

HOW TO GET THAT FIRST!

Reading

You are going to read an article from the Guardian newspaper. Here is the heading:

Before you read it, let's check some of the vocabulary to make it easier for you.

How to get that first!

Yvette Essen hears the secrets of two women who made the grade

PRE-READING 1



GLOSSARY - check that you understand these important words:

a degree	<i>The qualification that you get from university</i>
a graduate	<i>A person who has a degree.</i>
to get a first	<i>The top grade for a degree.</i>
a 2:1	<i>Degrees are graded first, second and third. You can get two kinds of seconds - a 2:1 and a 2:2. A 2:1 is better than a 2:2.</i>
a lecture	<i>A special lesson that you usually have at university. It's where a lot of people sit and listen to one person talking on a subject.</i>
to read a subject at university e.g. to read anthropology	<i>Another way to say "study", it's only used to refer to university study.</i>
a dissertation	<i>A long formal piece of writing on a subject, especially for a university degree.</i>
an essay	<i>A short piece of writing on one particular subject written by a student.</i>
retakes	<i>If you fail your exams you have to take special exams called retakes. If you pass, you can continue with your course.</i>

PRE-READING 2



Match the words to the definitions:

1 a highlighter	A Short for examination.
2 a mathematical proof	B A degree for two different subjects. For example, a joint degree in English and Anthropology.
3 to graduate from Edinburgh university (with a first / second)	C To pass your degree.
4 a bibliography	D A series of mathematical equations that show something to be true.
5 an exam	E A pen that is very brightly coloured and is used to draw attention to important words.
6 set books	F The books that you have to read for your course.
7 a joint degree	G A list of books or articles that you have used in your research for an essay or dissertation.

PRE-READING 3



DISCUSSION Can you think of anyone who you think is a really good student. Describe them to your partner. What do they do that makes them so successful?

STUDENT A - READING TASK

You are going to read about Melissa Malins. Your partner is going to read about Francesca Stellman. Read the article to complete the information about Melissa.

Student	Melissa Malins	Francesca Stellman
University		
Degree		
Why is she so special?		
What study techniques did she follow to be successful? <i>Your notes</i>		

How to get that first!

Yvette Essen hears the secrets of two women who made the grade

- 1 Melissa Malins graduated from King's College London with a first, she was awarded the Drew Prize for the Second Most Meritorious Mathematics Graduate.

6 “**A**lthough my degree had no coursework, I put a lot of work in during the year and went to virtually all the lectures, as you take things in subconsciously. I made notes in lectures and copied them up well in advance - often in different colours and sizes, using highlighters to make them look more interesting. As I had eight exams each year it was difficult concentrating on all my subjects without leaving one till the end or focusing too hard on another. Some friends worked on five of the exams, but if you have retakes the following year your workload increases to an almost ridiculous and 10 unmanageable level.

I didn't like going to the library much as I can't work for hours on end in silence. Instead, I spent a lot of time with friends in the study areas as we understood different things so could help each other. It is reassuring when you realise you're not alone when you can't do something. Group study can be distracting as you often talk instead of working, so you 15 need a happy medium and in the final stages I studied on my own.

I tried to think of different ways to remember things: some proofs you just had to understand, others I learnt parrot fashion, by mnemonics or rhymes. I found it better to study in small half-hour sessions rather than five-hour trots as it stuck more in my head and I had to constantly test myself.

- 20 Although a degree is really hard work and other things have to be sacrificed, getting the result made it all worthwhile.”

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STUDENT B - READING TASK

You are going to read about Francesca Stellman. Your partner is going to read about Melissa Malins. Read the article to complete the information about Francesca.

Student	Francesca Stellman	Melissa Malins
University		
Degree		
Why is she so special?		
What study techniques did she follow to be successful? <i>Your notes</i>		

How to get that first!

Yvette Essen hears the secrets of two women who made the grade

1 Francesca Stellman read anthropology and linguistics at University College London. She was the only person to get a first in her year.

6 “There is definitely more work doing a joint degree - this year alone I had two more courses than straight anthropology students. Easter was a nightmare as I had a dissertation and six essays, and two exams to revise for. However, I organised my time well by choosing essay titles, photocopying readings and taking books out well in advance.


10 To get a first you need to work consistently. I had lots of friends who worked hard this year but not in the first and second years. I also did all the reading for each essay, which helped as there was a large amount of coursework and my teachers commented on my "impressive" bibliographies and independent research.

15 Living at home made a difference to my final grade. I had lots of parental support, my own space and could work in peace without worrying about things like food and ironing. However, self-motivation is also important, as if you miss an essay deadline, the lecturers won't chase you up. I planned ahead but it took me months to research, write and redraft my dissertation.

20 For my finals I spent at least six hours a day revising and working on exam technique. As there isn't much time in exams I learnt a few topics well, made lots of essay plans using past papers and listed the arguments on both sides. My social life was more restricted during the exam period, but I also tried to relax and not work late in the evening.”

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POST-READING

 **DISCUSSION.** Ask your partner for the missing information for your chart. Was there anything that surprised him / her about the article?



VOCABULARY WORK 1 The article you read was full of word pairs. Look back at your article to complete the table. The first ones have been done for you.

