

SPANISH

Oralexam

Viva la conversación

Spanish is spoken by nearly half a billion people so a good command will come in very useful



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As I'm sure you're aware, Spanish is not just a Leaving Cert subject. There are over 400 million native speakers of Spanish, making it the second most spoken language in the world. It is not surprising then that many people choose to learn Spanish as a second language. In fact, Spanish is the most popular second language studied by native English speakers. You will benefit greatly from your

ability to speak Spanish if you ever choose to visit any of the 21 countries that speak it as a primary language.

With recent economic developments in South America, your skills in Spanish will also offer a variety of new working prospects. I hope you enjoy studying Spanish and I hope you put your skills to good use in the years to come.

The following articles concentrate

on the oral exam and section B of the written exam, which both present different challenges to students.

Marking breakdown:
Oral exam – 100 marks (25 per cent), 15 minutes
Listening exam – 80 marks (20 per cent), 40 minutes
Written exam – 220 marks (55 per cent), 2 hours and 30 minutes

400m

Number of native Spanish speakers worldwide

Oral exam

100 Marks – 25 per cent
General conversation – 70 marks 17.5 per cent
Roleplay – 30 Marks – 7.5 per cent

GENERAL CONVERSATION

Preparation tips

- Use every opportunity to practise speaking Spanish.
- Prepare responses to common personal questions. Avoid memorising scripts.
- Practise speaking Spanish with a friend from class. Ideally make a day or lunch (perhaps with tapas) when you can only speak Spanish to each other. Chat about your daily routine and try introducing current affairs.
- Practise vocabulary and expressions you find difficult to pronounce.
- Rehearse questions in different tenses.
- Use as many verbs as possible in your response, a minimum of seven verbs in each tense. Avoid making the examiner work to assess your ability.
- For example, if the examiner asks “What did you do last weekend?”, don't merely respond with a single activity. To demonstrate a good grasp of the language and an extensive vocabulary, cover the entire day from getting up in the morning to going to bed at night.
- Link vocabulary with different verbs. Use both regular and irregular verbs for each tense.
- Read your responses out loud once a day, to improve your pronunciation and intonation.
- Record the conversations and listen to them during the day instead of your music.
- Listen to your classmates when the teacher is engaged with them, you will benefit from it. Avoid switching off.
- Become acquainted with Spanish culture and traditions.
- Be aware that the oral examination is good preparation for the written exam in June.
- Don't wait until the last minute.

An A1 student

- Has a broad vocabulary relating to different topics.
- Has a good grasp of grammar; recognises a tense in the given question and is able to respond in the correct tense.
- Demonstrates knowledge of both regular and irregular verbs.
- Has good pronunciation and fluency.
- Uses intonation in their speech.
- Demonstrates an element of spontaneity in their responses.

Common errors

- Being too nervous. The examiner is not looking for holes in your knowledge, steer the conversation to things you are comfortable speaking about.
- Making the examiner work to assess your ability. Always attempt to expand on your answer as much as possible.
- Repeating the same verb.
- Responding in the incorrect tense.
- Incorrect grammatical agreement between



Marking scheme for general conversation

Grade	Ability	Grammar	Pronunciation/Communication	Examiner
65-70	– Fluent – Spontaneous	– Excellent syntax – Self-correction	– Very Good	– Mainly a listener
55-60	– Competent – Willingness to elaborate	– Good syntax – Minor errors but attempted correction	– Some mistakes but does not impede communication	– Prompter/facilitator
45-50	– Adequate – Relevant material used	– Good syntax with prepared questions but difficulty engaging with the examiner	– Fair – Inaccuracies but meaning never in doubt	– Intervener, may need to rephrase
30-40	– Limited – Problems in comprehension	– Fair syntax – Basic vocabulary and grammar	– Impeded occasionally – Inaccuracies	– Intervener – Assists with difficulties and adjusts
20-25	– Limited – Minimal	– Poor Syntax – Frequent grammatical errors – Needs regular assistance from examiner	– Persistent difficulties in understanding the intended meaning	– Continuously assisting

tween adjectives and nouns, and singular and plural.

