling with learning the content of by heart, my advice is to start practicing a week earlier than usually. Trust me, people will fall asleep the second you start to read something of the screen or of a piece of paper. If you are reading the exact same thing than on the screen, then why do you even need to be there? Personally, I usually use flashcards to guide me during the talk. Flash cards are practical and just about the right size to write down a couple of notes and not to distract the audience. The time you spent looking at your flash card can be used as a short speaking break in your talk. You can also look at your flashcards while switching to the next slide.

On a final note, make sure you practice your pronunciation and give value to important words or phrases. Try not to speak monotone but rather passionate to convince your audience of your
points. Don’t rush your presentation, but take breaks to give value to certain arguments in your talk.

How to start your presentation?

Start your presentation by interacting with the audience. Face your spectators and embody a calm, open and inviting posture. As House Captain of my boarding house, I had to give several speeches in front of hundreds of people and I generally started off by telling a spontaneous story. I gave the audience something to hold on to, something personal, emotional and amusing. This helps to connect, especially when you further keep eye contact. If you talk in front of your classmates make sure each and every single one of them is paying attention.

Additionally, you could engage them by showing a provocative image at the start of your presentation for example. Ask your spectators to
describe their immediate reaction, open a short discussion on the picture. Have a small dialogue with each person sharing their opinion. Involve your spectators and express sympathy by responding to their points. Use a white board to conclude main points. Visualizations are always very powerful to reinforce an argument. Close the interaction part after around two minutes by saying something along these lines: All of you have raised very interesting arguments, I am just going to drop a few of them on the board for you to remember as I am going to relate to them later during my talk. Since you have identified the key motifs of this picture, you will now have a better understanding of today’s topic which is ..(topic).

▶ How to prepare mentally?

And, are you already nervous? Being nervous is nothing you should fear at all, it actually makes you more alert. Like myself and the majority of people, you may feel anxious just before giving a
speech. Consider the number of people who find themselves in front of an audience on any given day. Correct, the numbers are shocking because there are thousands of events and talks going on each and every day. Think positive, your presentation is just like any other of them.

Furthermore, if you feel your heartbeat going up just before speaking, a breathing exercise might make you feel more relaxed. Take a deep breath in and out while you say the words *I am relaxed* repeatedly, *I am* for breathing in and *relaxed* for breathing out. This autogenous training will help you to calm down and refresh your thoughts. For optimal purposes practice two minutes long or ten breaths. Tell yourself that with every respiration you are more and more prepared and confident. Lastly, it might motivate you to imagine the good feeling you will have once you have finished your speech.
How to get better?

Think about an amazing speech which has caught your attention recently (TED maybe). Do you have one in mind? Good, now consider what exactly made that talk so special? Try to remember which techniques have convinced you, which haven’t and why? Imitate which techniques have worked well to improve your own presentation skills. Vice versa, consider a talk which has made you fall asleep, why? Look critically at popular presentations held by other people to learn for yourself and avoid making the same mistakes.

How to motivate yourself?

Rewarding drives motivation. In my experience, I work harder for something that comes with a reward. Similarly, when you are preparing your presentation you should think of something to be motivated. Work towards a goal, like an evening
off with your friends for example. Importantly, it does not matter how good your presentation has gone you should still reward yourself for your effort and engagement.

- Be confident and faithful in yourself, you can do it!
2.3 Study Less, Study Smart

I have learned a great deal by taking advice from other people. Two talks which I would like to point out to you specifically are by Amy Cuddy on TED, talking about how body language influences who we are and a talk by professor Marty Lobdell about how to study smart. Marty Lobdell has encouraged tens of thousands of students and he wants students to succeed. You can find his talk on youtube under Marty Lobdell - Study Less Study Smart, if you are interested. I have applied his techniques during my revision time and it was really helpful. Given that his speech is an hour long, and time cannot be wasted in the IB, I decided to make a short summary of his main tips and add my own ones.

Break your studying down into chunks of sessions, your ability to study diminishes after 25 to 30 minutes on average. After each session take a five to ten-minute break to restore your
effectiveness. In fact, taking breaks allows your brain neurons to process and memorize the information you have just studied. As you get comfortable with studying under timed conditions you can raise each individual session by five to ten minutes, so that after a couple of weeks one session could last 45 to 50 minutes. However, as soon as your concentration falls you should stop and take a break.

Create a dedicated study area to encourage actual studying, your environment will largely determine your behavior. In a boarding house, this can be difficult because you sleep, study and relax in the same room, hence you are easily distracted when studying. One technique though is to deploy a study lamp in your room as supposed to your usual room lighting. Take that lamp and make a little sign and put it on it saying **study lamp**. Use it only for studying and it becomes your study lamp. Turn your study lamp on when starting your 25-minute session and turn
it back off when completed. Take a five-minute break, leave the room and do something else. You can fully embrace your break if you change the environment, walk in someone else’s room to have a small talk or make a tea or coffee. A boarding house is a perfect place to have a small talk because there is always someone around.

