

# exAmTIMES

In association with The Institute of Education

## Study plans

Students share their tips



## No 1: Study Guide

Thursday,  
September 4th, 2014

## Essential tips to see you through exam year

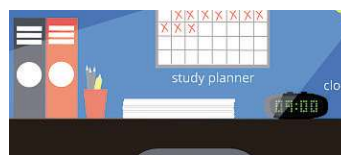
- ◆ Guide to answering HPAT
- ◆ Making idea mapping work for you
- ◆ Sample study plans

THE IRISH TIMES



### Skills for the Classroom

The tried and true systems to get the best out of your classroom lectures  
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■ Students from the Institute of Education celebrate their Leaving Cert results this year on Leeson Street, Dublin. PHOTOGRAPH: GARETH CHANEY COLLINS

**Get exam-ready with our skills guide**

Welcome to the Exam Times Study Guide, published by *The Irish Times* in association with The Institute of Education.

All students know the importance of developing good study and revision techniques. The earlier in the year you develop these skills and implement them in to your study routine the more effective they will be.

This supplement will help students improve their study technique by introducing them to the key techniques required to develop skills such as time-management, learning and memory techniques, prioritising and the self-discipline required to remain motivated.

At the Institute of Education we have more than 46 years experience of preparing and supporting students in the lead-up to the State exams.

Excellence is not just confined to our teachers, but to our facilities, our career guide service, our study notes

and the overall ambiance which is evident right throughout the Institute.

We hope that both students and parents will find the information in this guide useful and that it will help you start the academic year in a positive and productive frame of mind.

A further series of *Exam Times* supplements, written by teachers from the Institute of Education and focusing on specific subjects for both the Leaving and Junior Certificate exams, will be published in early 2015.

On behalf of the Institute of Education, I would like to wish all students preparing for the exams next June a productive and successful year ahead and remember, tús maith leath na hoibre.



**Peter Kearns**  
Director,  
The Institute  
of Education

**Exam Times supplements Coming up . . .**

<b>Choosing Leaving Cert subjects</b> .....	Nov 13th
<b>Leaving Cert Maths</b> .....	Jan 15th
<b>Leaving Cert languages</b> .....	Jan 22nd
English, Irish, French, Spanish, German	
<b>Leaving Cert biology, chemistry, physics</b> .....	Jan 29th
<b>Leaving Cert business, accounting, economics</b> .....	Feb 5th
<b>Leaving Cert history, geography, home economics</b> .....	Feb 12th
<b>Junior Cert English, business, French, Irish</b> .....	Feb 26th
<b>Junior Cert maths, science, geography, history</b> .....	March 5th

**Introducing the Exam Times series**

**Deirdre Falvey**  
The Irish Times

There has been some talk about a more holistic approach to education, and reform of the Leaving Cert, but in the meantime the current system remains.

A single terminal exam determines entry to third level, and demand outstrips supply, which raises points requirements – a set-up which piles ever more pressure on students hoping to progress beyond second-level education.

For good or ill, at the moment the Leaving Cert is the gateway, and our teenagers need support and guidance in the lead-up to exams.

Last June's students have for the most part started on the next stage of their lives, having gotten through the process, and the Leaving Cert is becoming a distant memory.

Those who will sit the exam in June 2015, or 2016, are now about to climb the very same mountain.

This series of *Exam Times* guides, published by *The Irish Times* in association with the Institute of Educa-

tion, aims to help students and their parents approach that mountain in a calm, focused and organised way.

The supplements, free with *The Irish Times*, have very high quality material from top tutors at the Institute of Education who have many years of experience guiding students through exam preparation.

This first issue, the *Study Guide*, comes at the start of the school year, when students, parents, teachers, are setting out a path for the months ahead, and will be helpful in setting goals, learning how to focus on schoolwork and organise study efficiently.

We will continue the series of Exam Times supplements with expert tips

**“For good or ill, at the moment the Leaving Cert is the gateway**

and advice from Institute teachers in specific subject areas for Leaving and Junior Cert exams.

The supplements are part of *The Irish Times's* ongoing education coverage, including education news, Tuesday features and regular education supplements, in the newspaper and irishtimes.com through the year.

Good luck in the months ahead.

# Magnificent seven Tips for parents

## Orla Ní Shúilleabháin

If you are the parent of a student who is in an exam year, then you have a major role to play in determining the success of their endeavours. Of course, when it comes to exams, worried parents often outnumber worried students, but there are many ways in which you can help your child to achieve their potential and get even more from their hard work and dedication.

**1** Help set up a homework/study area. Make sure it is well lit, free of distractions and noise, and that they have everything they need to study.

**2** Encourage hard work and help motivate them to study. Acknowledge their achievements and successes.

**3** Be there to help when it's needed. You can be their biggest ally this year. Whether you're answering a question about studies, helping create a study timetable, or simply dropping them to the library after school, you'll be contributing a lot to their future successes.

**4** Negotiate a study timetable with which you are both happy. It's great to find the right balance between their free time and good, solid study. Give them a chance to see friends or chill out when the work is done and they deserve a break.

**5** Help them get into a routine at home, by having meals at regular times and being home to keep an eye on things. Your son or daughter's will find it easier to follow their study routine and will soon be in the study groove.

**6** Parent-teacher meetings are a great way to find out how your child is doing in school and what needs improving. Whether it's punctuality or identifying areas where they may need additional support, there are always things to be aware of.



■ The Institute of Education: Don't underestimate the importance of your role in determining your child's success. A student feels more capable and in-control with a parent's support

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**Try to instil a sense of responsibility. Conversations about future plans and goals can help students understand the importance of putting in work now**

**7** Try to instil in them a sense of responsibility. Simple conversations about future college plans and careers goals can help students understand the importance of putting in the work now. This inside motivation is the most powerful force that can drive them forward in their studies. (See page 5.)

Don't underestimate the importance of your role in determining their success. A student feels more capable and in-control with a parent's support.

Be a part of their day-to-day studies and you will help them to reach their exam goals and get the results they truly deserve!

## Study skills the authors



### Orla Ní Shúilleabháin

Academic mentor at the Institute of Education

Ní Shúilleabháin has been teaching at The Institute of Education for 27 years. She is a fully qualified life and business coach, accredited by the European Coaching Institute. In her role as academic mentor at the Institute, Ní Shúilleabháin has developed an integrated study skills programme, which assists students to maximise their potential across all subject areas, and helps with

time management, problem resolution and organisational capability. As part of this programme, Ní Shúilleabháin works with individual teachers and gives one-to-one support and feedback to both pupil and parents. She is also author of the recently published "Study Skills and Exam Essentials," an all-in-one exam guide and student diary, published by Edco



### Mary Dorgan

Guidance counsellor at the Institute of Education

Dorgan graduated with a Science degree, a Higher Diploma in Education and a Diploma in Guidance Counselling (UCD). She has counselled thousands of students as they select their third-level courses and choose the subjects that suit their abilities and ambitions.

Dorgan believes that exceptional standards in the

classroom must be matched by exemplary career guidance. She invests time in each student to ensure the advice given is based on their personal interests and aptitudes. All students are encouraged to be ambitious and to focus on the best they can achieve. Dorgan is also the admissions officer in The Institute of Education.



### Colin Irwin

HPAT tutor at the Institute of Education

Irwin sat his Leaving Certificate in 2005, attaining 550 points. He originally studied law at both undergraduate and postgraduate level at University College Cork, after which he completed a legal clerkship with the Electronic Privacy Centre in Washington

DC. In 2011 Irwin achieved a 99th percentile score in the HPAT. Irwin is currently studying medicine at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland as a mature student, and is also a tutor on The Institute of Education HPAT Preparation courses that take place during the year.

## SCIENCE PRACTICALS

**12 Week Leaving Cert Courses from November 2014.**

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■ Students at The Institute of education

# Learn how to achieve the most important goal of your teens



## Orla Ní Shúilleabháin

Study skills adviser

Do you want to be a high achiever? Taking a tactical approach to study will help to keep you motivated and pay off in better final results

**A**s study skills adviser at the Institute of Education, every year I am struck by the number of students who perform at a level way beyond their own expectations. I am not only referring to the highest achievers, but to students at every level.

This includes, for example, a candidate achieving a pass at ordinary level in the Junior Cert who then goes on to get honours in the same subject in the Leaving Cert.

What stands out when I talk to them? What is their self-assessment of how they

exceeded their own expectations?

One of the most common key factors is the way in which they approached the task ahead, making sure to have the right positive attitude, staying motivated and setting clear goals in their minds at the outset.

It was also not how long they studied for but how they studied that made the difference. To put it simply, they all experienced one common realisation: time spent improving overall study technique and exam capability will reward a student with higher performance and extra points achieved across all subjects.

### YOUR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Now, let's talk about you. Please take a moment to consider the following three questions.

How would you rate yourself in terms of academic performance?

Do you believe that all your time spent studying is used in the most efficient or effective way?

Finally, are there aspects that you would like to improve come exam time, such as being able to recall key information more quickly and accurately?

Perhaps you lacked a bit of drive or focus in the past. You might have lost some confidence due to poor assessments or exam results. Either way, the good news is that these problems can be limited to the past and with the right approach you can transform your future exam results.

Remember, you are in the same boat as the majority of your fellow students, but

with the help and tips from this study guide, you now have the tools and support to move ahead of the pack.

There is an old cliché used by coaches when looking to get improvement from their athletes: if you do what you have always done, you will get what you have always got.

In other words, continuing to use poor study techniques will result in no improvement to your current level of performance and continued underachievement in your examinations.

So, the question I pose to you today is, what should you do differently and how can you apply this across all academic endeavours to achieve the results you deserve?

### LEARN TO STUDY

Simply put, you must learn how to study be-

fore you sit down to study. We are not taught how to study as we go through our formative school years. We unconsciously develop our own way attending class, doing homework and studying.

At no point are we taught how best to analyse and absorb information, and eventually distil what we have learned into one three-hour exam paper.

The good news is that this supplement now gives you a framework to help with all of the above: classroom technique, study and revision skills, and maximising performance in your exams.

Spend some time reading this guide from cover to cover. Learn about goals and how to set powerful goals of your own for the year ahead.

Take note of tips to help plan your workload and sample timetables to ensure you allocate enough time to cover all key subject areas in the coming months.

Remember to keep this study skills guide at your desk as your "How to" study reference point throughout the year.

From now to your exams is not a sprint, but a marathon. Break down the marathon into a series of smaller runs, each designed to achieve a smaller but still essential goal along the road to exam success.

Most importantly, you have to ensure that you keep the right balance between academic endeavour and managing a positive personal life.

With the right techniques and a positive mental approach, you will no doubt succeed.

Good luck!

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**From now to your exams is not a sprint, but a marathon. Break it down into a series of smaller runs, each designed to achieve a smaller goal on the road to exam success**

# Subject choice

**Mary Dorgan**  
Guidance Counsellor

Choose wisely and you'll be interested while you study, get it wrong and you'll be locked out of the third-level course you really want

Choosing your Leaving Cert subjects is a big decision. You will be studying these subjects for two years, they can affect what you decide to study in college and you may even end up choosing a career based on these subjects. So this isn't a decision you should take lightly.

Here are a few factors to consider when you're making these tough decisions:

## DECISIONS, DECISIONS, DECISIONS!

Depending on what you want to study after the Leaving Cert, some subjects are a matriculation requirement for certain third-level courses. This means that some subjects are mandatory to gain entry into a college course.

For example, a minimum C3 in higher-level chemistry is required for veterinary, a minimum C3 in higher-level maths is required for engineering, and a minimum C3 in higher level in two science subjects is required to study science in Trinity College Dublin.

It's important not to lock yourself out of a course you want to study by not choosing a required subject. Do your research. Often, different colleges have different requirements for the same course.

You should check each college prospectus and make sure that you have covered the requirements for going on to your preferred third-level course after doing the Leaving Cert.

## YOU'RE GOOD AT WHAT YOU ENJOY

It is much more difficult to do well in a subject that you don't enjoy or aren't naturally good at. Make sure to choose your favourite subject(s). When it comes to studying each subject, it is important you find them interesting to be able to excel at them.

Studying a subject you enjoy can decrease the pressure and workload immensely.

If you are good at a subject it will come naturally to you. Look at all of the budding engineers we have – these students tend to be naturals at mathematical subjects. Therefore physics would be a subject that would suit their ability and they would be good at.

## Going into 5th Year?

Research the subjects you are considering before choosing them.

Choose subjects that you enjoy and are interested in and not because your friends are choosing them.

Take interest tests to determine what subjects best suit you. Learn more at [qualifax.ie](http://qualifax.ie) and [careersportal.ie](http://careersportal.ie).

Review any aptitude tests you may have taken with your guidance counsellor.

Leave your options open. Don't neglect subjects that you may need for 3<sup>rd</sup> levels courses in the future.

## ADOPT A STRATEGY

Always pick the subjects you want to do and you think you will be good at. If you find an area you are particularly strong in, you could boost your ability by choosing subjects which complement each other.

Some subjects overlap with others, such as physics and applied maths or biology and agricultural science. Approaching your subject choice in this way may help to lighten your workload. For example, if you decide to study both biology and home economics, you will only have to learn about biomolecules once.

## TEST YOUR COMPATIBILITY

If you are unsure of what subjects to choose, there are aptitude tests available through your school or even online. These often include a series of questions related to your personality. Your answers are then calculated to match what subjects or career is best suited to you.

It might also be very useful to do an interest test at this point. An interest test can be the first indication of what career paths might appeal to you. If you are very unsure of what subjects to choose, aptitude tests or

interest tests can often be a great starting point.

## ADVICE IS ONLY A QUESTION AWAY

If you are wondering about whether or not to choose a subject, it is important to do some investigating. Browse the outline chapters or headings of the course and see if they appeal to you.

