This advice will help you as you prepare for your school based Trial examination and the HSC examination itself. You can also dip into it for helpful sections if you are faced with a school based assessment item. The HSC examination will test many skills, and it is important for you to realise that one of the first of these is the skill of time management.

PLANNING YOUR TIME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION</th>
<th>CONTENT AREA</th>
<th>WORTH</th>
<th>TIME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>World War I 1914–1919</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>45 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>National Studies</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>45 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Personalities in the 20th century</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>45 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>International Studies in Peace and Conflict</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>45 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key points to remember as you plan your time are:

- **You will be given reading time before the commencement of the examination, which should be used to carefully read the relevant sections of the paper.**
- **Do not waste time looking at questions that do not apply to the subjects you have studied, and never be tempted to answer a question from a topic you have not studied ‘because it looks easier’. You will not be able to compete with those students who have studied this topic in detail.**
- **You may answer the questions in any order. Some argue that you should do your ‘best’ topic first, as this will give you a confident start, leaving your least favourite topic till last. However, as most of the reading time will be taken up with reading and comprehending the World War I sources, we recommend starting with this topic while your mind is centred on it.**
- **In whatever order you choose to answer the sections, it is vital that you remember that they are of equal value and therefore deserve equal time. A common mistake is for candidates to devote too much time to their first response (commonly WWI) and to leave insufficient time to answer their final section.**
- **When full essays are required in Sections II and IV you are advised to plan your essay for five minutes then write for the remaining forty minutes. This is a far better use of your time than rushing pen to paper then stopping several times during the process to think what comes next. The result of this latter approach is often a disjointed essay that will not attract good marks.**

It is important for you to remember that the HSC is just as much a test of your time management skills as it is of your knowledge of content or writing technique. Otherwise excellent candidates can prejudice their final result by a misallocation of time and weaker candidates can improve their performance by following the advice above.
THE MANDATORY SECTION: WORLD WAR I, 1914–1919

It is first essential to ensure that you are aware of the syllabus content requirements and their implications for study:

War on the Western Front
The reasons for the stalemate on the Western Front:

- the failure of the Schlieffen Plan
- the superiority of defensive over offensive weapons
- the resort to trench warfare and the lack of knowledge of how to break it

The nature of trench warfare and life in the trenches, dealing with experiences of Allied and German soldiers:

- conditions inflicted by the enemy
- conditions inflicted by the environment e.g. disease
- differing conditions experienced by Allied and German troops and the reasons for this (e.g., trench construction and lie of the land)

Overview of strategies and tactics to break the stalemate including key battles (Verdun, the Somme, Passchendaele):

- going ‘over the top’
- new weapons: gas and tanks
- questions of leadership: Haig, for and against

Changing attitudes of Allied and German soldiers to the war over time:

- attitudes to the fighting
- attitudes towards the enemy
- attitudes to the war as it progressed over time
- attitudes of soldiers to their officers
- attitudes towards civilians ‘back home’

The home fronts in Britain and Germany
Total war and its social and economic impact on civilians in Britain and Germany:

- sentiments towards the enemy
- economic and social changes
- rationing
- the blockade of Germany
- key differences between British and German experiences

Recruitment, conscription, censorship and propaganda in Britain and Germany:

- different attitudes in Britain and Germany towards conscription
- early enthusiasm leading to disillusionment
- the stages through which Britain moved to conscription
• the fate of Kitchener’s new armies
• the role of the atrocity story

The variety of attitudes to the war and how they changed over time in Britain and Germany:
• from enthusiasm to disillusion
• the importance of ‘duty’
• defeatism in Germany

The impact of the war on women’s lives and experiences in Britain:
• changing circumstances according to class
• improvement of women’s economic position
• from homemaker to shell maker
• political rewards at the end of the war
• back to the kitchen!

