

Super-curricular Learning 2024



A Guide for Y10 Students and Parents

RCS (with thanks to Oxford University's Eastern Consortium of Colleges,
Hertford College, Oxford and Emmanuel College, Cambridge)



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What is super-curricular learning?

Why does it matter?

How can prospective Oxbridge* applicants access resources?

How should super-curricular learning be recorded?



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What is super-curricular learning?

It is, simply put, “To boldly go beyond the curriculum!”

It should stretch and challenge you.

It is not extra-curricular – that is your hobbies, CCF, sport, music or drama etc.

Ideally, it should encompass “Doing”, “Listening”, “Reading”, “Talking” and “Watching”.



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Why do it?

If you broaden subject knowledge/skills; deepen understanding; and focus on the stage you are at in your learning rather than your age...

Then...

You should enjoy better choices when selecting A Level and university courses; attain better results at GCSE and A Level; avoid becoming too narrow in your intellectual outlook; gain confidence in talking about academic subjects; and be better prepared for different challenges such as an EPQ in the Sixth Form.



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Let us consider the focus you will probably have in the Sixth Form.

Which degree do you want to study?

How will you write your Personal statement?

If you are applying to Oxford or Cambridge especially, but other courses and universities as well, *how will you come across at interview?*

So, what skills or attributes might help with this?



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Asking questions.



Critical thinking involves asking questions... What is the context?



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We have recently been through a General Election campaign.

Can you identify bias or inference in newspaper articles? To what extent is the purpose of the article to inform or to persuade? Start thinking critically by reading the same news story in different newspapers (the ones on this page all have free on-line editions). How do the papers represent the story differently? What do they want you to think about it and why? What are the facts of the story and where is the paper implying things. If you were given an article and not told which paper it came from, could you make an educated guess about where it was from?



Daily Mail

THE Sun

THE INDEPENDENT

Telegraph.co.uk

theguardian



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Can you make connections?

An essential skill at university is the ability to identify connections between different concepts. An Oxbridge interview will often test you on how well you can apply existing knowledge to a new problem.



Ladybirds are red. So are strawberries. Why?



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Generating other ideas.

If you have liked something you have already studied why not find other books by the same author, or books in the same genre by a different author? It is useful to “compare and contrast” and to go beyond what is on the syllabus reading list.



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THE HANDMAID'S
TALE

Margaret Atwood
**The Handmaid's
Tale**

Other books by
Margaret
Atwood

Books
within
the same
genre

Other
dystopian
literature

Other
speculative
literature

Other related
material

Book
reviews

Interviews
with the
author

Have the
book or
author been
in the news
recently?



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Talking about your subject.

One of the things that teachers look for in the most able of their students is the ability to talk about the subjects that interest them confidently and enthusiastically.

Of course, it does not have to be connected to a GCSE or A Level subject's syllabus. Have you considered giving a presentation to you Form? Or leading a discussion at a lunchtime Club or Society?

The skill of ORACY is rather an important one in life and the ability to formulate an argument in a debate often helps you write more persuasively too.



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Have a look at OXPLORE.

It is Oxford University's portal to what it describes as "The Home of Big Questions". It is designed to be accessible from ages 11 to 18: <https://explore.org/>.

It is digitally interactive, tackles a range of topics and complex ideas and links to debates and research undertaken at the University.

It might be the sort of thing you could share and discuss with friends.



OX?PLORE



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A couple of resources designed by Oxford University to help prepare those wanting to apply to them include:

The [Hertford super-curricular challenge](#), which compiles some of their suggestions for good starting places for super-curricular exploration for different subject areas.

University College's [Staircase 12 Reading Bank](#), which compiles super-curricular book reviews from their current undergraduates and can easily be filtered by subject interest.

[Springboard by Oxford for East of England](#) is a series of online academic taster sessions led by graduate students at Oxford on a wide variety of topics. This was a project that began over the pandemic as a collaboration between Hertford, Balliol and Wadham Colleges.



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Super-curricular Learning Resources

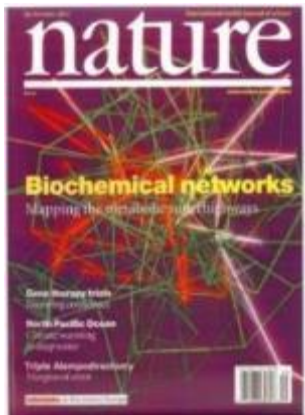


92-95 FM



The British Museum

Pitt Rivers MUSEUM
Anthropology and World Archaeology



The Economist



iWantToStudyEngineering

A website to help you compete for engineering places at top universities.

UCAS

This is a far from exhaustive list. For Oxbridge, but also many other universities, there are: degree course reading lists; podcasts/lectures; a digital resources hub, essay and other competitions etc.

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses/suggested-subject-resources>

They are obviously most suitable for A Level students but they provide a starting point.

Do not feel you have to read only in one subject, an interdisciplinary approach can be important!

The “A Very Short Introduction” series are particularly useful if you have not studied a subject at A Level.

Attend School societies and clubs.

Join with groups of likeminded students.

Visit sites of interest, galleries, historic sites, museums, science centres, libraries etc.



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How should super-curricular learning be recorded?

You might think it too early to start writing your university Personal statement but it is good practice to think about how you might record your academic or intellectual inquiries and progress.

You ought to keep some sort of record of books you have read or podcasts you have watched, interesting places you have visited etc.

Can you go the additional stage of making a short note: what was the key argument or theme? Did you find it convincing? If so, why? Did it lead you to a next step?



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A Footnote: Making the most of opportunities in School

We have already highlighted possibilities such as lunchtime clubs and societies. However, in Maths you could do the UKMT Intermediate Mathematical Challenge this year, or in MFL there is the Stephen Spender Prize for poetry in translation, the Anthea Bell Prize for young translators and the Mother Tongue, Other Tongue poetry competition, whilst D&T support pupils in the Engineering Education Scheme. All of these present opportunities for super-curricular learning and there are lots, lots more!



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