Arrange to meet with the teacher of the subject and ask them what will be covered in the subject. Talk to your parents, and to older siblings who have been through it before.

If your school has a career guidance counsellor then that's who you should talk to first. Your guidance counsellor will have experience in helping students choose subjects that suit their desired career path, or subjects which complement each other.

Your guidance counsellor will also have knowledge of subject requirements which are necessary to gain entry into particular college courses.

## USEFUL WEBSITES

[qualifax.ie](http://qualifax.ie); [cao.ie](http://cao.ie); [careersportal.ie](http://careersportal.ie)

## Self-motivation...

# This may be the missing ingredient

ORLANÍ SHÚILLEABHÁIN

Can I challenge you on what truly leads us to achieve our true potential? We sometimes look for the reasons why we can't do something. Turn this search into a positive force and it will deliver the three simple building blocks to being your best. The first two are relatively obvious: namely your own academic ability and the skillsets and supports of your teachers and educational facilities. The holy grail of this trinity comes from how you approach your studies and it centres around your positive attitude or motivation.

Let us start with a simple definition for the word motivation: The reason or desire within a person to achieve a particular goal or objective.

In the context of this article on study skills, motivation is the drive we have to achieve our academic targets or goals.

The key thing about motivation is that it is

**“Only you can realise your full potential. Only you can bring a desire and a willingness to succeed in your studies**

something that we must build from within ourselves – although others can certainly help us to achieve it. It is vital to believe in yourself. If you don't, how can you expect to succeed? Even a small bit of self-belief can work wonders!

Make the change. Be proactive and become positive.

■ Take on the responsibility. You have the opportunity and the facilities to succeed. It's up to you, not anyone else.

■ Only you can realise your full potential. Only you can bring a desire and a willingness to succeed in your studies.

■ Leave the past behind you. If you didn't succeed before forget about it. Start afresh. Don't be labelled by anyone, including yourself.

■ Know what you want and how you are going to get there.

■ Have a plan of action.

■ Try to replace negative thoughts with positive ones.

■ Challenge yourself. This is a good place to do some goal setting.

■ Praise yourself when you achieve something.

■ Seek help when needed.

■ See the positives in everything. Always see yourself in a win-win situation.

■ Review progress and make the changes that are necessary – don't give up.

■ And remember: There is no problem that cannot be solved.

THE IRISH TIMES in association with THE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

# Advice for Sixth years



**Mary Dorgan**

Only six subjects are counted towards your overall Leaving Cert points so choose well now

**T**his is a time for serious decisions. It's a common misconception that students entering sixth year have finished deliberating subject choice. In most cases, students in sixth year will continue to study the subjects they chose when entering fifth year.

However for some young people, tough decisions lie ahead. Students might be considering whether to drop a level, drop an entire subject or maybe even take up a new subject at this stage.

Don't panic. All of these options are possible. If you are feeling overwhelmed by your workload, then now is the time to consider making some of these decisions.

## HIGHER LEVEL, ORDINARY LEVEL AND FOUNDATION LEVEL

The beginning of sixth year is an ideal time to consider what level you are going to take in each subject. A year into studying the subject, you will have a better idea of your capabilities in each subject and whether you struggle with one over another.

Are you doing the correct level required of you to gain entry into your desired college course? Do you have too many higher-level subjects?

If you have, you may consider taking ordinary level in your weakest subject.

Ordinary level grades are not worth as much as those in higher level (an A1 in higher level is worth 100 points; an A1 in ordinary level is worth 60 points). If you risk failing a subject, you should really consider dropping a level. I would not recommend waiting until the morning of the Leaving Cert paper to drop a level.

The ordinary and higher level courses for each subject can be quite different. Therefore, I suggest giving yourself time

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**The ordinary and higher level courses for each subject can be quite different ... [give] yourself time to get used to and adjust to the new level and structure of the paper**



to get used to and adjust to the new level and structure of the paper.

Be very careful when choosing higher level maths. Although there are 25 bonus points available to higher-level students now, you won't get these bonus points if maths isn't one of your best six subjects.

On the upside, if you get a B3 in higher-level maths, the extra 25 points will make this equivalent to an A1. Finally, if you have been continually struggling with or failing a subject at higher level during fifth year, perhaps now is the time to drop to pass or foundation level. This will allow you to concentrate on other subjects.

## DROPPING A SUBJECT

Be honest with yourself. If you don't think you are going to do well in a subject or have consistently been performing badly in the subject despite working hard to do better, then you might consider dropping a level (from higher to ordinary or even foundation in some cases) or dropping the subject entirely.

But remember, although only six subjects are counted towards your final points, don't limit yourself to only sitting six subjects. You can never be sure how the paper will go on the day. Keep an extra subject as a back-up or last resort if another subject doesn't go your way.

## TAKING UP A NEW ONE

Taking up a new subject is an option. It's amazing how many subjects are possible

■ **All options are possible: student Ben Griffin at the Institute of Education**

to cover within a year. But this requires a huge commitment and a lot of attention. For subjects such as history or higher maths, the course is long and would be a challenge to cover in one year. I would recommend subjects with shorter courses, such as economics, applied maths or agricultural science.

Be very careful not to take too many higher level subjects. Higher level subjects require a lot of attention and commitment.

Remember, only six subjects are counted towards your overall Leaving Cert points. Therefore focus on high grades in six subjects, rather than average grades in eight subjects. You must weigh up if an additional honours subject is worth the risk.

## ALLOCATING TIME

My advice to those considering studying eight or more subjects is to manage your time carefully. This usually becomes a realistic option for students who are taking more than one ordinary level paper and wish to maximise their Leaving Cert results by having six higher-level subjects.

I would advise students wishing to take an eighth subject to think carefully about this decision.

Every subject requires huge time and attention. If choosing an extra subject will have a negative effect on one of your other subjects then it is not worth it.

## Q&A

### The points system

The CAO process can prove very stressful for students who don't have a full understanding of the process and points system. Here are some of the most frequently asked questions about the CAO system.

#### How are my points calculated?

Your six best subjects from one sitting are used to calculate your total points. Therefore it doesn't matter if you have six subjects or 10 subjects, only your best six subjects will be added to determine your results.

#### Why do points change for courses every year?

Points fluctuate for courses from year to year. This is because points are based on the demand for places for any particular course.

If the points for a course have increased in a year, it's not because the course has become more difficult – it's because a larger number of students have applied for the course compared to previous years. Because colleges only have a limited number of places available for each course, when the demand for places rises, so do the points. For example, in 2013 the final entry points for computer science in UCC rose by 90 points to 430.

This can work to a student's advantage also. If the demand for a course decreases, the points requirement for the course will drop. For example maths and physics in UL dropped 55 points to 480 in 2013.

#### Why do courses in some colleges have higher points than similar courses in other colleges?

Every college has a limited number of places for students for each course, depending on the size of the college. The points for these courses depend on the demand for the course in each respective college. Therefore it doesn't mean that any course is better or more difficult in one college compared to another. For example, in 2013 the final entry points for journalism in DBS

were 205 but in DCU were 435. Students from both colleges will graduate with a valid degree in journalism.

#### Do I have to count the results of my required subjects when calculating my points?

No. When calculating your points, only your best six subjects are used. If you've gained sufficient points for the course, then you only have to meet the minimum requirement of the required subject to gain entry into the course.

Ironically, this means that you may get a D3 in accounting and go on to study a course that relies heavily on the subject, such as business, based on your results from other subjects.

### Leaving Certificate points achieved by candidates in 2014

Points achieved	No of candidates	% of total
600	162	0.3%
500-599	5,088	9.4%
400-499	13,447	24.9%
300-399	14,047	26.0%
200-299	9,584	17.7%
100-199	6,926	12.8%
0-99	4,771	8.8%

#### If I'm repeating, can I use some points from the last time I sat the Leaving Cert?

No. Your best six subjects from the same sitting will determine your final result. However, you can carry a pass from a previous sitting if you need it for a college course requirement. For example, if your course requires a minimum C3 in higher level maths and you obtained this result in a previous year, you can carry this pass through to the following year. Your remaining subjects will be used to calculate your overall Leaving Cert points. It is important to note, however, that medicine is an exception to this rule. To gain entry into medicine, you must take your requirements and your points from the same sitting.

# Setting goals

**Orla Ní Shúilleabháin**

You have got to focus before your exams and one of the best ways to do that is to set yourself some targets



**G**oal setting is the crucial first step for every student hoping to do well in their exams. To put it simply, goals produce action. They inspire you to push forward with purpose; to get out of bed and into school; to turn off the TV and write that assignment; to get up off the couch and exercise.

You can think of a goal as the engine which drives you towards your desired outcome. Taking action without proper planning is one of the biggest causes of failure for all students.

I suggest, therefore, that you take time to set a number of goals before you begin your studies for the year:

One of the greatest challenges you can face when studying is not knowing what to do and where do you begin? Should you focus on this particular topic or ignore it altogether? I have found that even the most confident of students face problems like these all of the time.

Your teachers can help you answer these kinds of questions. They guide you in the right direction, identify the key concepts/goals and tell you how to prepare for the exams. Knowing what to do, however, is only the first step. What many students struggle with is taking this newly acquired knowledge and applying it in a structured and effective way.

This is where goals play a very important role. They help bridge the gap between knowing what you need to do and being able to do something.

- What will you study?
- When will you study it?
- What will be the effect of that study?

Before you begin, though, remember that any big goal is attained through the achievement of many smaller goals set along the way.

## HOW TO SET YOUR GOALS

■ Getting started is always the most difficult step in goal-setting. So, before you read any further, I suggest that you pick up a piece of paper and a pen and complete this exercise as you read.

■ Ensure that your goals are both realistic and specific. If you specify when and what you will do, you increase your chances of actually getting it done. Instead of saying that you will study more, for example, you could purposefully write that you will study one extra hour on weekdays and two extra hours on Saturday and Sunday. This leaves no wiggle room for you to avoid completing these goals.

■ Break each goal into simple, digestible parts. Break big long-term goals into many short-term goals. The easier you make it to complete each step of the goal, the more likely it is that you will eventually achieve it.

■ Each goal must have a target timeframe. A goal with a due date and time is

■ Institute of Education students Sarah Mahayni (Castleknock), Sally Anne Kiernan (Navan) and Alison Bell (Celbridge) celebrate their Leaving Cert results in August 2014

■ That said, always aim higher than you think you can achieve. You will amaze yourself at how well you can do.

## SMART

A useful guide to follow when creating your goals is to make them SMART (see left). Goals need to be specific, otherwise you will not be sure how to achieve them. They need to be measurable, or else you will not know whether or not you have made progress. Exam results and essay marks are good ways to measure your achievements.

Goals should be both achievable and realistic. In this way, you will not hit large obstacles or impossible challenges along the way. Finally, your goals should have a very strict timeframe. If you spend too much time on any one goal, it will affect the rest of your studies as well as spill over into your personal time.

## HOW TO STICK TO YOUR GOALS

Remember to:

- Review your goals regularly.
- Measure and assess your progress.
- Make changes if they're needed. Be honest with yourself.
- Keep your goals visible in your study area. We don't want them to be out of sight and therefore out of mind.

Make sure to reward or treat yourself when you achieve an important medium or long-term goal. You don't have to go crazy, but allow yourself some time off, a treat or even just a smug sense of satisfaction. You deserve it.

Secondly, you should keep a list of your achieved goals. Legendary US soccer player Mia Hamm, two-time women's Player of the Year and highest goal scorer in international football history, once remarked that "success breeds success". The message behind this quote is that success is a psychological phenomenon. Achieving your goals helps fill you with a strong sense of self-belief and it is this self-belief that carries you towards the next success.

Goals give us direction and a clear focus. They enable us to monitor our progress and, if necessary, aim higher. They help us get started and reach our final destination. When it comes to your own goals, there are some very simple rules that need to be followed. Understand the task ahead and appreciate the benefits of achieving the goal, but most importantly, don't forget to commit to it 100 per cent!

## The different types of goals

◆ A short-term goal is something you want to achieve soon. This can take any amount of time, from one hour to a couple of days. "Studying for next week's in-class test" or "finish my French essay" are great examples of short-term goals.

◆ A medium-term goal is a task you aim to finish over a period of weeks or even a month. You can list medium-term goals on your monthly planner. They often comprised many short-term goals that together help achieve something bigger. Medium-term goals often take the form of class projects or revising large areas of a subject.

◆ A long-term goal is a target you hope to reach over a period of several months or even a year. Long-term goals should be listed on your yearly planner. They are made up of lots of short-term and medium-term goals. A certain number of points in the Leaving Cert or getting into your dream course in college are perfect examples of long-term goals.

**“A certain number of points in the Leaving” or getting into “your dream course” are perfect examples of long-term goals**



very difficult to put off. For short-term goals, make a note of them on your daily planner, for all other goals keep them on the monthly planner.

■ Always make sure to write down your goals on a piece of paper and keep them close by. It's important that you make a record of them; it will keep you focused and remind you of what still has to be done. Read the list every day to keep you aware and reinforce them in your mind.

■ Don't bite off more than you can chew! Start off with a relatively small number of goals and gradually increase their number and size as you become more effective at completing them.

**“Practise, practise, practise: how can you attempt this exam if you haven't written under pressure – you should be doing a test to time every week. If this is not possible in your class, do it at home, don't leave everything up to your teacher. Even if you find this difficult at the beginning, you will get better – Susan Cashell, history teacher, the Institute of Education**



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46 Years of Academic Excellence

# The key to being a successful student

## Orla Ní Shúilleabháin

Using your time wisely and having a well-organised calendar will help you stay focused on your study goals

### GOOD TIME MANAGEMENT

What is the most valuable resource you have as you work towards your exams this year? Why, time, of course. You only have so much of it, and sometimes it feels like it just flies by. Come exam time, students often wonder where the time went. Then, at other times, it feels like the day will never end. The important thing to remember, though, is that there are 24 hours in every day, and that is the same for everyone.