Turning points
Impacts of the entry of the USA and of the Russian withdrawal:
• early neutrality of the USA
• the effect of the Lusitania sinking
• unrestricted submarine war
• the Zimmermann telegram
• impact of the Russian revolution on the Russian army
• freeing of German soldiers for transfer to the West

Ludendorff’s Spring Offensive and the Allied response:
• changing methods of warfare
• reasons for early successes and subsequent failure

Allied Victory
Events leading to the Armistice, 1918:
• the ‘Black Day’ of 8 August 1918
• the advance to the Hindenburg Line

Reasons for the Allied victory and German collapse:
• technological and personnel advantages for the Allies
• German collapse on the Home Front

The roles and differing goals of Clemenceau, Lloyd George and Wilson in creating the Treaty of Versailles:
• contrast what they wanted with what they achieved
• the changing historiography of Versailles
ATTEMPTING THE WORLD WAR I QUESTION

For this topic there will be THREE short answer questions to be answered on the lines provided in the answer book. If you understand what the examiners are looking for it will help you in the way that you respond.

Question 1 (worth 5 marks) tests your ability to locate and comprehend information in the sources. Your responses should be brief, taken only from the source(s) and without any reference to additional ‘own knowledge’.

Question 2 (worth ten marks) requires you to link specified sources with your own knowledge to produce a reasoned response in the context of a specific question.

This can be done in several ways:

• Point to ways in which the sources might support or be consistent with what you already know
• Point to contradictions between what you know and what the sources tell you
• Point to how a particular source amplifies your own knowledge, or how facets of your knowledge are amplified by the sources.

Our recommendation is that you start with a point from your own knowledge then bring in the sources.

A SAMPLE QUESTION:

Using Sources A, B and C and your own knowledge, explain how and why the attitudes of soldiers towards life at the front differed.


‘I adore war, it’s like a big picnic without the object lesson of a picnic. I’ve never been so well or so happy. No-body grumbles at one for being dirty. I’ve only had my boots off once in the last ten days and only washed twice but we cook good hot food in the dark in the morning before we start and in the night we get back to our horses and we take our good cold rations with us in the daytime. It is all the best fun. I have never, never felt so well or so happy or enjoyed anything so much. It just suits my stolid health and stolid nerves and barbaric disposition. The fighting and excitement vitalises everything, every sight, word and action.’

SOURCE B: Captain Malcolm Kennedy of the 1st Battalion Scottish Rifles, describing life in the trenches in 1915.

‘The constant immersion in icy cold water played havoc with the feet, and made them swell to such an extent that at times it was agony to keep on one’s boots. To take them off, however, to gain relief would have been fatal, as it would have been impossible to pull them on again...No one who was not there can fully appreciate the excruciating agonies and misery through which the men had to go in those days before anti-trench feet measures were taken...Padding about by day, sometimes with water above the knees; standing at night, hour after hour on sentry duty, while the drenched boots, puttees and breeches became stiff like cardboard with ice from the freezing cold air. Rain, snow, sleet, wind, mud and general discomfort all added their bit to the misery of trench life...the terrible monotony of the daily and nightly routine; manual labour and sentry duty night and day with insufficient sleep; never warm, never dry; dog-tired and weary in body and mind.’

SOURCE C: From an Australian soldier’s letter home, 17/8/1916

‘Strike me pink the square heads are dead mongrels. They will keep firing until you are two yards off them & then drop their rifle & ask for mercy. They get it too right where the chicken gets the axe...I...will fix a few more before I have finished. Its good sport father when the bayonet goes in there [sic] eyes bulge out like prawns.’
• From your knowledge you could write about the mixed attitudes to war shown by the soldiers: some liked it, some hated it, most were just ‘doing their duty.’ Give reasons for this variety of emotions then bring in the sources to illustrate your points.

• From your knowledge you could write about the unpleasant conditions brought about by nature, such as the weather, rats, lice or frostbite. Then bring in Source B to support your point.

• From your knowledge you could write about the attitudes of the soldiers towards the enemy. Opinions varied but overall there was a grudging respect. You can contrast this with Source C.

Question 3 (worth 10 marks) requires you to analyse nominated sources in the context of a specific question with reference to their usefulness for a historian, commenting upon their reliability and the perspective shown.

Usefulness: To be useful or valuable to the historian, the source must be reliable as evidence. That is, it must be relevant. It does not necessarily have to be ‘true.’ Look at the context. All sources are likely to be useful, but you will need to say why and to what degree.