Study smart and study actively. Don’t waste your time on learning material which does not matter, the sooner you realize this the better. If you believe a task isn’t worth your time, don’t do it. Obviously, there is a difference between prep you will have to do and tasks you do for yourself. However, the point is to study smart and as effective as possible. For example, study by quizzing yourself instead of just looking over highlighted sections of your book or notes. Study under exam conditions to get a feeling for pressure and time. Use past papers and mark schemes to decide which answers the IB is looking for. Furthermore, take smart notes in
class and expand on them as soon as possible after class to boost your initial learning. And finally to study smart, summarize and or teach what you learn, it will help you pinpoint gaps in your understanding.

Use mnemonics to study facts, acronyms, coined sayings, and image associations to help you remember material easier than rote studying. Image associations, for example, are great, because complex cycles can be expressed in simple drawings. Working visually is great to do the revision because you can stick images on the wall. To ensure you are looking at the diagrams look through them every morning and evening. Cover your whole room in the build up to exams, and extent to the bathroom to check notes while showering for example.

**Special tip:** Drink coffee, and drink lots of it. There are many arguments for and against coffee helping you to concentrate, but I like to believe it
does. So, whenever you revise have a cup of coffee too. It’s similar to using your study lamp, it becomes increasingly automatic to concentrate when studying. You sit, turn you lamp on, have a cup of coffee, and you are ready to go.

In summary, in the build up of exams, finding a habit of using a study lamp and or drinking coffee makes a great difference in your final grade. Interestingly enough, a study proved that the students who did use a study lamp were one grade point higher the next term, compared to the controlled group that didn't use a study lamp. One grade point simply by creating a designated study area. Additionally, in the build up of exams, it is also very useful to apply a range of study methods like working under exam conditions, teaching others and or making image associations for example. Applying a range of study techniques will guarantee depth. Good luck.
3. Bonus material

3.1 Letter of motivation

In addition to my Academic advice section, I would like to share an email with you I have sent to my fellow students in preparation for our November mock exams in Year 13. It may encourage you to make the most of your time.

Hi everyone,

until we have obtained our final IB results the time ahead is going to be very stressful, in particular, next week. Some of us may have started revision for the mocks, others are finishing their coursework.

Because we are all coming from different backgrounds in the world, I would like to use this
email to give you some advice in terms of what helps me:

1. **Beware of comparing each other!**
   Every single one of you is studying differently, making it unreasonable to compare yourself to others. Beware of causing unnecessary stress by comparing yourself to others. ("What? You have already revised topic 5??"). The amount of time and energy you invest in your learning is perfect for you. You can only give it your best try, and this varies from person to person.

2. **Do not drag each other down!**
   As much as everyone likes to share his feelings about how stressful this time at the moment is be aware that you are not dragging each other down. Simply think of how many people have passed these exams before you. If you encourage your friends ("Trust me we can do this!"), then hopefully you will encourage yourself as well.
3. Use your time wisely! - take a break as well!
Instead of frustrating with a headache, rather go outside and enjoy the day, socialize or just listen to your favorite song. After recharging your energy go back to study twice as efficient. --> If you are having trouble with working effectively, go and ask a german! ;)

I am more than certain that every single one of you will do the best to his ability. And after we have obtained these exams one thing is for certain: Thames celebration!

Best luck, Cosimo
3.2 Timetable revision

In preparation for my final exam period, I spent some time structuring the upcoming months. Amongst other things, I created a revision timetable to stay organized and on time. For me, it turned out to be the most effective when splitting each individual day into eight sessions. This way I could designate certain times to certain subjects and make the most of the limited time. To check out and or download the timetable template visit my Blog below.

LINK:
https://makingthemostofitib.wordpress.com
3.3 Meditation template

Meditation can be the perfect balance to a stressful day. It was part of my daily routine while I was going to school to meditate ten to fifteen minutes a day. You will have to be patient at first, but once you get the hang of it, you will be surprised what difference it can make. There are dozens of templates on youtube, however, I have still decided to create a recording specifically for you. Hopefully, you are encouraged to get started and or keep practicing meditation if you already do so. If interested, listen to my template on youtube, also linked in my blog below.

LINK:
https://makingthemo.stofitib.wordpress.com
3.4 Discussion

When I was accepted to come to Hockerill I had more questions than there were answers. I was curious to know what was about to come and how one can best prepare for it. If you are a new student and or a student of Hockerill, you might be happy to hear that I have helped to set up a Facebook page. Together with friends we came up with questions which we would have liked the answer to before coming to Hockerill. So, if you are curious, check our Facebook page.

LINK:

In addition, I created a Blog for you to follow the latest news! Check out the learning concepts and TED talks I have mentioned and referenced in this experience report. Further, is this our opportunity to communicate! Here you are invited
to share ideas and discuss anything that comes to mind! Leave me a comment or a private message, and I will try my best to get back to you asap.
Lastly, I am also thrilled to get feedback about this experience report and to hear about your progress!

LINK:
https://makingthemostofitib.wordpress.com

Now, it’s up to you to make the most of it -
Yours Cosimo