Because no student has more time than another, good time management can make all the difference in achieving great exam results. This is another skill which we are not taught as we grow up, but now it's time for you to learn how to control your time – and how to spend it wisely. If you can achieve this, you will be able to make sure that the time you spend studying gives you the maximum amount of learning possible.

Although it may sometimes feel like a waste of time, you will actually gain huge time savings when you take a few minutes to plan out your day. Below are some of the many reasons why you may want to “learn” how to plan your everyday life and get organised in your studies:

- It helps you prioritise. Good timetabling helps you take care of the important and urgent tasks first.

- It helps you be realistic. We often don't realise how long a task really takes. Timetabling shows you how long you spend on common tasks such as essay-writing and problem-solving.

- It helps you procrastinate less. With a written list of tasks, you are more likely to sit down and just get it done.

- It helps you be more productive. You should know exactly what you will study before you sit down at your desk.

- It helps give you more freedom. When you plan ahead, you know that you'll be finished at a certain time. Students who don't plan well often find themselves working all evening without realising it.

- It helps reduce guilt. If you know that you've achieved your goals for the day then you can spend your free time without your studies on your mind.

- It helps you track your progress. Stick to your timetable and you know that you are on course to get everything done.

- It helps you plan for the long-term. Good organisation removes the uncertainty from your study and helps you focus on getting the best results possible.

Good planning is the key to getting the most from all of your activities. This discipline also helps create a good study-life balance and will benefit you in many areas of your life for years to come.

### BE ORGANISED!

So the clear message so far is that good organisation is the key to being a successful student. You have to trust me when I tell you that an organised approach to your studies means that you will have to work less over the coming year. With better organisation you will be on top of things from day one and won't have to cram come exam time. I know it sounds too easy, but it really is the secret to success.

I have found the best approach to be one which breaks your goals up into three different types: Short, Medium and Long-Term. A great way for students to describe these would be as Daily, Weekly and Term goals. You can record these in your study planner (see sample on pages 12-13),

with Daily goals being quite detailed and Term goals being more general and giving you an overall understanding of your studies:

- Your Daily plan can hold a day-by-day account of your assignments and areas of study. The best time to prepare your study plan is in the evening time, when you have finished studying and know what needs to be done the following day, eg make a to-do list or list of short-term goals for the day.

- Your Weekly plan can be used to give you an overall plan for the week, a list of approaching tests and tasks to be achieved over the seven days.

- Your Term calendar gives you a broad view of your semester and helps you to plan ahead. Use this to mark all school assignments, tests and activities (along with due dates) so that you don't overlook them by mistake.

Remember, when it comes to study, a realistic timetable is really important. A timetable which is too demanding will cause stress for you and work will pile up before you know it. So keep it simple and plan according to the time you have available – make sure you don't overload yourself. You will become a better, more productive student as a result.

### TIPS FOR PUTTING TOGETHER YOUR TIMETABLE

- Do the groundwork. Spend time on planning and organising yourself.

- Set S.M.A.R.T goals

- Prioritise your goals and allocation of time.

- Use a to-do list every day. Prepare it the night before.

- Be flexible. Adapt your timetable if something unplanned comes up. Remember to reschedule the missed hours.

- Consider at what time you are at your best. Then plan to study at this time when you will be most productive for effective time management.

- Start as you mean to finish – in control and successful!

- Avoid being a perfectionist. If something does not work, start again, see what went wrong and approach it differently.

- Don't tackle big projects all at once, but break them into manageable chunks. This will make your life easier in April when the projects are due.

- Don't forget to break up your study time and not to study longer than an hour

in one go, taking at least a five-minute break between study periods.

- Try to develop and stick to a regular study routine, which helps prevent procrastination.

- Don't forget to reward yourself, giving you the motivation to make the extra effort.

### HOW MUCH SHOULD I STUDY?

This is a question which every student asks at some point in their studies. It's easy to be worried by classmates who claim to be up all night studying. You must remember that it's not the amount of time spent studying, but rather the quality of the study that counts.

It's also important to note that there is no one answer for everyone. Some students study more effectively than others and will not need to spend as long studying. Every student will find some subjects more difficult than others and have to spend more time mastering those. As always, it's best to focus on your own needs and abilities. Your goal should be to improve your study methods so that you maximise the results of your work.

Before we talk about the amount of time you need to spend studying, remember the following points:

- Some subjects consume more of your time than others. This is natural and it will depend on how much work you need to do in each one.

- It's easy to focus on the subjects we like most, so be careful not to neglect other subjects.

- It can be difficult to keep on top of everything during the week, so the weekend can be a good time to catch up in some areas.

Every student is different. But below is a rough guide to how many hours you should spend every day on homework and study combined. Remember, it takes experimentation to find out what suits you. Your study times should most of all suit your academic needs and goals.

First Year	-----1.5 hrs per day
Second Year	-----2 hrs per day
Third Year	-----2.5-3 hrs per day
Fifth Year	-----3-4 hrs per day
Sixth Year	-----3.5-5 hrs per day

**NB** This is just a rough guideline which should be adapted as your situation requires. Of course, the hours should be increased close to exam time to help you with extra revision or project work, and each student will have different amounts of work to complete, depending on subject choices and how much preparation has been done so far.

**“There's not much point in learning something if you are then going to forget it. Study a small amount of material in a study session. Condense your notes. Check out past questions and examine the markingschemes. Learn off any definitions related to that topic. Before you begin your next study session, revise the previous topic.”**  
–David Bourke, biology teacher at the Institute of Education





■ Students at the Institute of Education on Lower Leeson Street

#### CREATING AN EFFECTIVE STUDY TIME-TABLE

Many of my past students believe that creating their own study timetable was one of the best steps they took to improve their exam results. They suddenly felt in control and on top of their studies. They now had a proper structure to guide them each and every day. They said that they finally started to make the most of their time. Most of all, every student tells me that it helped give them a proper study-life balance – something which is hard to achieve during the Leaving or Junior Cert.

Preparation is essential to achieving the most from your school day. I strongly advise you to spend the first half-hour of your evening noting and revising the main topics covered in your classes that day. This will not only help reinforce the key concepts from each class, but also highlight potential areas of weakness where you need extra study to understand things fully. Always start with a subject you dread or find difficult. Not only will you get it out of the way before you are too tired, but with this extra attention you'll find that you understand the topic more each time and may even soon grow to like it.

■ Using a blank timetable, write out your daily class schedule and any extra-curricular activities you have.

■ Decide how long you will spend on study each day. Divide the total study hours by the number of subjects, and allocate equal time for each subject – making sure to keep a few spare hours for subjects that may need extra attention.

■ Plan to study at least three subjects each day (to keep your study varied and stimulating).

■ Friday evening is a great time to complete homework for the weekend and leave Saturday and Sunday free for study.

■ It is recommended that a Leaving Cert student should aim to study between four and eight hours at the weekend. This may seem like a lot but when you break it up into two- or three-hour slots, such as 9-12pm and 4-6pm, it's not so daunting.

■ Make sure you take the afternoon or evening off to reward yourself on one of the days to socialise or to relax.

■ You will need to include time on your weekly planner for:

- a) Homework assignments
- b) Ongoing working assignments
- c) New material covered in each subject
- d) General revision for exams or revision of material already covered.

■ To determine short-term goals or weekly needs, each Sunday use your planner to draw up a specific study plan for the coming week, specifying exactly what you will work on in time slots of your term/month planner.

■ Discuss your timetable with your friends and family to let them know when you are free and when you are due to study. They will understand that you must study and will make an effort to fit into your free slots.

■ It is a good idea to build rewards into your timetable to act as a motivator. These could include an hour's relaxation for writing an essay or a day off once a month for a good grade or for finishing an assignment. Just don't go overboard!

■ And finally, remember the saying: Fail to prepare, prepare to fail.

#### My study plan

**Stephen Lally**  
Sixth-year student at  
The Institute of Education

Firstly, I'd like to start by saying I'm no genius. I'm an average student who achieves good grades through hard work and utilising the time I have to study effectively.

Believe it or not, most learning is done in the classroom. If, like me, you struggle to stay focused in class, you need to try and combat this.

Don't allow what the teacher is saying to go in one ear and out the other. Mentally process what is being said and try to link it with material you've already learned. Good note-taking can also help you stay "switched on" in class.

In the evening, if you sometimes feel that you are struggling to concentrate, stand up



and get away from the books for five minutes. I struggle with definitions in chemistry (and, trust me, there are a lot of them). What I do to try and retain as many definitions as I can, as clearly and as accurately as possible, is learn trigger words. These are the key words in definitions that, when you think of them, bring the entire definition to mind.

Organisation is also the key to effective studying. Creating an up-to-date study plan is essential. If you have difficulty creating or sticking to a plan, organise a meeting with your careers guidance teacher to help you make one.

It's important to establish what type of learner you are so you don't waste your time using study techniques that don't suit you. Methods that work for visual learners are using flashcards, idea mapping, fully labelled diagrams and acronyms.

Aural learners can particularly benefit from audio recordings. This involves recording yourself reciting a definition, quote or key part of a text. I find this very helpful for material that I need to learn off. I can listen to the recordings anywhere – while walking or on my commute to school.

These tips are just general guidelines. Some people may need more time to retain information, others may need less. It depends on what type of learner you are.

With regards the future, if you feel you have the ability to do something you really want to do, go for it.

Good luck in June!

# Skills to do your homework

## Orla Ní Shúilleabháin

When up to 80 per cent of your time as a student is taken up with study, skills and procedures are crucial

### Powerful concentration leads to great results

Studying for exams is like any other task, you may find it easy in the short term but holding your concentration for extended periods can prove to be difficult. When your mind begins to wander, what you are reading may not register and it can be impossible to remember what you have just covered. This can waste very valuable time.

You may even be too tired to study at all, and need to postpone the work until a time when you are more refreshed.

To make matters worse, you may be reading something which you find boring and, as a result, it won't easily hold your attention.

The biggest cause of frustration at homework time though, and often why this work feels boring, is that students usually do not have a clear plan or structure set out to maximise their learning and efficiently cover the work in hand. Sticking to a good study plan will deliver the most satisfying results.

The traditional approach to study involves burying your head in books for hours at a time, but this often ends with

very little achieved.

On the other hand, the clever approach to studying involves being more organised and making the material more engaging and interesting to you.

In this way, you can eliminate distractions and improve your concentration during study.

Follow the tips in this section and you will discover how to develop better powers of concentration. Keep in mind that real and effective concentration is developed slowly.

With proper preparation and a strong desire to do your best, your homework and study results will improve dramatically.

### Physical environment: Where you study makes all the difference

■ Establish a daily routine that suits your study habits and needs. Stick to it!

■ Have a set place where you study – Then you will always associate it with effective study. Keep it free of distractions.

■ Your study place, if possible, should have a desk, comfortable chair and good lighting and heating when required.

■ Have your books and stationary on hand. Time spent looking for things is time spent not studying.



■ Avoid clutter as this can cause chaos when you least need it.

■ TV, friends and the Internet are the biggest distractions. Turn your phone off and log out of social networking sites. Look forward to these “rewards” during your breaks.

■ Have your daily/weekly planner where you can see it. Check off completed tasks/study periods as you finish them.

Once you have created an effective and suitable study area that is free of audio and visual distractions, you are ready to start studying!

### Tips for keeping the mind from wandering . . .

■ When your mind begins to wander, ask yourself why?

■ If you have been momentarily distracted then try and re-focus on the task at hand.

■ If you have reached your limit on doing a particular task, then switch to something different in order to keep yourself interested.

■ When their concentration lapses, some students find it useful to pinch themselves lightly and bring themselves back to base.

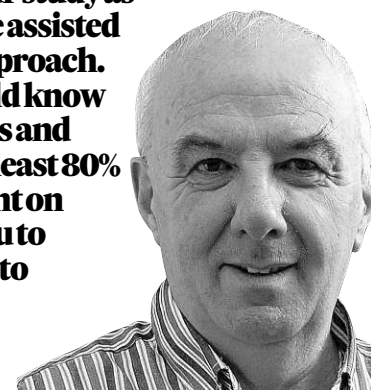
■ Draw an X on the corner of a page every time this happens and soon you will become more aware of your lapses in concentration.

■ Keep a record of this and gradually your mind should begin to wander less.