Reliability: There are two questions for assessing reliability. Is the information in the source likely to be accurate or not? If not, is the source still reliable as evidence for the historian?

Perspective: Is the source from the Allied or the German viewpoint? Is it an official document, which might give it a certain authority or the scribblings of a soldier in the trench? Is it an immediate reaction or a considered viewpoint with the benefit of hindsight?

A SAMPLE QUESTION

Considering the syllabus topic: The roles and differing goals of Clemenceau, Lloyd George and Wilson in creating the Treaty of Versailles.

Question 3 (10 marks)

Assess how useful Sources A and D would be for a historian studying the creation of the Treaty of Versailles.

In your answer consider the perspectives provided by the two sources and their reliability.

Source A: French President Georges Clemenceau speaking about Germany in Paris at the conclusion of the Peace Conference in 1919

‘Their trouble is that they (the Germans) see the future only through the blood-red mists of a civilisation grafted upon the survival of barbarism. If they can make themselves over, they will, little by little, attain the position to which they are justly entitled in the world. If they cannot, the victors, whether they realise it or not, must continue to mount close guard over lands whose borders have become as President Wilson said, “the frontiers of freedom.” The maintenance of these frontiers which was the constant aim of French effort at the Conference, is of no small moment.’

Source D: An extract from Diplomacy written by the American academic Henry Kissinger and published in 1994

‘The nations of Europe came to blame their suffering on the inherent evil of their adversaries, and convinced themselves that compromise could bring no real peace; the enemy had to be totally defeated or the war fought to utter exhaustion...

‘The debacle of the Treaty of Versailles was structural ... Its terms were too onerous [harsh] for conciliation but not severe enough for permanent subjugation. In truth it was not easy to strike a balance between satisfying and subjugating Germany... Thus, the framers of the Versailles settlement achieved the precise opposite of what they had set out to do.’
When discussing the usefulness of both of these sources, be mindful that they are (as noted on previous page) relevant to the topic and they are therefore useful. What you will be required to do is assess the nature of that usefulness.

In this instance usefulness is determined by perspective—both the point of view and the moment in time from which the author of the source views the event.

In this instance, Source A offers a point of view from 1919. You would also note that the opinion offered is that of the French President. Source D presents a point of view from 1994. The author of the source is an American academic. You might, therefore, want to think about the opinions of an academic with little or no personal involvement compared and contrasted with the view offered by a French politician from the time.

Furthermore, Source A can only offer a short-term assessment of the event; by contrast, Source D has had the opportunity to view the event from a much longer-term perspective.

It is important to remember that primary sources are not necessarily any more useful or reliable than secondary sources. The usefulness of the source must be considered carefully in the light of just what the historian wants to know. Therefore, do not assess the sources in the abstract; be careful to always link your assessment of them back to the focus of the question—in this case, ‘the creation of the Treaty of Versailles’.

The reliability of each of these sources can be considered in terms of truthfulness or accuracy, and (even if you suspect that they are not accurate or truthful) in terms of their reliability as evidence of a particular point of view.

For example, Source A is the publicly expressed point of view of a French politician from the time. Think about whether or not all of the things politicians say in public are completely truthful.

One of the key elements involved in any consideration of reliability is motive. As you write about the reliability of both Sources A and D, consider the motives of the author of the source. In the case of Source A, what does Clemenceau want and why? In the case of Source D, what is Kissinger’s likely motive?

The key to a consideration of these types of sources is to allow for the fact that in the examination format they are only limited extracts, and that to make a valid judgement about their usefulness and reliability, the historian would want to view the entire source and to compare and contrast the opinion offered by the source with other relevant sources and opinions.

In the end, Source A and Source D are useful as starting points for further research and investigation they are not a sufficient basis for any final judgements about the creation of the Treaty of Versailles.
WRITING THE ESSAY

You will write essays for your National Study and your International Study in Peace and Conflict, and ’mini-essays’ for your Personality Study. So it is a good idea to develop a good essay technique!