Melissa Malins		Francesca Stellman	
a ridiculous an unmanageable	<u>level</u>	a large	<u>amount</u>
well	.....	.....	in advance
.....	medium	living	.....
in the final	.....	.....	support
parrot	.....	a social	.....
.....	work	an essay	.....




VOCABULARY WORK 2 Complete the sentences with the missing prepositions.

Melissa Malins	Francesca Stellman
1 Melissa graduated King's College London	1 Francesca was the only person to get a first her year.
2 a first.	2 She said that doing a joint degree meant that she had two exams to revise
3 She said she put a lot of work during the year.	3 Her teachers had commented how good her bibliographies and research was.
4 She always made notes lectures	4 She also thought that living home helped her
5 and copied them	5 as she could work peace.
6 She found it difficult to concentrate all her subjects	6 She said self-motivation was important as if you don't do work, the lecturers won't chase you
7 and not focus too hard just one subject.	7 She tried to list the arguments both sides of a subject.

When you have finished dictate your sentences to your partner.

POST-READING

 **DISCUSSION.** Ask your partner for the missing information for your chart. Was there anything that surprised him / her about the article?

The newspaper article finished with advice for students. Look at the ideas below. Can you rank them in order of importance.

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The rules

- Revise in advance. Plan a realistic timetable and stick to it.
- Good class and lecture notes are vital for essays and revision.
- Don't be afraid to ask lecturers questions or approach personal tutors for help.
- Read set books on time.
- Work on oral presentations, even if you aren't assessed on them. They may be taken into account if you are borderline*.
- Keep to deadlines. Once one essay is late it is easy to slip.
- Leave time to research, write and rewrite dissertations.
- Get into the habit of good attendance and punctuality.
- Last-minute cramming** may get you a 2:1, consistent work pays off in the long run.

* borderline = *a borderline pass in an exam is when you only just pass, a borderline fail is when you fail but only by a point or two.*

** cramming = *trying to revise a lot just before an exam*

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TEACHER'S NOTES

LEVEL - Intermediate + SUITABLE FOR - young people who are studying at university.

PRE-READING 1

Go through with class

PRE-READING 2

1 E, 2 D, 3 C, 4 G, 5 A, 6 F, 7 B

PRE-READING 3

Do this as a pair-work. It will help the students to start thinking of the qualities of good students.

READING

The reading is done as a jigsaw reading. Students are in pairs A-B, A-B, A-B ... Student A reads one text, student B reads the other. They complete the table with their information. Afterwards, they ask each other to complete the missing information.

Student	Melissa Malins	Francesca Stellman
University	King's College London	University College London
Degree	~ mathematics	anthropology and linguistics
Why is she so special?	got a first, prize for second most meritorious Maths. graduate	only person to get a first in her year
What study techniques did she follow to be successful?	put in a lot of work attended nearly all lectures made notes copied notes up in colour worked in study groups and on own used parrot fashion, mnemonics and rhymes	organised her time well worked and prepared for essays in advance did all the reading for each essay planned ahead spent 6 hours a day revising learnt a few topics well prepared using past exam papers tried to also relax and not work too late

POST-READING VOCABULARY WORK 1

Students read their text to complete the missing words to make up the word pairs. The idea is to get the students to focus on common collocations.

At this point, you might decide to let them read the other text as well.

Melissa Malins		Francesca Stellman	
well	IN ADVANCE	WELL	in advance
A HAPPY	medium	living	AT HOME
in the final	STAGES	PARENTAL	support
parrot	FASHION	a social	LIFE
HARD	work	an essay	DEADLINE

TEACHER'S NOTES CONTINUED.

POST-READING VOCABULARY WORK 2

Students complete the sentences with the missing prepositions. Afterwards, they could dictate their sentences to their partner.

Melissa Malins	Francesca Stellman
1 Melissa graduated FROM Kings College London.	1 Francesca was the only person to get a first IN her year.
2 WITH a first	2 She said that doing a joint degree meant that she had two exams to revise FOR
3 She said she put a lot of work IN during the year	3 Her teachers had commented ON how good her bibliographies and research was.
4 She always made notes IN lectures	4 She also thought that living AT home helped her
5 and copied them UP	5 as she could work IN peace
6 She found it difficult to concentrate ON all her subjects	6 She said self-motivation was important as if you don't do work, the lecturers won't chase you UP
7 and not focus too hard ON just one subject.	7 She tried to list the arguments ON both sides of a subject.

POST-READING DISCUSSION

If you have a large class, get pairs to do this first, then put two pairs together to get them to re-discuss it, and then discuss it with the whole group.

Monitor their discussion and afterwards give feedback on the good things they said, the errors they made and any pronunciation problems.

OTHER IDEAS

1. Students could read out their text to their partner pausing now and then. Their partner has to guess which word will come next.
- 2 Students could choose 5 words or expressions that they would like to remember and make a note of them in their notebooks.
- 3 You could choose a few short sentences from the text. Say them at a natural speed to the class and ask them how many words were in the sentence.
- 4 Students write a similar article / similar list of "rules" called "How to fail your degree!"
- 5 Student could discuss how they would like to improve their own study skills.