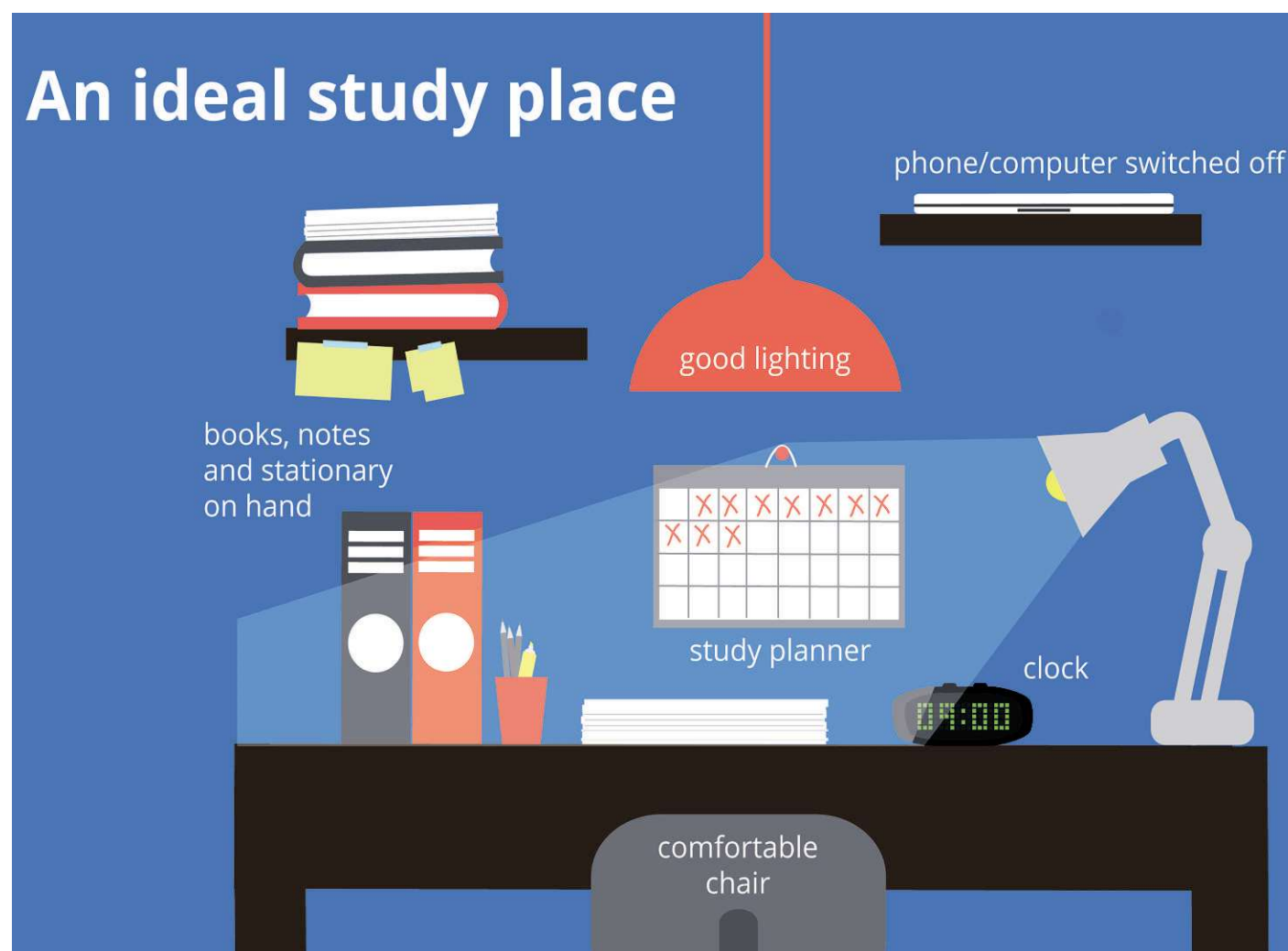
**“To retain information, you need to use it frequently. One of the best ways of doing this is to revise each topic on a regular basis. Each month or each term should do for most students. What you will find as you revise a topic again and again is that each occasion takes less and less time, as you remember more and more. In revision, you should attempt exam type questions, where you can practise both the techniques and your decision-making skills – Aidan Roantree, senior maths teacher at the Institute of Education**



**“Take control of your study as your success can be assisted by an organised approach. Don't blame anyone else. You should know what is involved. Get the past papers and study the structure of the exam. At least 80% of your time as a student will be spent on private study so it is essential for you to acquire the skills which enable you to study effectively.” – Jim Carberry, Geography teacher, The Institute of Education**



## An ideal study place



■ Remember to use whichever system works best for you. It's good to have a system; it will keep you focused and channel your attention to the areas where it's needed most.

■ If you absolutely cannot focus on your study, then move away from your books for a while. Go for a quick run, or have a chat with someone in the family.

■ When you feel relaxed and ready again, return to your study area. Remember that it's "mind over matter". You are in control of your own attention and focus.

Everybody is different. Can you think of ways that could keep your mind from wandering and that would help keep you focused while you study?

- 1) .....
- 2) .....
- 3) .....

Now that you've pinpointed some methods to help you stay focused, try to imple-

ment them into your day-to-day routine.

### Effective studying techniques

■ After each task or page you read, stop and check back to see what you can recall.  
■ Continually ask yourself questions to keep yourself on track.

■ This constant testing helps highlight areas where you need to study further and reinforce confidence in areas you know well.

■ Always do your homework for the most difficult/least favourite subjects first. By getting these out of the way, you will find everything else comes easier.

■ Concentrate on one thing at a time. Don't try to multi-task.

■ Use page markers and dividers to keep everything organised and easily assessable.

■ Mark/take notes on what you read. Update notes learned to flash cards.

■ Ask yourself: "Am I getting the best use out of my time right now?" If not, why? Make changes so that your time is being used as well as possible.

■ Have a set place where you study – then you will always associate it with effective study

### How am I doing?

It's important to regularly ask yourself how you are getting on. You can think of this as checking in with yourself, and a way of making minor corrections if needed.

■ Visualise what it is you wish to achieve from working hard; your end results, your aspired college place, etc.

■ Decide whether or not you are on course to achieve this goal and what changes, if needed, can be made.

■ Don't be too hard on yourself. Old habits can take a bit of time to change. Reward your successes and work on changing what you find hard to do. Your time is very valuable – so use it wisely.

■ Keep a trusted friend/family member up to date on your progress. Let them know when you have achieved an important goal.

■ Success breeds success – even little ones

### My study plan

**Laura Harrington**

6th-year student at  
the Institute of Education, Dublin

I've constantly heard from past students how important it is to start studying early in sixth year. Trying to learn vast amounts of information days before an important exam just doesn't work for me.

I believe the best way to prepare for the Leaving Cert is a well-structured study timetable. It can be quite daunting at first but I found that giving time to things that I enjoy in between my study throughout the day takes the fear out of all those hours of studying. You have to be realistic when filling in your timetable – a block of five hours of study without any breaks will not be efficient.

I find when studying it's best to focus on one topic and continue to do that until I know it off by heart. For me confining a subject to just one hour can put strain on my learning. Subjects such as chemistry require longer study periods than other subjects so my timetable is tailored to suit that.

I love spending time with my friends and if I know I'm going out later in the day I will make sure to get my few hours of study in so that I don't feel guilty about going out. Studying doesn't always have to be awful, and when I know I have something to look forward to after it I'm more motivated to

## “With planning and a balanced lifestyle of study and leisure the Leaving Cert can be tackled

study harder and concentrate better. It sounds crazy but it really does work. I know that by keeping a balanced routine of study and the things that I enjoy, I won't end up a nervous wreck before my exams.

One of the challenges of sixth year is balancing study and life; for me trying to fit in my part-time job is quite difficult. In my timetable I have periods where work is marked in and that way I can ensure I don't mix up school and my job.



In short, sixth year poses many stresses and challenges but I believe that with careful planning and a balanced lifestyle of study and leisure the Leaving Cert can be tackled.

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Timetable for success Weekly planner

	Sept 8-14th	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
<p><b>A good start is half the battle!</b></p> <p>◆ The best time to start with your study preparation is now. Waiting until later in the year will only make things more difficult for you in the long term.</p> <p>◆ This sample weekly study chart is dated from next Monday to the following Sunday.</p> <p>◆ It can be a great help to fill in your study chart every Sunday evening, in preparation for the week ahead.</p> <p>◆ Be specific about what you plan to study in each subject. For example, in English on Wednesday you might revise the poetry of Sylvia Plath.</p> <p>◆ Your chart will provide you with an easy guide to what you will study each day.</p> <p>◆ Stick the timetable to a wall in your study area and use it to plan your homework and study hours.</p> <p>◆ Remember, it's never too soon to begin your preparation!</p>	<b>English</b>	Shakespeare - Othello (deception & judgment notes)			WB Yeats in "East Window" & "September 1919"
	<b>Irish</b>	Revise today's class notes	Make flash cards for díospóireacht vocab		Practise past papers
	<b>Maths</b>		Algebra – Revise fractions pages 5-12 and practise questions	Algebra – finish fractions chapter & practise questions pages 17-23	
	<b>French</b>	Irregular verbs and l'imparfait – make flash cards		Revise flash cards and test (try reversing)	Practise past papers
	<b>Biology</b>			Plant structure – make flash cards from key points in chapter 1	Write notes on today's topic
	<b>History</b>		The Eucharistic Congress – revise class notes up to page 18		
	<b>Chemistry</b>	Write up notes for today's experiment		Revise this week's notes on volumetric analysis	

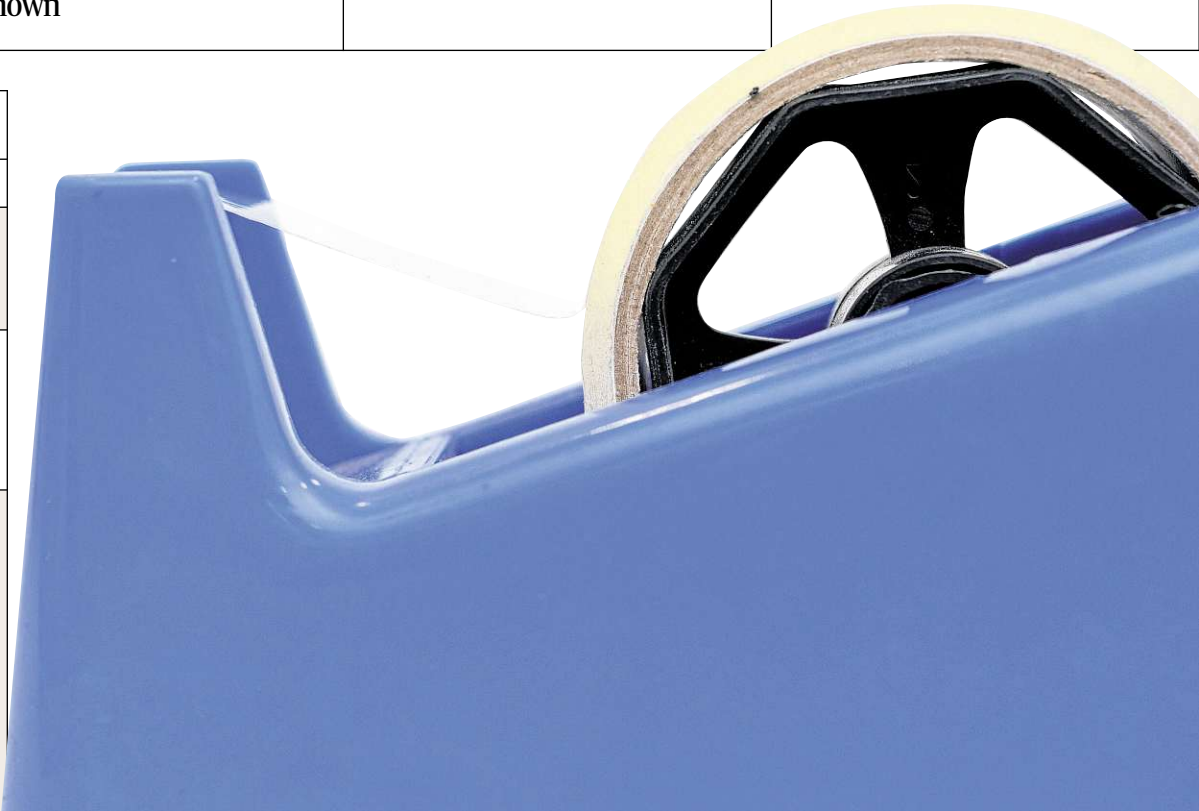


Timetable for success Monthly planner September 2014

	Tasks	Week 1	Week 2
	To study/revise	Shakespeare – Othello	Shakespeare – Othello
	Tasks	Identify examples of judgment and deception in Othello	Practise essay writing on Othello
	To do	- Revise class notes - Draw idea map for judgment - Draw idea for deception	- Answer questions on Section I, E (ii) on paper using last idea map as an example plan.

		 <b>“</b> <b>By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail</b> – Benjamin Franklin		
<b>Monday</b>	<b>Friday</b>		<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Sunday</b>
ats – Revise themes ter 1916” tember 1913”			Frost – Revise class notes on “Birches” and “Spring Pools”	Shakespeare – Othello (idea maps)
e filíocht using pers	Practise picture sequences			Revise flash cards for popular question phrasing
	Algebra – quadratic equations	 <b>“</b> <b>The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing</b> – Walt Disney	Algebra – quadratic graphs	Algebra – quadratic roots
e journal entry (use per questions)			Oral vocab – family, hobbies and school ages 12-20	
up notes for experiment	Germination – revise class notes and practise diagrams			Write notes for key points on plant production pages 32-47
	Practise past paper exam questions on Eucharistic Congress		Research study report	Research study report
		<b>“</b> <b>One of the most important keys to success is having the discipline to do what you know you should do, even when you don’t feel like doing it</b> – Unknown	Practise past paper questions on volumetric experiments	Practise diagrams for volumetric experiments

14 – English (paper 2)		
	<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Week 4</b>
	Poetry – Dickinson	Poetry – Frost
iting on	Identify the themes in Dickinson’s poetry	Describe the key aspects of Frost’s poetry
n in 2008 week’s essay	- Revise class notes on themes of death, nature and states of mind. - Look at poems “A Bird came down the Walk” and “I felt a funeral, in my brain” and identify the main themes in each poem.	- Draw an idea map of key aspects from class notes - Read “Mending Wall”, “The Tuft of Flowers” and “The Road not Taken” and look out for exam- ples of common aspects.



# Skills for the classroom

**Orla Ní Shúilleabháin**

There are tried and true systems and strategies to get the best out of your classroom lectures

Have you ever been faced with a difficult question in an exam and thought to yourself, "wow, I wish I had paid attention to the teacher when they were covering this topic in class"? Well, believe it or not, most learning is done in the classroom.

The more attention you pay to your work in class, the easier it is for you to revise that same material at home or later on. This means that you have to spend less time in the evenings and on weekends catching up on material, and you have more time to spend with friends or on your favourite pastimes.

