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Guide to self-studying for niche A LEVEL SUBJECTS

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If this article has caught your eye, it likely means that you are or are thinking of being someone who breaks away from convention to pursue your passion amongst the less popular A level. If so, you have probably come to terms with the myriad issues you will face, starting with the glaring lack of resources. You may also have realised that self-studying might be the only way to cope with this problem. This article will hopefully help guide you on this journey.

The first step to self-studying a subject is to thoroughly understand its structure. Visit the official websites of your exam boards and download the specification or syllabus. This document is, in simple terms, the map of your course. It details all the information you need to know, including the weightage of marks and relevant external resources. If you are entirely self-studying the subjects, it is crucial to go through your specification or syllabus a few times to get a thorough understanding of how your exam will take place, if the procedure will be different from the standard, and which segments you need to study. Use this document to understand and study each topic well.

Many niche A level subjects, like law, psychology, and history, experience the problem of not having locally available books or qualified teachers. Now what do you do when the standard methods of learning fail you but you are determined not to quit? Well, you turn to the old friend of

mankind: the internet.

One of the most helpful resources I found was notes2you on Wix, which offers comprehensive notes and past papers across a variety of niche subjects. If this website does not work out for you, YouTube is always a treasure trove for all, but other sites such as SaveMyExams or Revision World carry all the necessary resources as well. Between you and me, these sites single-handedly helped me pass after I put off studying for my exams for months.

Not just that, you may be missing the sense of camaraderie one gets from suffering together with their friends in a coaching centre for hours on end. But what if I told you that can be replicated on a virtual level as well? Lo and behold, the world of Reddit. While problematic to a certain degree, this site does have its wonders, one of them being the forum for suffering A level students. Here, you can share your woes, get insight from others who have already taken the exam, and take notes from those who can spare it.

Now, what is the use of knowing all this if you simply save these sites or forget about your syllabus until two weeks before the exam? The essence of self-study is discipline. It is easy to lose track of studying a subject that you are not getting formal lessons in. To combat this, begin by creating a study schedule that allocates time to each topic in the syllabus. Break your work into manageable sections and set realistic deadlines to complete them. Use tools like digital planners or apps to track your progress. As

you are learning things alone, it may be harder for you to grasp concepts and, thus, any streak of laziness will set your progress back.

Now you have learned your course, finished all topics and ticked off all your goals from your list. What next? Time to practise past papers. Practising past papers is the only similarity that nearly all A level subjects share. From art prompts to essay questions, past papers are invaluable for understanding exam patterns and honing your skills in answering questions effectively. By solving these, you can quickly realise your inconsistencies and work on them to get better. Try your best to finish at least 6 years' worth of past papers to have a stronghold on the subject. Remember, examiners often look for specific keywords and phrasing, so reviewing official mark schemes is essential. Use the marking schemes to check your answers and understand how to improve.

Self-studying a niche A level subject can be challenging, but it's entirely achievable. Focus on understanding your syllabus, use online resources and forums for support, stick to a disciplined study plan, and practice past papers to build confidence. While the journey may feel lonely, remember there's a global community of students facing the same challenges. Stay motivated and success will be within reach!

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