

ex**A**mtimes

In association with The Institute of Education

**How I got
my A!**
Tips from
students



No 4: Languages

Thursday,
January 22nd, 2015

English, Irish,
French, German
and Spanish for
the Leaving Cert



THE IRISH TIMES



Spontaneity and structure

Tips and technique
for Leaving Cert
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Everything you need
to know Pages 2-9



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an gcaint!**
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Welcome

Welcome to Issue No 4 of our
Exam Times series for
2014/2015, a collaboration
between the Institute of
Education and *The Irish Times*.

Written by senior
language teachers at the
Institute of Education, this
week's guide covers five
Leaving Cert languages:
English, Irish, German, French
and Spanish.

Our ability to communicate
defines us in many ways, and
language, literacy and
communication are all vital life
skills.

About the authors

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dents.

Irish

■ **Clare Grealy**
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Today's guide gives an
overview of some of the key
areas that students should
focus on when preparing for
these exams, with advice on
revision, exam preparation,
the oral examinations and
more.
We hope that students and
their parents will find this
information beneficial and
informative.

Peter Kearns
Director, the Institute of
Education

English Paper 1 (higher and ordinary level)

Compose
yourself



Jim Lusby

The skillset you acquire
in studying for Paper 1 is
equally essential for
success on Paper 2

Your performance on Paper 1
will more or less determine
your final grade in Leaving
Cert English, not only be-
cause it is worth 200 marks out of the
total of 400 available for the subject,
but also because the skillset you ac-
quire in studying for it – how to ex-
press yourself and how to organise a
coherent essay – is equally essential
for success on Paper 2.

The paper sets three writing
tasks – Question A, Question B and
Composition. Although you should
attempt them in that order in the
examination itself, it is best to study
for them in the following sequence.

Composition

Study and practise
Seven essay titles are set, covering
three genres: **personal essay**, **dis-
cussion essay**, and **short story**.
Since you have to write only one, it
makes sense to decide early in your
preparation which genre best suits
your abilities and to perfect this.

Examination techniques
Select your composition title during
initial reading of the examination
paper. Jot down essential notes on
content relevant to the genre and top-
ic and on structure – how you will
open, develop and conclude the es-
say. Leave the writing of the composi-
tion until after you have finished
Questions A and B.

Writing
Shape the essay in bullet point form
before you begin. Shape a paragraph
in your head before starting it. Shape
a sentence in your head before writ-
ing it.
Search for the most expressive lan-

guage. For example, *I walked into the
room* is neutral and dull, but *I stag-
gered into the room*, or *I burst into the
room*, or *I strode into the room* are all
much better writing, because they
convey more.

Use sensory imagery: the world en-
ters our brains through our senses –
touch, smell, taste, hearing, sight –
and should come back on to the page
through the same route. Aim for
750-1,000 words.

The personal essay
The personal essay combines de-
scriptions of your experiences rel-
evant to the topic with your reflec-
tions on these experiences. It must
have a reflective element – check out
the marking schemes from previous
years on examinations.ie to confirm
this. You may reflect on other peo-
ple's motivations, on your own emo-
tions, or offer philosophical reflec-
tions on life.

Sample opening: The act of leaving,
and the emotions it brings with it, is
one of the most universal experienc-
es in our society. Felt on countless lev-
els – physical, spiritual, permanent or
temporary – we have all left things,
people and places, and we have all ex-
perienced things, people and places
leaving us. In almost every case, no
black-and-white emotion can sum up
our feelings – leaving a loved one or
losing a friend does not simply result
in sadness, for instance, but often re-
gret and anger, or sometimes relief.
Fully explaining the concept of
“leaving” would not be possible with-
in the boundaries of a single book, let
alone an essay, but I will attempt to
paint a picture of what it means to me.

Key reading: *The Art of the Personal
Essay*, edited by Philip Lopate.