Who wouldn't want to make the most of the time they spend in class? You can, too, if you listen actively and take quick and effective notes. Active listening is the single most useful skill you can have in the classroom.

Instead of just hearing what your teachers have to say, listen to it, pay attention and mentally process what is being said. In addition to this, good note-taking actually helps maintain concentration and makes it possible to understand the information you are being taught.

Just remember; anything you can learn in the classroom, you don't have to spend time learning at home. Using the few simple classroom skills outlined below will make learning for you a lot easier.

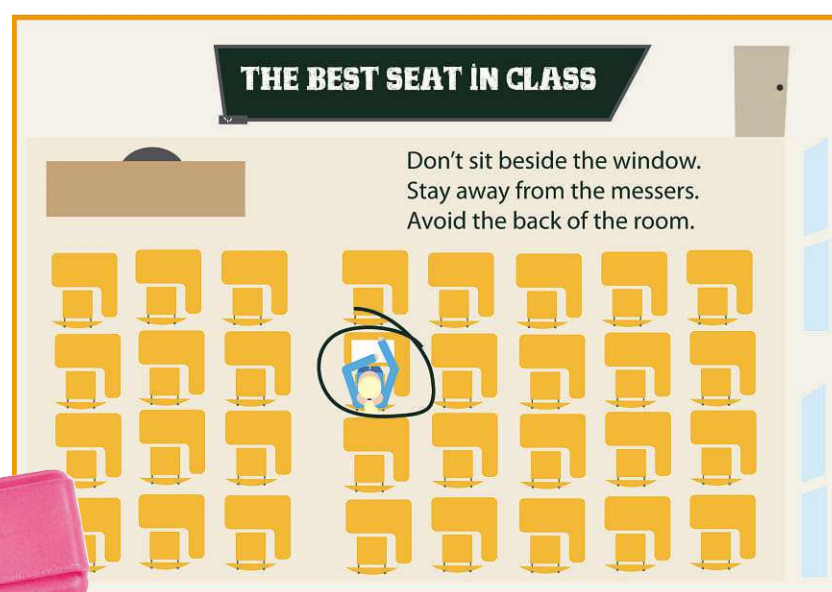
## GOOD PREPARATION FOR CLASS IS ESSENTIAL

- No matter which subject or teacher, you can get a lot more out of class with a little preparation beforehand.
- Make sure you have completed all the homework due that day.
- Try to give equal priority to all homework, not just essays or other written work.

- Reading book chapters and teachers' notes are equally as important for your progress.
- You will find it easier to take clear and concise notes in class when you have read the text.
- Have a quick review of your notes from class that day to help retain the new knowledge.
- Have some questions ready. You can never ask your teacher enough questions. They are your greatest resource for the Leaving Cert – an expert in the subject, who will be able to answer any questions you have or issues that you can't solve.

## BE EFFECTIVE IN THE CLASS

- Remember, the more you



learn in class, the more you will gain from your study at home.

- Be a good listener. It is very important for you to be a good listener in class. Listening requires you to pay attention and think about what you hear.
- Listen with questions in your mind about the topics being covered.
- Ask yourself questions and try to put the material into the relevant context.
- Be ready when you come to class and have all the necessary books.
- Make sure you have completed all homework or previous topics covered.
- Read ahead if you know what material is to be covered.
- If you have a question to ask, ask it!
- Be willing to learn – your attitude is very important to empower you to learn – so come to class with a positive attitude.

## YOUR SEAT IN CLASS

Where you sit in class will have a great influence on your concentration and, in choosing the right seat, you can improve your in-class performance greatly. The easiest thing to do in class is to daydream or let your mind wander. This will result in reduced performance and will cost you a lot come end-of-year results. So, choose your classroom seat

wisely. Bring a positive attitude to your classroom learning and you will reap the rewards.

- Avoid the back of the room.
  - Don't sit beside the window, you'll get distracted.
  - Stay away from the "messers".
- Many see classes as a waste of time. However, this is where most of your time is spent, with the experts that specialise in their subjects. Don't waste that opportunity. Make the most of it, stay focused and you will derive the value from it.

Remember, you will get out of your class what you put in.

## BE PROACTIVE IN CLASS – GOOD NOTE-TAKING

Many students take down word for word what the teacher says, but for the majority of students, this is not the most effective way to take in the material from each class. Instead of writing notes as the teacher is speaking, try to listen to the point they are making in full, then summarise it in bullet points in your notes, in a way that makes sense to you.

## HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR ACCURATE AND QUICK NOTE TAKING

- Listen carefully for key phrases that tell you a certain point is important i.e. "most importantly", "as a result", "to summarise", "on the other hand", "on the contrary" etc.
- Listen for points that the teacher repeats, emphasises or writes up on the board.
- Note any reference made to exam-type questions and practise them at home in



exam conditions.

- Jot down points quickly so you can include all the important information.
- Use rough brain storms/idea maps with key words.
- Make margin notes when working from a text book.
- Circle or highlight important terms/dates and details.
- Use abbreviations or shortened words when possible, eg info for information.
- Use symbols when possible, eg % for percentage.
- Keep your notes short, in point form.
- It will be possible to go over your notes later and fill them in fully.

#### THE FIVE STEPS TO QUICK AND CLEVER NOTE-TAKING:

- You must listen actively.
- You must select the relevant information.
- You must summarise it.
- You must organise it logically.
- You must understand it (when revising).

#### THE CORNELL SYSTEM

The Cornell note-taking system (see right), designed by Walter Pauk, is a well-known system for taking notes that many students use. Why not try it out and see if it works for you? The page layout includes large margins on the left and bottom of the page.

The note-taking area is where you write your notes during class. Try to jot down the key ideas and sentences involved. Use this area for diagrams, examples and to list points.

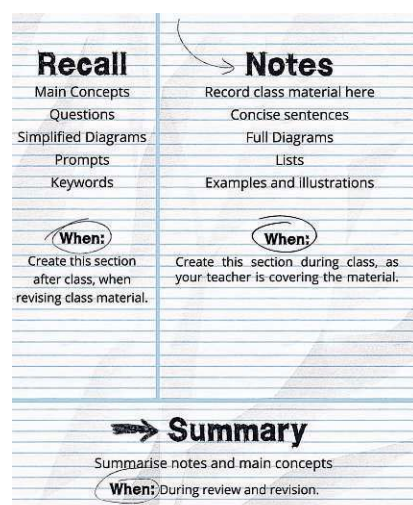
The recall column is created when you review your notes after class. As you revise the material in your notes, you should write questions and key words in the recall column.

By writing questions, you are forced to think about the class material in a way that helps you understand meaning and strengthens your memory.

Furthermore, this recall column can be used before exams to revise without

“

**This means you can't fool yourself into thinking you know it... It will help you get a complete understanding of the topic you just studied**



#### ■ The Cornell note-taking system

looking at your notes. This means you can't fool yourself into thinking you know it.

The summary area at the bottom of the page is reserved for a summary of the notes on that page. It should be brief, in your own words, and will help you get a complete understanding of the topic you just studied.

#### ACTIVE PARTICIPATION: HOW THE A STUDENT DOES IT

A-students have several important techniques that help them do well on exams at the end of the year:

#### ■ Students in class at the Institute of Education

■ A-students are able to engage with their teacher about the material. They discuss specific topics with the teacher and identify areas which need work.

■ A-students listen closely to the words of their classmates – other students often ask good questions and make helpful comments which can help you understand things further.

■ A-students give the teacher their full attention and are genuinely interested in class interactions.

■ A-students consider the new material and try to ask themselves relevant questions about it, ie What do I already know about the subject? What do I need to know? What are the important details and how could I apply my learning in the exam?

■ A-students take good written notes about what their teacher is saying.

■ A-students listen actively, work through the class and repeat points they hear.

■ A-students use marking schemes and past papers from examinations to identify exactly what is needed to answer each question and maximise their exam answering technique.

#### WHAT TO DO AFTER CLASS

■ As soon as possible after your class, review the notes you made during it. Fill in any blank areas which you couldn't complete earlier and note any questions you may have for the next class.

■ Do homework from the class now. Completing homework when it's fresh in your mind is a great way to make sure you do it to a high standard.

■ If your class-time handwriting is illegible, then use the time when you are rewriting your notes as an opportunity to revise the material as well.

#### Study-life balance

## Balance is the key to success

Orla Ní Shúilleabháin

When you achieve a study-life balance it means that you are optimising your academic work, while spending time with your family, having a balanced social life, and participating in sports and other activities.

Everything outside of your studies contributes to your mental well-being and helps to minimise your levels of stress. Nobody studies for 24 hours a day, and getting the right balance in your life means that you will get the maximum benefit from the time spent on your study.

**Enjoy your breaks**  
The best approach is simply to study when you are meant to be studying

and to relax when you are meant to be relaxing.

Do the same when you are taking time off. Don't let your studies be on your mind.

Enjoy your breaks when you take them, switch off for a few minutes, and it will be much easier to return to the work with a clear head afterwards.

**“Getting the right balance means you will get the most benefit**

Students who have a good study-life balance achieve more than they ever believed possible; they also manage to combine their academic and personal life in the very best way, and get the maximum benefit out of each.



#### STUDY AN EXTRA SUBJECT

“I received an A2 in Accounting, which I studied outside of my own school in The Institute of Education on Friday evenings. Authur Russell's first-class teaching and guidance over the past year allowed me to attain this result.”  
- Ross, Leaving Cert class of 2014.

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# Learning & memory techniques

## Orla Ní Shúilleabháin

If you don't use it you lose it... and many more tips for memorising your way to exam success

### HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR LEARNING MEMORY

Memory is like any other discipline, if you don't consistently use it, it can underperform and let you down when you need it most. Not only this but we were probably never taught how to properly use it. Like any other worthwhile skill, improving memory and recall will take a little bit of effort at first, but will soon become second nature to you. It will soon be easy to increase your focus, avoid cramming, and structure your study time well. Apart from these basics, there are many more useful tips for memorising your way to success.

Your memory works in three very simple steps:

- Information in
- Information storage
- Information recall

All of these aspects are important for success in your exams. So how do we improve our ability to store and recall information? There are many different techniques and I can guarantee you that there are some to help every student.

### WHAT TYPE OF LEARNER ARE YOU?

Let's discuss some of the best methods for gathering and storing information in the first place. A small amount of time spent now on figuring out what works for you will reward you later as you approach exams.

Are you a visual or verbal learner? Think about the things in life that you remember vividly and in full detail. Is it information in the form of pictures and text? Or is it a speech from the radio or news read on the TV? Visual learners learn best from what they see and write down. Verbal learners learn best from asking questions and hearing answers.

■ If you are a visual learner then you will learn most effectively through the use of diagrams, clearly laid out notes, visual organisers, colour-coded bullet points and study techniques such as idea-mapping and flash-

cards.

■ If you are a verbal learner then you can improve study performance by reading texts and key points aloud, talking to others about what you have learned, recording your notes and playing them back on your MP3 player, and through memory techniques such as mnemonics.

### INFORMATION IN & STORAGE

- No matter how you learn best, it's a
- Approach new material with strong in-

great idea to focus on learning in more ways than one, for example, find ways to take in information visually and verbally.

■ Read aloud to yourself as you take notes and learn the same info in the form of idea maps and flashcards.

■ The more connections you create and storage areas you use, the easier it is for you to recall the information on cue in the exam.

terest and a high level of focus. This will help you to remember more details.

■ The opening and closing paragraphs will usually contain good summaries of the material covered.

■ End of chapter questions highlight the most important things that you need to know.

■ Teach what you have learned to another person. This can be another student or even a family member – it's not important who.

■ In teaching somebody else, you have to approach the material in a different way and this helps create new links to the material in your brain. Not only that, but teaching others can help reveal gaps in your own knowledge that you were unaware of.

■ Teaching somebody else is very similar to writing in an exam, when you have to explain things to the examiner.

■ Try to connect new information to things that you already know. This could be in understanding the relationship between two geographic features or why certain Spanish verbs have similar changes in the past tense.

■ By establishing a relationship between a new idea and existing thoughts, you can strengthen your understanding and more easily recall this in the future.

### INFORMATION RECALL

Once you've started learning all of this information, it's time to begin working on your information recall. Having good memory recall means that you will be able to quickly and efficiently remember facts during the exam and present them to the examiner in the best way possible.

Keep learning and practising. It's important to keep using the material that you have learnt. Examinations.ie is a great resource for past papers, marking schemes and practising under exam conditions. This is why it's important to have a regular revision schedule.

There are a number of methods to test your recall. Using an idea map or brainstorm, write down everything you can remember about a topic without consulting your book or notes.

Check what you left out. Repeat these two steps, focusing more on missing details each time.

When you can recall all of the essential points, you have it well learnt.