■ Using the incorrect article. Make sure to use for example: *el problema/un problema/este problema*.

■ Using *ser* instead of *estar* (the verb “to be”).

■ Incorrect use of *gustar/encantar + infinitive*, eg *me gusta ir al cine*.

■ Not using the subjunctive where required, eg *cuando termine los exámenes iré de vacaciones*.

■ Not paying attention or responding to the examiner's questions.

■ Not correcting a grammatical mistake or mispronunciation when you recognise you have made one. Don't just continue talking, correct it.

ROLEPLAYS

The roleplay comes after the general conversation. The examiner will ask a student to play one role from the five prepared. Normally, students have a few minutes to revise the selected roleplay. Take this opportunity to ask the examiner to explain any words or phrases in the roleplay that you may have forgotten. You will not be penalised for this. The examiner will then ask if you are ready to begin.

Preparation tips

- Read the roleplays aloud once a day.
- Record and listen to them during the day.
- Once you are familiar with the role plays, practise with a classmate.

■ Avoid monotony. Have fun with it. Play the role. This makes it more enjoyable for you and the examiner, leaving a positive impression.

■ Learn the five roleplays, not just one.

Common Errors

- Not using intonation in your speech.
- Memorizing the roleplays without understanding what is being said.
- Not making eye contact with the examiner and looking at the sheet the entire time.
- Responding with a single “si” or “no” in the “open question” at the end of the roleplay. Answer with a full sentence, if in doubt use the same verb as the examiner uses in the question.

SPANISH

Written exam

Vocabulary, translations and structure

Learn plenty of vocabulary, know all the tenses and prepare systematic answering approaches

Section B

We will now focus on section B. Many students find this section of the written exam, which includes the opinion piece, (written in Spanish) particularly challenging and it is advisable to prepare your opinion piece well in advance. It is of course vital that students prepare fully for sections A and C of the written exam as well.

COMPREHENSION TEXT (100 marks)

The comprehension text is usually longer than the journalistic text. You will find questions in both Spanish and English. Remember answer them in Spanish if they're written in Spanish and English if they're written in English.

Preparation tips

- Know your vocabulary. You need to know a lot of vocabulary for the Spanish written exam. Make a note of words that come up frequently and learn them off.
- Learn all the tenses. Become familiar with the endings of different verbs, especially the irregular ones. Be able to recognise if a verb is in present, past, future, conditional, subjunctive or if it is a command.
- Practice past exam papers frequently.
- Try not to learn words directly translated from English to Spanish. Instead, become familiar with synonymous words. This becomes useful when you are asked to rephrase a sentence provided in Spanish or to pick out similar phrases.

Example phrases

Here are some examples from the 2013 paper and papers from previous years:
Percibir = ver – to see
Esconder = ocultar – to hide
Realizar = hacer = ejecutar – to make/to carry out
Compañía = empresa = firma – company
Atascos = embotellamientos = mucho tráfico – traffic jam
Ser consciente de = darse cuenta de = notar – to realise/to be aware
Recientemente = últimamente = en las últimas fechas – recently

Permanecer en el puesto de trabajo = quedarse en su trabajo – to stay in the office
Disminuir = descender = bajar – to decrease
Aumentar = ascender = subir = incrementar – to increase/to rise
Un desastre = un accidente = una catástrofe = un siniestro = una tragedia – a catastrophe
El día = la jornada – the day
Ayudar = auxiliar = socorrer = dar apoyo – to help
Descuento = rebaja – discount
Encontrar = hallar – to find
Después de = tras – after
Huir = escapar = fugarse = salir corriendo – to flee

Questions in Spanish

■ Questions 1 and 3 – you are asked to find equivalent phrases from the text. Normally, if the phrase provided is in a certain tense, the phrase you are looking for is in



Try not to learn words directly translated from English to Spanish. Instead, become familiar with synonymous words

the same tense. Look for similar words in the paragraph. If the phrase is singular, look for a singular sentence or noun. If the adjective is plural, look for a plural adjective. If it's infinitive, you should look for an infinitive. Similarly with present, past and future tenses.

