

## Syrian refugee top student in Australia school

15th December, 2016



A Syrian refugee who could hardly speak a word of English two years ago has just passed his high school exams in Australia with flying colours. Saad Al-Kaab, 19, has just graduated with the top marks at one of Australia's biggest high schools. His outstanding overall grades put him in the top 4 per cent of all graduates in Melbourne. Saad fled the civil war in Syria to start a new life in Australia. He said: "Coming to a place where you don't know how to speak, where you don't understand people - it was really hard...because it just felt unreal." He added: "It really makes me sad to think that I have friends in my school back in Syria who were as good as me, but who didn't have the opportunity that I've had."

Saad said that he tried to learn English from his cousins for his first two months in Australia. Then he started to watch a popular political programme on television. It is a live broadcast of Australia's politicians questioning their prime minister about the issues of the day. He explained how the show helped his English. He said: "They use the best, persuasive language in parliament. They speak slowly and you can find the words." He said it was very different to Syrian politicians and parliament, where, "all they do is clap". Saad is very appreciative of his new beginning. He said: "I just want to say that you so much to Australia for giving me the opportunity. It's revived me and given me a new life."

Sources: [bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk) / [abc.net](http://abc.net) / [theage.com.au](http://theage.com.au)

### Writing

The best way to learn English is to watch English television. Discuss.

### Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

refugee / high school / exams / graduated / grades / a new life / understand / unreal / cousins / politics / television / prime minister / persuasive language / clap / thank you

### True / False

- The Syrian refugee wasn't very good at English two years ago. T / F
- The boy (Saad) attended Australia's biggest high school. T / F
- Saad was in the top 4% of students in the whole of Australia. T / F
- Saad is sad when he thinks about his friends in Syria. T / F
- Saad learnt English from watching a politics programme on TV. T / F
- Saad said the politicians spoke quickly and that helped him learn. T / F
- Saad said politicians in Syria clap a lot in the Syrian parliament. T / F
- Saad thanked Syria for giving him a new life. T / F

### Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- |                        |                 |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. <b>hardly</b>       | a. imaginary    |
| 2. <b>marks</b>        | b. excellent    |
| 3. <b>outstanding</b>  | c. convincing   |
| 4. <b>unreal</b>       | d. chance       |
| 5. <b>opportunity</b>  | e. thankful for |
| 6. <b>live</b>         | f. energized    |
| 7. <b>persuasive</b>   | g. barely       |
| 8. <b>clap</b>         | h. real-time    |
| 9. <b>appreciative</b> | i. applaud      |
| 10. <b>revived</b>     | j. grades       |

### Discussion – Student A

- How did you learn English?
- What do you think of the way Saad learnt English?
- What do you think of programmes of politicians discussing things?
- How important is English in the world today?
- How can we help more refugees to get a good education?
- How useful has English been to you?
- What are you appreciative of?
- What questions would you like to ask Saad?

## Phrase Match

- |   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| 1. A Syrian refugee who could hardly          | a. with flying colours  |
| 2. passed his high school exams in Australia  | b. language             |
| 3. outstanding overall                        | c. that I've had        |
| 4. it just felt                               | d. of his new beginning |
| 5. have the opportunity                       | e. issues of the day    |
| 6. a live                                     | f. speak a word         |
| 7. questioning their prime minister about the | g. given me a new life  |
| 8. persuasive                                 | h. unreal               |
| 9. Saad is very appreciative                  | i. grades               |
| 10. It's revived me and                       | j. broadcast            |

## Discussion – Student B

- Have you ever been the top student in your class?
- What do you think about what you read?
- What exams have you passed with flying colours?
- Why do you think the term 'flying colours' is used to describe success?
- Why do you think Saad did so well?
- What is it like being in a place where you can't speak the language?
- What do you know about the civil war in Syria?
- What advice do you have for Saad?

## Spelling

- with ygnfli colours
- His outstanding loravle grades
- the top 4 per cent of all dtrgeaaus
- Saad fled the liicv war in Syria
- it just felt aueln
- have the ttoupioyrnp that I've had
- learn English from his usocnis
- a popular lioitlcp programme
- a live abtaocdsr
- rpeeuiavss language
- politicians and apetmilran
- Saad is very iprcaevaepit

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. j	3. b	4. a	5. d
6. h	7. c	8. i	9. c	10. f

## Role Play

### Role A – Language

You think language is the most important school subject. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that aren't so important about their subjects. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): religion, sports or cookery.

### Role B – Religion

You think religion is the most important school subject. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that aren't so important about their subjects. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): language, sports or cookery.

### Role C – Sports

You think sports is the most important school subject. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that aren't so important about their subjects. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): religion, language or cookery.

### Role D – Cookery

You think cookery is the most important school subject. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that aren't so important about their subjects. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): religion, sports or language.

## Speaking – School Subjects

Rank these with your partner. Put the most important at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |            |           |
|------------|-----------|
| • language | • maths   |
| • IT       | • art     |
| • physics  | • sports  |
| • religion | • cookery |

### Answers – True False

a	T	b	F	c	F	d	T	e	T	f	F	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.