Eat healthily. A healthy diet contributes to a healthy brain, and thus improves your memory recall noticeably. Foods that

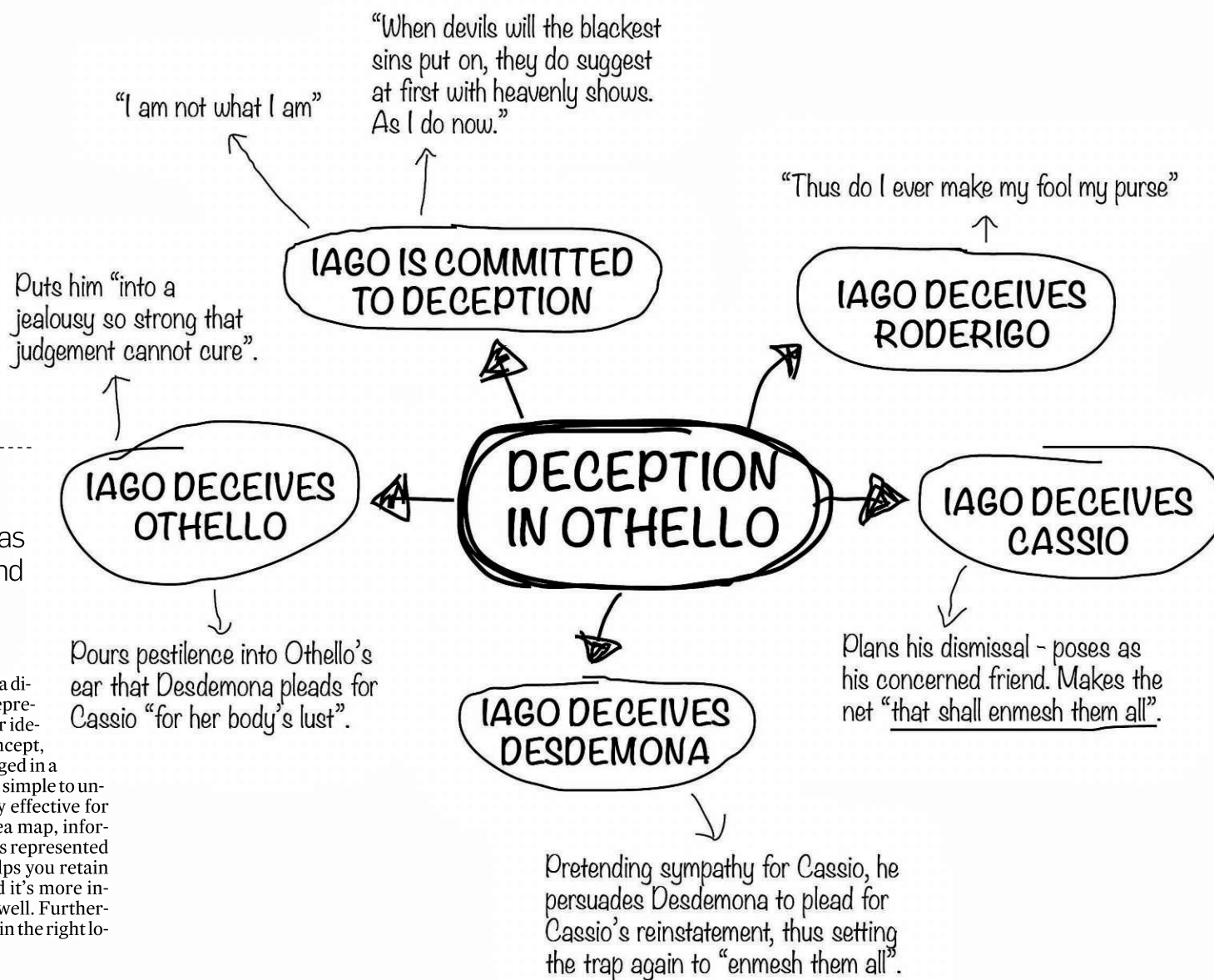




**Orla Ni Shúillebháin**

The idea mapping concept involves drawing a diagram as an aide-memoire and to add interest

Idea mapping is the use of a diagram that is drawn to represent facts, words or other ideas linked to a central concept, around which they are arranged in a circular pattern. It is not only simple to understand, but also extremely effective for use in your studies. In an idea map, information on a topic or subject is represented visually on the page; this helps you retain more of the information and it's more interesting for you to study as well. Furthermore, each concept is placed in the right lo-



# Idea mapping

cation (regardless of the order in which it is thought of). In fact, studies have shown that students who study while using idea maps and other graphical representations of information recall more information than those students who study only the teacher's notes or their own written summaries of the material.

But what can we use idea maps for? This method of arranging and presenting information is very useful for studying and preparing the general structure of essays and answers before answering. Above we have prepared a sample map using the play *Othello*. It deals with the theme of deception in *Othello*. Studying this map can help you simplify information as complex as the main themes of a Shakespearean play, and is a great additional study tool to your teacher's typed notes.

## IT CAN ALSO BE USED WITH GREAT SUCCESS IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

- Note-taking
- Brainstorming (either individually or in groups)
- Studying and memorisation
- Researching projects
- Problem solving
- Increasing creativity

## HOW TO DRAW AN IDEA MAP

Drawing an idea map is as easy as follow-

ing these six simple steps:

**1** Begin at the centre of an A4 page in landscape orientation; write down your central concept on the page and circle it, box it in, or mark it in some way. In this case we have ringed the heading "Deception in *Othello*".

**2** Surrounding this central concept, write down any main ideas which relate to it. These can then be attached to the centre using branches. Any of these ideas can then be expanded out using sub-branches.

**3** It is a good idea to colour code your branches, ie one colour for the central concept, a different colour for the surrounding ideas, and so on.

**4** The branches should not be uniform and straight, but rather curved and overlap each other.

This presents the information in a natural and intuitive way, which makes it easier for you to recall later.

**5** Feel free to use small notes and images at various points to clarify points of information.

**6** Try to refrain from too many layers of branches and sub-branches. The goal of idea mapping is to simplify the information delivery process, rather than complicate it.

## HOW TO DRAW AN IDEA MAP

Try to use as many different colours, drawings and symbols as possible when creating your idea map.

You don't have to worry about creating a work of art, just a memorable representation of the topic which you will remember easily come exam time. Also, keep the sentences/idea labels as short as possible.

If you can, try keeping them to one phrase or even a single word. Your idea map will be much more effective if you keep it that way.

Finally, try not extend your diagram too far, as this can get complicated and lead to confusion. It is preferable, instead, to take an existing idea from your diagram and use this as the central concept of a new Idea map layout.

So, why not try and create your own idea map. Follow these few guidelines and don't worry about doing it "correctly" – all that matters is that you engage your brain a little more while making notes, and make it a little more enjoyable for yourself to be studying.

“

**Idea maps bring every aspect of a topic together in an ordered fashion and help us to focus**

– Denis Creaven,  
English teacher at  
The Institute of Education



# Effective reading skills

Orla Ní Shúilleabháin

Reading to learn is not as simple as it sounds – it is a skill that students must develop through practise

**L**earning to read was one of the key steps in our early education. Through simple language and storybook visuals we first learned how to assimilate meaning and knowledge. But, as the words became longer and more plentiful, we were not necessarily taught more advanced reading techniques as well. As such, just as we sometimes hear but do not listen, we often “read” words but do not fully comprehend the meaning or context.

Think about this. How often have you read a full paragraph of text but struggled at the end to remember its content or retrieve the required learning from the exercise? Our study time is too precious to waste it on ineffective reading. Now is the time to practise reading to learn and to begin achieving the maximum learning possible from the time spent on school texts.

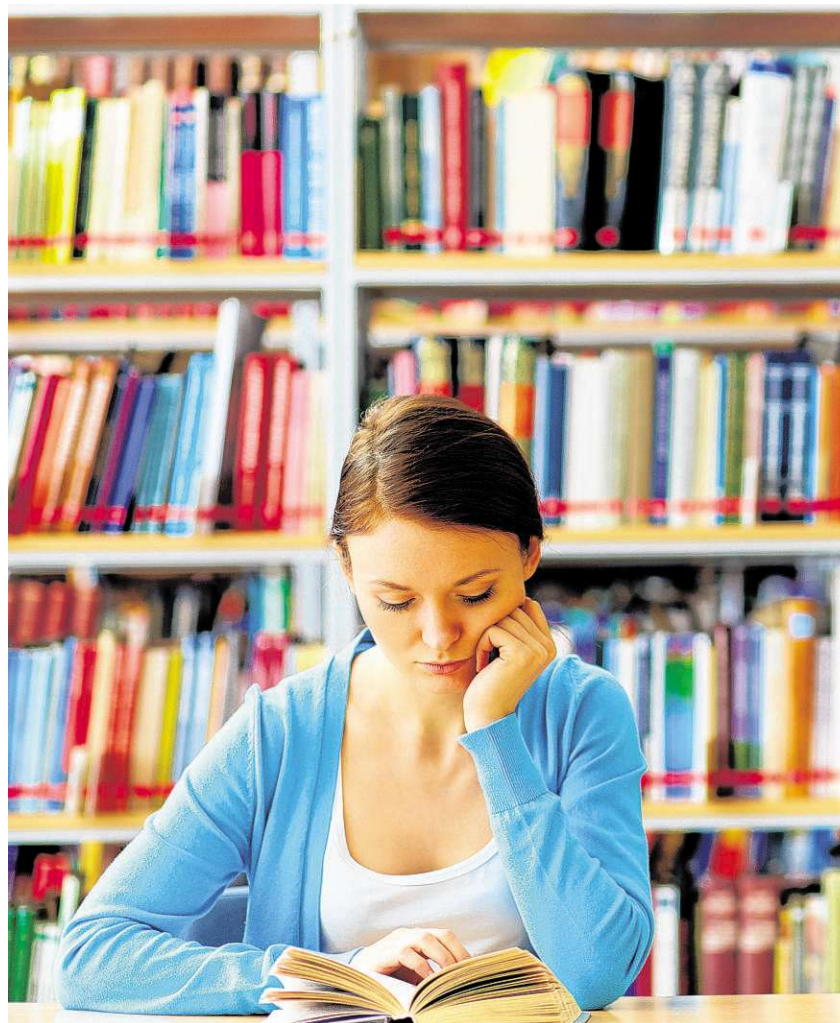
Step back from the daunting task of reading the vast quantities of material across all your subject choices. By simply using the various techniques below, you will learn to absorb and recall information in the most practical way.

There is also a difference between studying a language and, say, a technical subject. Languages are very much about the vocabulary, sentence structure and grammatical concepts while a specialised subject may rely on recall of visuals, charts, numbers and facts.

Plan to look at individual subjects on the basis of what is the most effective way for you to assimilate the key information and the best ways to retrieve the results on your exam day. It's not necessarily about being the best reader but it is about getting the most of what you do read.

## Reading to learn

Every text or chapter you read must have a defined purpose. Ask yourself the



following questions:

- Why am I reading this article, chapter, or book?
- What do I want to achieve from this?
- What do I need to know about this topic?
- How will this information improve my overall knowledge of the topic?
- How will I use this information when I'm being examined on this topic?
- Do I have this information condensed (flashcards/summary notes) for rapid revision later on?

## Techniques for learning key information

- Scanning techniques
- Skimming the text
- Reading for full comprehension
- Summarising
- Light reading

## – Scanning techniques

Look for key data (formulae/ tables/ headings). You may then proceed to skim or read the text in greater detail.

**Learning tip:** Tables, charts and idea maps are useful to identify important and relevant parts of a required topic and can be an

excellent aid to help save time in your search for key information.

## – Skimming the text

A rapid search technique which helps you quickly cover large amounts of information with a view to gaining an overview of the text.

**Learning tip:** It's useful to identify key words and phrases that will ensure that further reading for comprehension will be time well spent. This is also useful when revising as it will help better recall of the full body of the text. You are reading the text fully and in greater detail.

## – Reading for full comprehension

You are required to understand key words and phrases – such as in foreign language texts – or need to pick up key technical information – such as in maths and science subjects.

**Learning tip:** Look out for meaning and context. Take note of these. Memorise words or phrases that will trigger better recall of the overall text or article, especially at exam time.

## – Summarising

Once you have gained a full understanding of the material, it can be a good idea to summarise your learning in the form of study

notes, flashcards or audio recordings.

**Learning tip:** Summarise the topic with exam questions in mind. Making notes in the margins will help identify key information which will be useful at future readings

## – Light reading

You are reading supplementary material or background information on the topic in question. This can help deepen your understanding and provide extra details for answering exam questions.

**Learning tip:** Reading a novel, magazine or newspaper article in your spare time would be an example of the above. The additional information can be the difference in getting those extra marks at exam time.

## How to apply the different types of reading/learning

Try using the following for your next learning opportunity – **SSRCRR**:

**1** Scan information, eg textbooks, to find the chapter relevant to your topic.

**2** Skim the chapter or text to ensure that required information is there and that the time you spend reading will be productive.

**3** Read for comprehension: understanding the detail of the piece.

**4** Clarify accuracy of your learning: try to visualise questions that could be asked.

**5** Recap: recall what you have learned

**6** Revisit (maybe in a later session) the text to ensure that your learning has been robust.

## Learning tips:

**Jot down key words for your flashcards.** Consider using a pencil if you wish to highlight items in your text book.

**Some textbooks will have a very useful summary at the end of the chapter.** Most useful for revision and learning key words to help expand your answers in exams.

**Mix it up – why not recite your answers aloud?** Create a visual of a main character reciting a key line or quote from a play. It will help with recall during your exam.

**Mix it up 2 – use a classmate or friend to test yourself on information learned or try explain it to somebody.** It really works!

**Know your optimum learning time when you are reading large amounts of information.** Take a break then and recap/recall to ensure that your concentration is good and that you have not wasted a valuable study session.

**Know what works for you.** Be disciplined. The more you apply the above techniques the more it will feel like second nature and the better your learning will be.

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# What is the HPAT?



**Colin Irwin**

HPAT tutor at The Institute of Education

Tips for the question styles you may be confronted with in the HPAT exam for entering medicine

The Hpat-Ireland examination is an additional exam which must be sat by students hoping to gain entry to undergraduate or mature entry medicine in Ireland. Universities in the Republic of Ireland combine your HPAT-Ireland score with your Leaving Cert points, and the total determines whether you are successful in your application to study medicine (Leaving Cert points are not considered for mature entry).

The following table equates the old points system with the new, in the wake of the introduction of the HPAT-Ireland exam. The maximum score in the Leaving Cert is 625 (including 25 extra points for higher lever maths), and this is adjusted to a maximum score of 565 for medicine entry.