The discussion essay
The discussion essay combines
your well-informed opinions on
the given topic with evidence and il-
lustrations supporting these opin-
ions, all organised into a logical argu-
ment that gathers momentum as it
goes along and concludes convincingly.
Although some of the material sup-
porting your argument may consist
of personal experience, you really
need to know what's happening in
the world beyond the availability of
the next “free gaff” to write an impres-
sive discussion.

Sample opening: Ladies and gentle-
men. At present, Ireland stands at a
crossroads. In our country, all major
political parties wish to remove the
provision of free education and free
student fees. Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael
and the Labour Party have all stated
in their electoral manifestos that they
support the re-introduction of fees
for third-level students.

It appears clear that, at present,
the conviction of all political parties
is that education is a privilege, not a
right. They are wrong. We must
stand unequivocal in our defence of



free education. If this first step in dis-
mantling our education system is
sanctioned, abhorrent consequences
will permeate through Irish society. I
tell you today, my friends, that this
will lead to our destruction.

Key reading: *The Oxford Book of Es-
says*, edited by John Gross, and the
comment columns in newspapers
such as *The Irish Times* and the
Guardian.

The short story
The short story is a fictional ac-
count, most successfully of a char-
acter caught in a defining situation –
that is, a situation that defines the es-
sence of their personality. The ability
to bring characters alive on the page,
through external appearance, behav-
iour and dialogue; the creation of
drama through external or in-
ternal conflict; and the talent
for capturing a setting
with a few well-chosen
descriptions – these are the
essential skills of
the short-story writer.

In addition, the
marking schemes
available on examina-
tions.ie always stress
that “narrative shape”
will be rewarded. Put
simply, this means your
story should be shaped as
conflict-crisis-resolution.

Sample opening: Maria sat gazing at
the fireplace as the luminous flames
raged. Her delicate fingers clasped
the large wine glass, which she had
just topped up, while the half empty
bottle stood perfectly parallel to the
vase on the glass coffee table. She was
restless.

Key reading: *The Granta Book of the
American Short Story* (1 and 2), edit-
ed by Richard Ford, and *New Irish
Short Stories* edited by Joseph O'Con-
nor.

■ **Jim Lusby**
teaching at the
Institute of
Education.

PHOTOGRAPH:
BRENDAN DUFFY

How I Got My A1

■ **Kathy McGrath, English,**
the Institute of Education

So many people give up on
English because they think it's
a subject that you have to have
some unattainable, innate
ability for, and that there's only
so much study that can be
done. So how did I get an A1 in
English? I worked really hard.
Preparation and practice are
key to maximising your grade.

You've probably learned by
now that the system doesn't
care whether you're the next
Shakespeare or Yeats if you
can't distill your skill within the
time constraints of the two
exams. Timing was always my
Achilles' heel, so I trained until
I got better at it. As the year
went on, I would give myself
less and less time to get
essays done until, leading up
to the exams, I would practise
under exam conditions.

Have an hour to do some
English study? Do a reading
comprehension. Most of your
study should involve actively
writing – it's the only way
you'll improve.

In paper one, I would
sometimes struggle to think of
what to write about (an exam
hall is probably the place most
devoid of inspiration). So for
fear of suffering paralysing
writer's block, I collected ideas
about different topics through-
out the year. I read the
newspaper whenever I got the
chance, particularly the
opinion pieces. Watching TED
talks on youtube was a
revelation – inspiration
condensed into video format!



For paper two, what helped
me most was knowing my
texts really well. Steer clear of
falling into the panicked trap of
learning off prepared an-
swers. The chances of you
being able to slot one of those
into a question asked in the
exam are slim to none.
Understand your texts,
know your quotes and you'll
be able to deal with anything.
Also, answer what you're
asked! Focus on key
phrases in the question and
structure your response in a
way that answers every
element. You won't get marks
for irrelevant waffle, no matter
how eloquent it might be!

Finally, let your personality
permeate what you write. Be
different. This applies to paper
two as well: if you have an
unorthodox opinion about a
character, include it – as long
as you can back it up. If you can
pique an examiner's interest
amidst their mountains of
corrections by showing that
you can form your own original
thoughts and ideas about
something, you're on to a
winner. Good luck!