Here are some examples from the 2013 paper:
Phrase provided – answer
De verdad – en realidad
Gente en gran peligro – (grupos que son) su-



Work out a structure before you begin to write.
 Above: La Sagrada Família, Barcelona, Spain

jetos de mayor riesgo
Escapar de la casa – Huida del hogar
Potencian el crecimiento – Favorecen el desarrollo
Permanece en la oficina – Se quede en su puesto

Questions in English

Read each question carefully and then go to the paragraph that's indicated to find the answer.

■ Question 2 – you are asked to explain in English the meaning of certain sentences from the text. Never translate the sentence word for word. A direct translation from Spanish to English never makes sense in the context of the text. If you don't know a word in Spanish don't leave a gap when

translating. This will show the examiner that you don't understand. Try and get the general meaning of the sentence. If you need more than one sentence to explain the meaning in English don't worry. The most important thing is that when the examiner reads the answer it makes sense in English so read it back over.

■ Question 4 – if no instruction is provided in the question as to how much information is needed in the answer, give at least three main points. If you see more, write more, but as a rule of thumb there should be at least three.

■ Question 5 – opinion piece (50 marks, 20 minutes). In this question you are given two statements from which you choose one to write your opinion on. Usually you argue either in favour of the statement or against.

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How to get your A1

SPANISH

■ Lauren Tiedt
■ Medicine
■ Trinity College Dublin



Live the language

Doing well in anything is made much easier by being interested in it. I immersed myself entirely in the language. Read your favourite books and watch your favourite movies in Spanish. Read the Spanish news on the bus. Change your phone/Facebook settings to Spanish. Do anything that makes the language relevant to you.

Preparation and planning

■ Get familiar with the layout of the exam: compulsory questions, how much to write per question, etc.
■ Practise doing full exam papers for timing. It will be worth it.
■ Decide what questions you plan to answer and focus on them.
■ Choose questions that apply to your strengths. Some questions appear to be harder but are marked more objectively.

Oral

■ Learn the roleplays now. If you know them well, it'll be easier on the day.
■ Practise. Find someone to do mock orals with. Speak Spanish whenever possible.

■ Prepare answers to the common questions. Record yourself, or someone fluent, reading them and put them on your iPod to study on the go. Do the same for the roleplays.

Aural

■ Practise exam papers to familiarise yourself with the different accents.
■ Listen to Euronews, especially the weather segment as it's a definite question.

Written

■ Keep a vocabulary notebook. Write down and learn any unfamiliar words.
■ To obtain high marks in the opinion piece, it's important to use the "subjunctive" tense. Learn off a few phrases in the subjunctive that you can use on the day if you're stuck.

Relax

Do things that make you happy. Fit in hobbies and friends. I continued figure-skating during the year which allowed me to unwind. Plus, it definitely counts as studying if you listen to Spanish music on the way there.

Here are some examples of groups you can blame:

La gente – the people
La policía – the police
El gobierno – the government
La juventud – the youth
La sociedad – the society
La familia – the family

Be careful when assigning blame. Avoid saying "I blame the government". Rather use the present subjunctive to make your point. Here are some useful phrases:
Es una vergüenza que + present subj. – It is a shame that.../it is a disgrace that...
Es urgente que + present subj. – It is urgent that...
Es absurdo que + present subj. – It is absurd that...
No creo que + present subj. – I don't think...
Dudo que + present subj. – I doubt...
Es increíble que + present subj. – It is incredible that...

Or you could use the imperfect subjunctive;

Verb

Me gustaría que

Nouns + tense

el gobierno + imperfect subj.
la sociedad + imperfect subj.
la juventud + imperfect subj.

Examples

Me gustaría que la sociedad se diera cuenta de lo importante que es tener diferentes actividades y deportes.

Verb

Me encantaría que

Nouns + tense

la gente + imperfect subj.
los padres + imperfect subj.
la sociedad + imperfect subj.

Example

Me encantaría que los padres pasaran más tiempo con la familia en vez de en el trabajo.