First, you should understand the language of essay questions. Study the glossary of terms put out by the Board of Studies. You must be very familiar with these—do not lose marks because you are unsure of what you are being asked to do. Remember, the familiar ‘how’, ‘why’ and ‘to what extent’ appear frequently as well. Those terms which are set in **bold** in the list below are the more likely to be used in Modern History questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>account, account for</th>
<th>state reasons for, report on. give an account of; narrate a series of events or transactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>analyse</strong></td>
<td>identify components and the relationship between them; draw out and relate implications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apply</td>
<td>use, utilise, employ in a particular situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appreciate</td>
<td>make a judgement about the value of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>assess</strong></td>
<td>make a judgment of value, quality, outcomes, results or size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>calculate</td>
<td>ascertain/determine from given facts, figures or information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clarify</td>
<td>make clear or plain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classify</td>
<td>arrange or include in classes/categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>compare</strong></td>
<td>show how things are similar or different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>construct</td>
<td>make; build; put together items or arguments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>contrast</strong></td>
<td>show how things are different or opposite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>critically analyse/evaluate</strong></td>
<td>add a degree or level of accuracy depth, knowledge and understanding, logic, questioning, reflection and quality to analyse or evaluate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deduce</td>
<td>draw conclusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>define</td>
<td>state meaning and identify essential qualities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrate</td>
<td>show by example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>describe</strong></td>
<td>provide characteristics and features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>discuss</strong></td>
<td>identify issues and provide points for and/or against</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>distinguish</td>
<td>recognise or note/indicate as being distinct or different from; to note differences between</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>evaluate</strong></td>
<td>make a judgement based on criteria; determine the value of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>examine</td>
<td>inquire into</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>explain</strong></td>
<td>relate cause and effect; make the relationships between things evident; provide why and/or how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extract</td>
<td>choose relevant and/or appropriate details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extrapolate</td>
<td>infer from what is known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identify</td>
<td>recognise and name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interpret</td>
<td>draw meaning from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>investigate</td>
<td>plan, inquire into and draw conclusions about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>justify</td>
<td>support an argument or conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>outline</strong></td>
<td>sketch in general terms; indicate the main features of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>predict</td>
<td>suggest what may happen based on available information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>propose</td>
<td>put forward (for example a point of view, idea, argument, suggestion) for consideration or action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present</td>
<td>give remembered ideas, facts or experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recommend</td>
<td>provide reasons in favour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recount</td>
<td>retell a series of events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>summarise</td>
<td>express, concisely, the relevant details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>synthesise</td>
<td>put together various elements to make a whole</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
So now you have worked out what the question wants you to do. What next?

**The essay process:**

**Think about the question.** What do the key instruction words mean? What content is required? Underline key words or phrases ('assess,' 'to what extent,' etc.) These are the 'discriminators' that will sort out the analysers from the narrative writers. Take care to note any dates that are given in the essay and make sure you stick to them—they are there for your guidance and must be adhered to. You will waste your time if you write about the wrong period of history and will not receive any credit for doing this.

**Plan your answer.** Jot down ideas and key points in logical order. These points will become the skeleton of the finished essay. If you have 45 minutes for the essay, use up to 5 minutes to plan, then write continuously. It is time well spent.

**Think about the evidence for each of these points.** Can you support or illustrate them with examples? Jot down additional supporting details.

**To quote or not to quote?** There is no credit to be gained by ‘dropping’ the names of famous historians, but a short and appropriate reference to a historian and his or her view will indicate that you have researched your topic. There is no ‘target number’ of references that you should make in an essay to gain good marks. Indeed, overquoting, particularly at length, can damage the essay because it breaks up the flow of the argument.

**Write your introduction.** This should clearly provide an overview to the whole question. Its style is important, as it sets the tone for the rest of the essay. If you have not indicated the answer to the question in your opening paragraph, it is a bad opening paragraph.

**Build up each planned point into a paragraph.** Each paragraph should begin with an indication of its main theme. The rest of the paragraph then supports that theme with facts, details, quotations, examples, etc. Remember to be grammatical, formal, and concise. Literary style is very important.

**Sum it up in your concluding paragraph.** A telling fact or apt quotation can be used here. Do not let your essay tail off or fade away without a concluding paragraph.

In an exam situation, allow time (a couple of minutes will do) to go over your essay to eliminate silly mistakes of grammar, spelling, etc.

