

Ace Your VCE English: Six tips.

1. Make the Dictionary your friend

If you don't have a dictionary, get one. If you don't have a hard-copy version, a phone or tablet app will do. You must have a dictionary and you must learn how to use it. (Sounds easy – but a surprising number of students don't really know how to use a dictionary and rarely use it.)

- Try this: Look up the word **onerous**. Under the definition of **onerous** you will find the word **burdensome**. Now look up the word **burdensome**, there you will find the word **connotes**. Look up the word **connotes**. Now you have 3 new words AND you understand what the word onerous really means. Get into the habit of doing this for each word you encounter and don't understand. It is essential at this stage of your education that you expand your vocabulary as much as you can.

2. On-line ideas

VCE work requires you to develop themes, arguments and ideas but this is not always as easy as it initially seems. Try watching some short videos from [TED](#) or *Justice: A journey in moral reasoning* by [Michael Sanders](#) at Harvard. These will give you a break from straight school work while also providing you with ideas you can use.

3. Read a Newspaper

The single most significant thing you can do to help improve your English marks is become a regular newspaper reader. In VCE you will be required to do exercises in media analysis and to express a point of view about the world. Newspapers are essential for this. In year 11 you should be aiming for at least one newspaper per week, by year 12 you should be reading at least 3-4 per week.

1. Don't choose the Melbourne Herald-Sun. The reading age of the Herald-Sun is year 6. Yes that's right. A year six student should be able to read the Herald-Sun! You are in year 11 or 12. You need to be reading something a bit more advanced. I suggest, either the AGE or the Australian.
2. If you really do find these too boring try: [The Drum](#), [The Zone](#), or [The Punch](#) (all available on-line)
3. If you are really adventurous you could try, the English Guardian, or the New York Times or Le Monde (English Addition)

4. Read your texts before the start of the year

Make an effort to get your reading lists early and to read your texts over the holidays. However, I recommend that you don't just read those texts. Try to read other books as well. Read what you enjoy. Read what stretches you. Try something from either of the two book lists suggested on this page.

5. Keep a word bank (you can download one from this page)

For each book you read, fill in a word bank

Keep a separate word bank or word diary for words you encounter in newspapers or elsewhere.

6. Start a blog and write every day

Think about writing a blog of your experience. There are all sorts of good reasons to do this, it can help you unwind and connect with others also doing VCE, it will improve your self confidence and ability to express yourself, and it will improve your writing. There are numerous sites that provide free blog opportunities [WordPress](#) is just one but there are many others. You could try joining [writing.com](#) not only is it free, but people will also provide feedback on your writing.