Common errors

■ Don't use the plural of the verb with gente, gobierno, or sociedad.
■ The only double consonants in Spanish are LL, RR, CC.
■ Do not forget that although some nouns end in "a" they are masculine. These may be useful in your opinion piece to show the examiner that you know that they are masculine.

Choose the sentence you understand better. There are 25 marks for content and communication, and 25 marks for the language used.

In the opinion piece you should be familiar with general topics. Prepare vocabulary on broad topics like climate change and renewable energies, cyber-bullying, and physical child abuse in the home.

Before you start writing

■ Think about what you are going to say.
■ Work out a structure to your argument.
■ Look out for helpful vocabulary in the text that maybe used. Do not transcribe the text verbatim.
■ Refer to your own personal experience.
■ Above all ensure you write about the chosen topic and not about something else.

Helpful tips

■ The language you use will be informal. You are writing as if you are talking to a friend and expressing your point of view.
■ If you're not comfortable with opinion pieces and you don't think you have the vocabulary necessary to fully express your views, it is best to write simple and short sentences about the topic and your experience.
■ This is your opinion, so whether the examiner agrees or disagrees with you is irrelevant. They'll respect your opinion either way. You will be marked on how you express your opinion, the content, your grammar and the vocabulary used.

STRUCTURED ANSWER

If you're comfortable with opinion pieces in Spanish, structure your answer into

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three paragraphs.

Paragraph 1: Write about the topic in general based on your own experience.
Paragraph 2: Blame the responsible party.
Paragraph 3: Try to give a solution or how to make the situation better based on your own experience.

Paragraph 1

Here are some general verbs you can use to talk about the topic:

Creo – I believe
Pienso – I think
A mi me parece que... – It seems to me that...
Estoy de acuerdo con esta afirmación – I agree with this statement
No estoy de acuerdo con esta afirmación – I disagree with this statement

To show the examiner the full extent of your Spanish, you could also use impersonal expressions which require the present subjunctive. For example:

Es necesario que + present subj. – It is necessary that...
Es triste que + present subj. – It is sad that...
Es bueno que + present subj. – It is good that...
Es lamentable que + present subj. – It is a pity that...

Paragraph 2

Blame someone. Blame the responsible parties. For example, if your piece is on climate change you could blame society. Keep in mind that the responsible parties are all singular.

Written exam at a glance

Total marks: 220 (55 per cent)

Total time: 2 and a half hours

Section A – 70 marks, 50 minutes
(Attempt both question 1 and 2)

■ Question 1 – 50 marks, 35 minutes
a) Prescribed literature
or
b) Journalistic text
■ Question 2 – 20 marks, 15 minutes
Two short comprehensions

Section B – 100 marks, 60 minutes
(Attempt all questions)

■ Comprehension – 50 marks, 40 minutes
■ Opinion – 50 marks, 20 minutes
Section C – 50 marks, 40 minutes
(Attempt both question 1 and 2)
■ Question 1 – 30 marks, 20 minutes
a) Dialogue construction
or
b) Letter writing
■ Question 2 – 20 marks, 20 minutes
a) Diary entry
or
b) Note

Examples

El problema/un problema/este problema – the/a/this problem
El sistema/un sistema/este sistema – the/a/this system
El tema/un tema/este tema – the/a/this topic

Paragraph 3

In the final paragraph you should try and give a solution to the problem. What do you think will solve the problem or make it better? The following phrases could be useful:

Verb

Espero que

Noun + tense

el gobierno + present subjunctive
la sociedad + present subjunctive
la juventud + present subjunctive

Example

Espero que la juventud dedique tiempo al trabajo y también a sus actividades

Ojalá que + noun + present subjunctive

Example

Ojalá que los padres pasen más tiempo con sus hijos practicando deportes

Present indicative + if + future

Example

La sociedad no sufrirá de estrés si comparte el trabajo con los pasatiempos.

If + imperfect subjunctive + conditional

Examples

Si los adictos al trabajo dedicaran más horas al ocio estarían más contentos.
Si yo no hiciera deporte estaría muy aburrido/a