

EDUCATION

How English medium students can effectively utilise online resources

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Picture this: You spent the entire school year frolicking around coaching centres with pals, quoting TikTok references memorised better than your board exam syllabus. The only thing sourer than the tamarind at your coaching's designated *fuchka* stall? The expressions on your parents' faces on results day.

Depending on coaching as a rite of passage is a rabbit hole we all fall into, and not everyone can find a "Wonderland" like Alice. However, it's important to note that there are numerous free online resources available that, when utilised effectively, can significantly improve your grades.

Plan accordingly

The coaching environment can feel overstimulating for many students. For me, it was the constant clicking of pens, the crowd of students squeezed together in a small room, the fidgety deskmate, and that one student firing away questions at the teacher. And yet, I hesitated to leave—if everyone's learning from this very hyped, famous teacher, why can't I?

Everyone needs a game plan before attempting something major. Studying independently is only fruitful if you're confident enough in your self-teaching abilities. Some students need concepts broken down into steps, whereas others prefer to read and marinate in the content. That being said, online resources will only prove useful if you're disciplined enough to learn, retain, and apply.

Finding the right online resources

The first mistake many of us make is trying to consume every YouTube video ever made on a topic. If you're expecting that a marathon on organic chemistry will make you the next Marie Curie, you're in for a rude awakening. The internet is overflowing with videos, notes, and websites to refer to, catering to both the Cambridge and Edexcel examination boards. A famous friend to all is Khan Academy, but it's the wrong first stop to make if you're looking for syllabus-accurate content.

Search for the subject code instead, for example, "Physics 9702 (Cambridge)". This usually leads you to resources that have a thorough rundown of individual topics, and good ones usually follow the sequence of the syllabus. Quality over quantity is key, so find syllabus-aligned content that is easy to digest.

Finding resources that actually make sense

Physics was one of the subjects that gave me a few grey hairs on the way to getting decent grades. I tried many coaching centres, and was still blank when it came to solving questions.

The UK-based examination syllabuses are designed with



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

concepts that are conceptually easy to grasp but difficult to apply. After some trial and error, I discovered YouTube channels like Alpha Learning, Prosperity Academy, and O/A-Level Mathematics, among others, that both explained topics and solved past papers.

Moreover, the Reddit app has numerous communities where students share their resources, and some even provide links to handwritten notes—if you're someone whose handwriting resembles more chaos than cursive.

You'll find more study materials on the internet than any coaching centres can provide, in several versions and forms as well. The confidence builds slowly, and you might even find that you're ahead of your peers who are fully dependent on coaching centres.

When learning stops being a luxury

With the way the private education sector functions, the accumulated cost of coaching can often total a school's monthly fees. Not to mention the staggering additional cost to sit for mocks before exam season. You have access to every sort of material just a few clicks away, which will save you the tiring commute, with the sacrifice of spending less time with friends.

Are you actually learning anything?

You have the colourful sticky notes, the set of five-coloured pens, and the pastel highlighters. However, you've reread

the same paragraph for the past hour, replayed the playlist twice, and still, there remains an itch that feels unscratched. Independent study makes it painfully easy to feel productive without actually learning anything.

The simplest way to check whether a resource is working is to close it. If you can't explain the concept out loud, solve a question without peeking, or teach it to someone else, even an imaginary student, you probably haven't grasped it yet. Online learning only works when it's active: pausing videos, attempting questions, making mistakes, and revisiting weak spots instead of endlessly consuming content. Sitting for mock exams also helps you estimate your preparation.

Board exams are perhaps one of the few moments in life where you need to reach your maximum academic potential, so don't let yourself become a procrastination connoisseur. It's unrealistic to want great grades with a quarter of the effort and then blame the difficulty of the exam. So, always walk into an exam room expecting the worst, or you'll be stuck in the loop of A levels while you watch others live your shiny university dreams.

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