Leaving Cert points	Adjusted LC points for medicine
550	550
555	551
560	552
565	553
570	554
575	555
580	556
585	557
590	558
595	559
600	560
605	561
610	562
615	563
620	564
625	565

## UNDERSTANDING THE HPAT

The HPAT-Ireland exam is a test of general reasoning ability. The test is designed to provide a measure of your aptitude for the study of medicine and your suitability to work as a doctor.

HPAT-Ireland is not based on learned

material, on curriculum content or on the study of particular subjects. It tests your ability to understand and respond to a set of questions and scenarios, as well as your capacity to handle stressful situations.

## Preparing for the exam

The HPAT exam consists of three individual sections, each with a particular style of question. The style and format of HPAT questions will be alien to the vast majority of students. It is therefore essential that you practise and familiarise yourself with exams before you sit the actual exam. You should be as well-prepared as possible, and develop your thinking style and test-taking strategies in the lead-up to the exam to perform to the best of your ability.

It is equally important, however, to remember that while 565 points are available from the Leaving Cert, only 300 points are theoretically available from the HPAT-Ireland exam. In reality, those candidates who scored 200 and above in the 2013 and 2014 HPAT-Ireland exams were placed in the top 1-2 per cent of all candidates in the State.

The Leaving Cert therefore effectively represents over 70 per cent of the marks available for entry to medicine. So the Leaving Cert remains the cornerstone of any medical application.

The HPAT does not benefit from hours of continuous study. Practice materials should only be studied for short periods of time when you are feeling fresh and attentive. Spending more than two hours studying HPAT materials in one sitting will have a reduced effect, and ultimately waste study material.

Most students can enhance their HPAT test score with effective preparation, but the level of improvement will be limited by their inherent abilities. This is due to some HPAT questions having an intuitive aspect which does not benefit from study in the same way geography or maths would benefit.

In contrast, there really is no substitution for consistent, structured study throughout the Leaving Cert cycle to maximise one's points tally. For this reason, it is vital that the Leaving Cert remains your top priority, and that you do not allow your HPAT preparations jeopardise your main exam performance.

“

**It is essential that you practise and familiarise yourself with HPAT exams before you sit the actual exam**

## The exam format and timing

Section	Type	No of questions	Time	Time per question	Time per 10 questions
1	Logical reasoning & problem-solving	44	65min	1 min 25 secs	14 min approx
2	Inter-personal understanding	36	45min	1 min 10 secs	12 min approx
3	Non-verbal reasoning	30	40min	1 min 20 secs	13 min approx

This guide introduces you to some of the question styles you may confront in the HPAT exam and provides you with practical tips on how to approach each type.

## CHANGES ON THE HPAT-IRELAND EXAM

Last year saw the introduction of two changes in the HPAT-Ireland exam.

HPAT results can now only be used to gain entry to medicine in the same year that the exam is sat. That is, if you sit the HPAT in March 2015, you can use the score to get into medicine in 2015, but not in 2016.

Prior to the 2014 exam, sections one, two and three each counted for one-third of the marks available. Now the weighting has changed.

Section one and two are now worth 40 per cent each, while section three has been reduced to 20 per cent. The structure of the exam will remain the same, as will the time allowances.

## 2014 SCORES

Scores in the HPAT exam for 2014 in Ireland were noticeably lower than previous years. If students look at the percentile scores they will see that overall candidates scored markedly lower, indicating a more difficult test or a harsh marking scheme. This resulted in a lower cut-off point for entry to medicine this year.

This has very little practical impact as the same number of top scoring students will still be accepted, it is simply that the “top scores” will be lower than in previous years.

“

**There is no negative marking in the HPAT, so, if you don't know the answer make an educated guess**

## HOW HPAT IS STRUCTURED AND WHAT EACH AREA MEASURES

**Section 1** – Logical Reasoning and Problem Solving: 44 questions to be answered in 65 minutes.

**Section 2** – Interpersonal Understanding: 36 questions to be answered in 45 minutes.

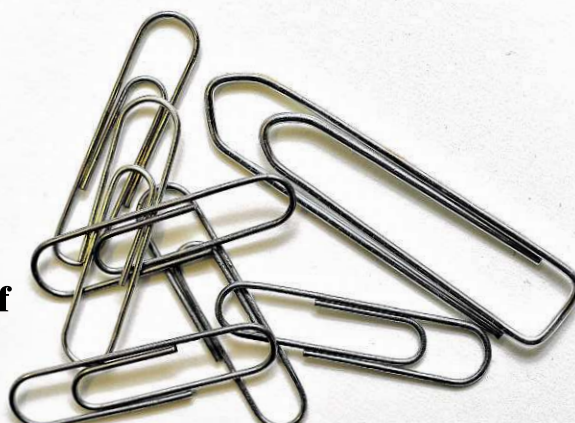
**Section 3** – Non-Verbal Reasoning: 30 questions to be answered in 40 minutes.

All questions are in multiple choice format with four or five possible responses. There is only one correct answer for each question. Do not leave any questions blank. There is no negative marking in the HPAT, so, if you don't know the answer make an educated guess. In most questions you should be able to narrow your options by identifying some answers as obviously wrong. If a question is taking too long, try and rule out one or two wrong answers, guess, and move on.

## TIMING TIPS

The HPAT exam is two and a half hours long. There is a limited amount of time to complete each of the three sections (see table above). You will be informed when the time is up for each individual section, and you must then move on immediately to the next section. You may not move onto the next section until instructed to do so.

Timing is therefore key to success in the HPAT. The exam is designed to put you under pressure and see how you react to stressful situations. The key to timing is to know how long 10 questions in each section should take. This allows you to check your progression every 10 questions, without having to check your watch with every question. With practice the timing will become easier.



# A guide to answering the different types of questions in the HPAT



■ Students at the Institute of Education on Dublin's Leeson Street.

## Colin Irwin

It is essential to note that in each of the following examples we provide a useful approach method. Of course, you may have alternative methods that are more effective for you. Methods presented here are designed to help you in your performance but are not to be taken as the exclusive way to interact with each question type. Ultimately, you should adopt the approach that works best for you.

### Section 1: Logical reasoning and problem solving

These questions assess your ability to understand, infer rational conclusions, identify relevant facts, analyse information, identify omitted/supplementary facts, and create and evaluate possible hypotheses.

#### Example 1: Numerical Reasoning

The following question type tests your numerical understanding and ability to read data, graphs and charts. Questions of this style vary in their level of difficulty, ranging from those that simply require you to add numbers in a table, to more difficult questions involving percentages, basic probability and averages. To improve performance in these questions you should practise doing simple calculations (+, -, x, ÷, %) without a calculator. The more you practise, the faster you will be able to get through questions.

#### Sample test question

**Q:** Paul is having a barbecue, but has forgotten to purchase fire lighters. He decides to drive to the local supermarket. He drives at 20mph to reach the supermarket. Once he arrives he realises he must hurry home as his friends will arrive shortly. He buys his firelighters, then drives at 30mph all the way home so as to not be late. If we exclude the time Paul spends at the supermarket, what was his average speed for the entire journey?

- A. 24mph
- B. 15mph
- C. 25mph
- D. 12mph

**Solution:** You are not given the distance Paul has to travel. In such cases, rather than use a hypothetical distance X, pick a distance that will be easy to work with mathematically, eg: 10, 100 etc.

Let's say Paul lives 10 miles from the shop (the actual distance doesn't matter as the answer will work out the same regardless of the distance you choose).

On the way there, he travels at 20mph. It will therefore take him 30 minutes to travel the 10 miles.

On the way back he travels at 30mph. It

will therefore take him 20 minutes to travel the 10 miles back.

In total, Paul is travelling for 50 mins. To get his average you need to do the following.

$$\frac{\text{Time spent at 20mph} \times 20 (\text{speed}) + \text{time spent at 30mph} \times 30 (\text{speed})}{50 (\text{total time})}$$

$$\frac{30 (\text{mins}) \times 20 (\text{mph}) + 20 (\text{mins}) \times 30 (\text{mph})}{50 (\text{mins})}$$

This comes to  
 $1200/50 = 24$   
Answer = A

#### Example 2: Verbal Reasoning

These questions test whether or not you are able to extract important information from a short piece of text. Again, questions vary in their difficulty – some are quite straightforward whereas others are very technical or subject-specific. It is important that you quickly absorb all the information and draw logical conclusions from the information provided. Clearly separating and identifying each piece of important information will help you achieve this quickly. Remember, all the information you need to answer the question is contained in the text.

#### Sample test question

**Q:** The Road Safety Authority (RSA) in Ireland recently distributed 400,000 free high-visibility vests to those living in rural communities, in an effort to reduce the incidence of involvement in collisions with motorists while out walking. Research has shown that increased visibility dramatically reduces the incidence of vehicle/pedestrian collisions in Ireland.

**Which of the following is supported by the above information?**

- A. High visibility clothing significantly reduces the incidence of accidents on Irish roads.
- B. Pedestrians living in rural areas are most at risk of involvement in collisions with motorists.
- C. High visibility clothing may actually increase the incidence of collisions on Irish roads.
- D. Irish roads have a high incidence of vehicle/pedestrian collisions, especially within rural communities.

#### Solution:

A: Correct: This statement is directly supported by the text where it states "Research has shown that increased visibility dramatically reduces the incidence of vehicle/pedestrian collisions in Ireland".

B: Incorrect: We cannot say people in ru-

ral areas are at higher risk as this would be an assumption. There is no information in the text to support this statement. To say people in rural areas are at higher risk, we would have to have a comparison between rural and non-rural areas.

C: Incorrect: There is nothing in the text to suggest that high-visibility clothing may increase the incidence of collision. The text states that research shows that the opposite is true.

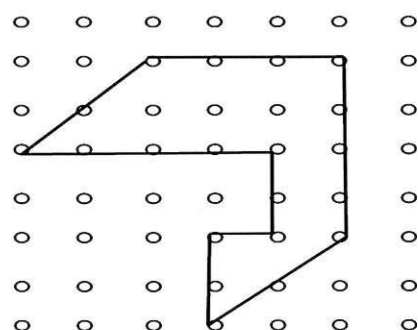
D: Incorrect: This is incorrect for the same reason B is incorrect; there is a direct statement and also no comparison. There are no figures or other region/countries provided to compare Ireland to, therefore it cannot be said that the incidence is high or low. The text also does not state that there is a high incidence.

#### Logical Reasoning

These questions are often visual in nature and involve movement, placement or location. These questions can contain a large number of rules or patterns which are too confusing to figure out mentally. It is essential in these questions to use drawings, charts or diagrams.

#### Sample test question

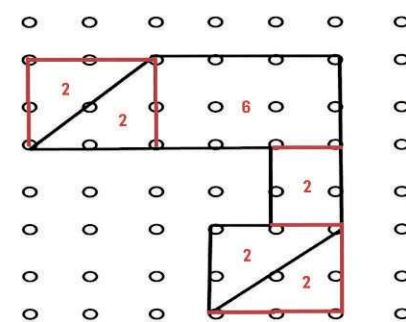
**Q:** Below is a lattice polygon, ie, a polygon whose vertices lie on the points of a square lattice. Assuming that the points are spaced at intervals of one unit, what is the area of the polygon?



- A 12
- B 20
- C 14
- D 16

**Solution:** Using simple drawings or scribbles, simplify the question for yourself. As shown below the complex image has been broken into four simple squares/rectangles. To calculate the area of each square/rectangle simply multiply the length by the width. If the area required is a triangle, then take half the area of the square/rectangle.

The total area is  $2+6+2+2=12$   
Answer = A



### Section 2: Interpersonal understanding

This section tests your ability to perceive reactions, beliefs, emotions and motivations of other people from a short text or conversational piece. These questions often involve interactions between professionals and non-professionals, or people with differing perspectives, which you have to appreciate and understand.

This section requires a mix of verbal comprehension and interpretation of matters of a personal or human nature. While the questions seek to identify your ability to understand various human situations, they are still constructed in a way where the information required to answer a question correctly is always provided.

This section is heavily dependent on your understanding and level of English. It is important to try and increase your vocabulary and range of language. This can be achieved by reading articles and books that use complex, descriptive language. If you don't understand a word, look it up in a dictionary. Also use a thesaurus to widen your descriptive vocabulary.

Note: Although there is only one right answer to any given question, you should make sure you check all the alternatives in the interpersonal understanding section as there can sometimes be two or three options that make sense in the context of the piece. In these instances you must ensure you select the most appropriate option. Spending a little extra time checking that the facts and wording in the passage support your chosen option is wise here.

#### Sample test question

Ben's son and daughter-in-law have recently been killed in a road traffic accident leaving behind three children: two girls, Mairead and Ruth, aged 10 and seven years and a boy, James, aged four. The children have no other living relatives apart from Ben, who is a widower. A social worker and district nurse have brought the children to Ben's house and asked him to be their full-time carer.

Ben: "I suppose I'm the only family they have now, but I haven't seen them for

◆ Continues overleaf

## ◆ from previous page

several years, I live alone and have a full time job.

District Nurse: I'm sure it's all a big shock but the children will be better off living with you as you're their only relative.

## 1: In her response the district nurse has;

- A. Dealt with Ben's anxieties adequately.
- B. Dismissed Ben's concerns as irrelevant.
- C. Failed to properly deal with Ben's anxieties.
- D. Failed to understand that Ben is worried.

## 2: The district nurse's reply may well have left Ben feeling:

- A. concerned about the future.
- B. embarrassed at his behaviour.
- C. assuaged of his responsibilities.
- D. enabled to deal with the situation.

## Q1

A: Incorrect. The nurse has not dealt with Ben's anxieties at all. She diverts his attention to the children and what is best for them.

B: Incorrect. She does not tackle Ben's concerns at all, so she does not dismiss them either. She ignores them.

C: Correct. The nurse's response agrees that it is a "big shock" but does not go about dealing with this at all. Instead she focuses her attention on what is best for the children.