For a research assessment item or classwork essay, you should take more time to plan the finished product, using the following process.

- **Tidy up grammar, spelling and punctuation.**
- **Eliminate extra words or ‘padding;’ making sure every word or sentence adds something; if not, remove it!**
- **Rework sentence structure if necessary.**
- **Check paragraphing and word order.**
- **Your teacher may have given you a list of criteria on which the essay will be marked. Does your essay measure up to these?**
- **Rewrite your first draft so that it represents your best effort—the first draft rarely does!**
Common faults in essays

Be aware of the following common faults in essays. Check your work to ensure you have not made any of these kinds of errors:

- *all narrative and no interpretation*
- *generalisations with no evidence to back them up*
- *lack of structured argument in logically ordered paragraphs*
- *lack of fluency in writing style.*

A practical example

This example is taken from the National Study topic Germany 1918–39. Although you may not study this option, you can still learn lessons about the construction of essays from reading it.

**Question**: Popular support was more important than terror in securing Hitler’s leadership in the 1930s. To what extent do you agree with this statement? Support your arguments with evidence from this period.

The key phrase is ‘to what extent’. This essay requires an evaluation of the foundations of Hitler’s leadership, not a narrative account of the events from 1933 onwards. A ‘to what extent’ opening usually gives the student the opportunity to argue a topic from both sides. This opportunity should be taken!

An example of a poor introductory paragraph

In January 1933, Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany in a coalition with other Nationalist politicians. Soon after, as a result of the Reichstag fire, the Nazis won a significant victory in the March election and began to put their policies into action. They began on 1 April, with a boycott of Jewish shops and businesses.

Can you see why this is a bad beginning? It is historically correct. But it does not answer the question asked. It could be about anything to do with Germany in the 1930s. Contrast the paragraph above with the one below:

Despite the fact that the Nazis came to power without ever having gained a majority of popular support, Hitler’s regime, and especially Hitler himself, became enormously popular throughout Germany in the 1930s. A restoration of economic fortunes and national pride produced great support for the regime, but underlying this ran a current of enforcement and terror that ensured the compliance of the majority.

This paragraph gives a clear indication that the two major themes are understood and suggests a relationship between them. It also gives a hint of some themes to be further explored in the essay.
Planning the body

A narrative answer to this question will run through the key events of the period without putting them into the context of the question. Hence, a candidate may mention the establishment of concentration camps, the activities of the Gestapo, the Strength Through Joy movement, the success of public works, and anti-Semitic activities – and be surprised to receive no more than an average mark. All these pieces of information are valid for this essay. The skill is to use them properly so it is clear that you are analysing the question.

Make sure that each paragraph has a clear theme, as shown in its theme sentence. Here are some suggestions for themes for this essay:

- **The personal popularity of Hitler.** Main point of theme sentence: although the activities of the Nazi party were sometimes disliked, Hitler’s personal approval rating remained high throughout the period.
- **Economic progress.** Main point of theme sentence: the reduction of unemployment and labour schemes were popular measures.
- **Restoration of national pride.** Main point of theme sentence: foreign policy successes from 1939 onwards cemented the popularity of the Nazis.
- **Propaganda and the work of Goebbels.** Main point of theme sentence: the work of Goebbels emphasised the achievements of Nazism and thus made the regime more popular.
- **Anti-semitism.** Main point of theme sentence: this can be a key paragraph, drawing upon recent research to emphasise how persecution of the Jews was a very popular measure, but the issue can also be used to illustrate the ‘terror’ side of the question.
- **The establishment of concentration camps.** Main point of theme sentence: political opponents could fear retribution for speaking out.
- **The agencies of enforcement.** Main point of theme sentence: through the SS, SA and the Gestapo the Nazis could intimidate people.
- **The Nazification of institutions (e.g., the courts and the church).** Main point of theme sentence: all aspects of institutional life were made to conform to the Nazis expectations, making dissent almost impossible.
- **Conclusion.** Draw the points of the argument together to show that Hitler’s regime was both popular and feared. Make an assessment of which you think was the most influential factor.

A FINAL WORD

Remember that essay technique is as important as your background knowledge of the subject. You will not succeed unless you make the attempt to master both.