D: Incorrect. This is wrong because the nurse acknowledges Ben's worry when she says, "It's all a big shock".

## Q2

A: Correct. This is correct, as the nurse has made it clear that it

will be better for the children to live with Ben. Ben now has to face many years looking after the children so he would be concerned about the future. Process of elimination is important here.

B: Incorrect. There is no reason to believe Ben would feel embarrassed. He has not acted inappropriately and the nurse has not replied in a manner that would make him embarrassed.

C: Incorrect. Assuage means make a feeling less intense. This is incorrect, as the nurse's reply has done nothing to sooth his concerns about his responsibilities.

D: Incorrect. The nurse has not done anything to enable Ben to deal with his situation. The nurse has only stated that it is a "big shock" and that it will be best for the children.

## Section 3: Non-Verbal reasoning

There are three different question types in Section 3:

- Next in Series
- Missing Segment
- Middle of Sequence

All three involve a similar approach.

You would not come across these question types on a regular basis in a school setting, and they can appear quite abstract. Some students are able to approach these questions intuitively; for many others it is important have a practical, methodical approach. Practice can greatly improve every student's performance in section 3, as you will be able to identify patterns and question types more easily through repeated exposure.

In each question type, the answer is found by identifying rules or patterns that put the elements into a coherent sequence. Once you have identified these it is straightforward to derive the correct answer.

## The approach we suggest is to:

1 Quickly identify what rules or patterns are present in the sequence. Focus on one individual aspect to begin with, as there may be several rules or patterns within each question. When you have identified a pattern/rule see does it fit with the other rules/patterns operating in the question.

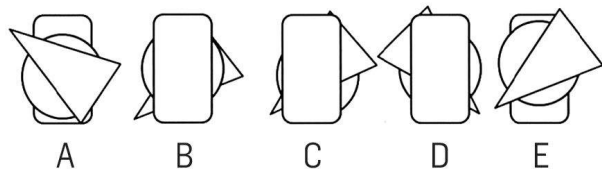
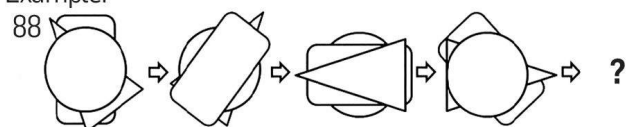
2 Apply the rules to the answer options to see which one fits logically. As you identify more rules and patterns, you will rule out more and more incorrect options.

## Next in the series

Essentially this question wants you to figure out "what comes next?" This type of non-verbal reasoning question requires you to work out the item that follows a certain sequence and rule. These sequences can involve images, letters or numbers. Questions may have four or five items, with the last item missing. You have five answer options to choose from (A to E).

## Sample test question

Example:



**Solution:** As with all section 3 questions start by focusing on one element of the question and attempt to establish a rule. Start with the circle, from the 1st to 2nd image it moves from the top to the middle.

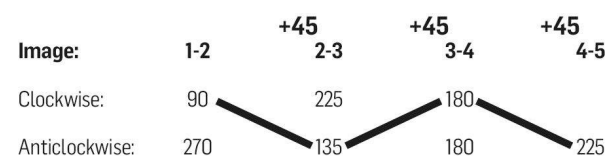
From the 2nd to 3rd it moves from middle to bottom. From the 3rd to 4th it moves bottom to top. The other 2 shapes follow the same pattern in unison. The rule we have established here is that the shapes move one space each time in the sequence: top, middle, bottom, top, middle....

Therefore the fifth image has to be: rectangle, circle, triangle. Therefore only B can be the correct answer.

There are several other rules at play here that you can use to verify that B is correct.

Look at the rectangle, it rotates 45 degrees clockwise in each new image. Therefore the rectangle must be in the upright position in the fifth image.

Look at the triangle. It rotates between each image. There is no obvious pattern at first, however this chart of its clockwise and anticlockwise movements makes the pattern easier to see.



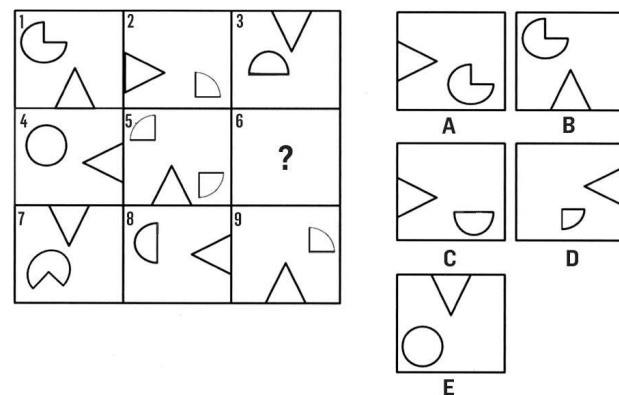
Therefore the triangle will be in the position shown in option B

## Missing segment

This type of question requires you to figure out the rules or follow a pattern that connects the items, then apply the rules or pattern to the answer options and select that option that follows the rules/pattern.

## Example:

\*Note: the numbers in the boxes below are not part of the question but have been added help explain the solution



**Solution:** Again focus on 1 element within the question. In these grid questions the patterns frequently go horizontally, vertically or diagonally.

Look at the triangle in box 1, it is located on the bottom of the square. In box 2 it moves clockwise to the left hand side of the box. In box 3 it again moves clockwise to the top of the box. The pattern here is that the triangle is moving clockwise around the grid box one side at a time.

Therefore from box 5 to 6 the triangle will move from the bottom to the left hand side. This leaves us with options A and C.

Now look at the circle segments. In the top row, boxes 1-3, you can see that there is  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a circle in box 1,  $\frac{1}{4}$  in box 2 and  $\frac{1}{2}$  in box 3.

In the bottom row, boxes 7-9, you can see that there is  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a circle in box 7,  $\frac{1}{4}$  in box 8 and  $\frac{1}{2}$  in box 9.

The pattern here appears to be that the segments in the 2nd and 3rd boxes in a row add together to give the segment in the 1st box. ie:  $\frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{2} = \frac{3}{4}$

Therefore for the middle row we get: 1 (box 4) =  $\frac{1}{2}$  (box 5) + ? (box 6)

Therefore box 6 must contain a  $\frac{1}{2}$  segment. That rules out option A.

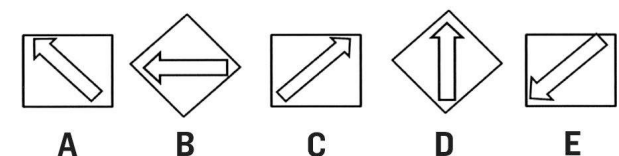
Therefore option C is the correct answer

## Middle of the sequence

These questions provide you with five images that form a sequence or pattern, however the five images are in the incorrect order. The aim in these questions is to figure out the correct sequence and select the middle image as your answer.

These questions are often the most challenging in section 3 as patterns and rules are much more difficult to identify when the images are not in sequence.

## Sample test question



Focus on the arrow here. It is difficult to ascertain any pattern without a methodical approach. Take the arrows to be hands of a clock:

A = 10:30, B = 9, C = 1:30, D = 12, E = 7:30

Now put these in order from the earliest to latest

1:30 - 7:30 is a 6-hour gap - does not fit

7:30(E) - 9(B) is a 1½ hr gap

9(B) - 10:30(A) is a 1½ hr gap

10:30(A) - 12(D) is a 1½ hr gap

12(D) - 1:30(C) is a 1½ hr gap

Therefore the correct order is: E B A D C

Answer: A



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# What stops us from studying?

**Orla Ni Shúilleabháin**

Barriers to study can be conscious or sub-conscious but these can be overcome by a disciplined approach

What is the first thing you think of when you hear the word “study”? Most students will immediately think of it as a task that is both difficult and boring. Why is that? It’s because we were never really taught how to study in an interesting and effective way.

Without understanding how to approach it, students often avoid beginning their study altogether and tell themselves that they will “start it later”. This often leads to a vicious cycle and overdue study builds up and soon it seems impossible to catch up.

This can lead to cramming and last-minute study come the end of the term, with the pressure of exams just around the corner.

Thankfully, there is a simple solution to help you stop avoiding study – thinking positively and creating a structure that will help you get going. This could be as straightforward as setting some goals or writing the first sentence of that English essay you were putting off.

Once they get started, my students often find their assignments are more interesting than they expected and not as difficult as they feared. There is also an amazing sense of satisfaction and relief to be felt when you complete a task. This sense of ac-

complishment will motivate you to keep up the good work and maintain your study momentum!

Barriers to effective study can be thought of in two ways – conscious and sub-conscious blocks. More simply, the conscious barriers are those that you are aware of and the sub-conscious ones are those which you might not know exist.

## CONSCIOUS BARRIERS INCLUDE:

■ Distractions such as TV, a busy social scene or social networks.

■ There may be practical reasons such as having to help at home or part-time work which reduces the time available for study.

■ The physical study environment may not be suitable – noisy or lacking privacy.

Most students never have the ideal, perfect conditions for study. Everyone has to deal with these distractions as best they can and make the most of the situation. Remember, you can’t keep on making excuses for not getting started.

The sub-conscious barriers are not as obvious and may be more difficult to deal with as a result. Here are some of the typical blocks which make it difficult to motivate yourself and get going:

## THE BLOCKS THAT GET IN THE WAY

■ Feelings of self-doubt: Many students ask themselves, “Why should I try if I’m just going to fail?” This can lead to a lack of self-belief and less motivation.

■ Feelings of anxiety: Worry about the impending exams can cause real stress

when studying for the Junior Cert or Leaving Cert. Anxiety is often as a result of not having a plan or structure and not having long-term goals in place.

■ Feelings of fear: Every student wants to get their course in the CAO. The fear of not getting it can be a major study distraction, however, and cause them to feel helpless.

■ Feeling overwhelmed: With the mountain of work ahead, we begin to panic. It seems impossible to tackle. We keep putting it off as long as we can and this can lead to feelings of hopelessness.

■ Fear of failure: For many students, the fear of failure weighs heavily on their minds. It is one of the most common reasons for not studying. Unless a student overcomes this fear, it can be difficult to achieve their goals.

However it is possible to remove these barriers to study. The following checklist is a great way to start reducing barriers to study and start getting good work done:

## HOW TO OVERCOME THESE STUDY BLOCKS

■ It’s good to talk. Chat to a parent, teacher or friend. Discuss your biggest study blocks and decide how to remove these distractions from your day-to-day life.

■ Set goals for yourself. With strong goals we empower ourselves to achieve what we want most of all.

■ Get rid of self-doubt with positive affirmations. Remind yourself that you are a smart and capable student and not to undervalue yourself. Celebrate successes

and achievements, no matter how small.

■ Remember that the key to success is consistency. The most successful students are the ones that do effective work every day.

■ Use exercise to expend any nervous energy you have while studying. Going for a quick run before you settle down to work can be a great way to clear your head and stay focused on the books.

■ Write down how you feel about different subjects and exams. This helps identify any problems so you can start getting rid of them.

■ Think about changing your study environment. To keep things fresh and interesting, try something different such as availing of optional after school study instead of heading straight home to your room.

■ Make study a regular part of your routine. This will help cement study as a habit and make it feel less like a chore.

■ You might change how you do things at weekends such as not going out on Saturday night and getting up for study early on Sunday morning (when the house may be more quiet).

■ Don’t let the fear of failure become an issue – use the positive learning from effective study skills techniques to overcome any doubts that you may have about not succeeding in your goals and academic results.

■ Most importantly, be disciplined. When you decide on a particular approach or plan, stick to it. Have periodic reviews and make changes then if necessary.

## Coping with stress The balancing act

School is a balancing act – exams and projects, classes and homework, study and your personal life all need to be taken care of and managed properly. No wonder some of us feel stressed. But how can you tell when you are stressed? Negative emotions and worries about day-to-day responsibilities may all be symptoms of stress. We’ve all experienced nights tossing and turning in bed, unable to get to sleep because our minds are worried about studies or other problems. As you try to cope with the demands of the Leaving Cert, stress can affect you in different ways.

It may lead to:

- changes in behaviour
- exhaustion
- loss of interest in studies
- depression
- difficulty in concentrating on simple tasks
- changes in your physical or emotional wellbeing.

Many of the causes of stress can be resolved in just a few short steps. In fact, successful students may reduce stress to a

manageable level and use it to their advantage, to give them an edge in their studies and drive them forward every day.

## HOW TO REDUCE STRESS LEVELS AND CLEAR YOUR MIND

- Get organised and remove clutter. This is the number one cause of stress in students.
- Set realistic goals that have a specific timeframe and are measurable.
- Always use the expertise and guidance of your teachers.
- Maintain a regular study pattern. A solid study routine is reassuring.
- Allocate time properly to each subject. Weaker subjects should get more study time, and should be studied at a time when you are at your freshest and brightest.
- Prioritise well.
- Believe in yourself, be positive and track your successes.
- Avoid alcohol and tobacco and try to limit caffeine intake.
- Take regular breaks and exercise, say, three to five times a week.
- Eat healthily and get enough sleep. A

healthy body leads to a healthy and stress-free mind.

## MAKE SURE TO PACE YOURSELF

If you decided to run a marathon, you would pace yourself so that you could finish the race and not run out of energy early on. A similar approach is the best way to tackle the Junior Cert or Leaving Cert and it helps you to have the best mental approach come exam time. Here are some common guidelines that can help you pace yourself properly. In your studies, too many loose ends and a lack of organisation can be overwhelming, and stress soon kicks in. Creating goals and overcoming your fear of failure will help clear your thoughts, and you will soon be more productive and experience reduced levels of stress. Remember, don’t be afraid to harness the positive, energising effects of “stress” and use it to help achieve your goals. However, if you are stressed and you believe that you cannot overcome it, please seek help from someone you trust – a parent, friend, or teacher – and you’ll find they can be of great assistance to you.





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