At a glance
English
Paper 1

The paper contains
three texts – samples
of personal writing,
discursive writing
and narrative writing.
Three related tasks
are derived from
these:

■ Understanding a
text (Question A –
50 marks)

■ Creating a similar
text of your own
(Question B –
50 marks)

■ Writing a
full-length
composition in one of
the three styles
(Composing –
100 marks)

Timing is key

You have 170 minutes for
Paper 1. Allowing for slight
adjustments on the day:
Reading and detailed
preparation – 10 mins
Question A – 50 mins
Question B – 40 mins
Composing – 70 mins



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All-purpose approach

Jim Lusby

Structure and style are important, but if you're not answering the set question, you are wasting marks

Question B

Study and practise

Question B is a functional writing task. You are given: a) a set of personalities – a student, a journalist (2013); a reader, a citizen, a student (2012); a radio reporter, a student, a commissioning editor (2014); b) a task – to debate, to introduce, to offer an opinion (2013), to critically respond, to propose, to persuade, to report, to debate, to describe; and c) a format – a talk, a book introduction, a newspaper article (2013); a letter, a proposal, a web article (2012); a radio report, a talk, a letter (2014) – and asked to write an appropriate piece of 300–400 words.

You will notice that the expression and support of an opinion dominates these tasks from the past three years. At the very least, therefore, you should study and practise the communication of a point of view. Note how the best writers and speakers effectively open an address with something colourful and engaging – an anecdote, perhaps, or a quotation, or a personal reminiscence. Note how they clearly express their central point early in the delivery of an article or speech and then keep repeating this essential communication. Note how strongly they end, by emphasising again the most important feature.

Key reading: The letters pages of quality newspapers such as *The Irish Times* and the *Guardian*; the texts, available online, of famous speeches, from Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" to Barack Obama's "Yes, we can"; the best blogs online, for example Stephen Fry's at stephenfry.com.

Examination techniques

Select your Question B and Question A in tandem, since you can not do both on the same text. You may find it most efficient to choose Question B first. Make your choice on the basis of whether or not you can write a piece that feels authentic – this is the main criterion for Question B. During your preparation, jot down the personality you are asked to assume, the audience you are

asked to address, the task you are asked to perform and the format you are asked to use.

Writing

Follow the same advice in terms of structure and expression as for the Composition, above. Imagine yourself in the situation within which you have been asked to work. Before committing them to paper, assess every word and every sentence in the light of this. Does it sound right? Does it fit?

The task is to use language appropriate to a specific situation. This may require a neutral vocabulary and tone – as in a purely informative document – or a passionate vocabulary and tone – as in a polemic (a strong attack) against the influence of social media.

Question A

Study and practise

Three texts are presented for comprehension on the examination paper. These may include examples of:

- Narrative writing – such as the extract from Richard Ford's novel *Canada* in 2014 and Paul Theroux's travel piece in 2012
- Personal writing – such as the two extracts from the *Guardian* series on artistic influences in 2014 and the extract from Margaret Laurence's memoir in 2012
- Discursive writing – such as the extract from Seamus Heaney's essay on the influence of the past in 2014 and the guide to cliff-hangers in 2013.

Although you have to answer on only one text, you cannot assume that any single genre will definitely appear on the paper – there was no narrative text in 2013. You should therefore read critically in all three areas, identifying the features that are essential to each genre, such as anecdote and reflection in personal writing, rhetorical power in discursive writing, drama and description in narrative writing.

Most texts include a visual element: photographs, reproductions of paintings, drawings, or other illustrations. Questions were set on the visual element in 2012 and 2013, but not in 2014. Practise reading images rather than merely looking at them, with reference to the body language of the figures within the frame, the use of colour and light, and the setting or environment.

Identify each text as an example of personal writing (exploring some aspect of personal experience), discursive writing (presenting and supporting an argument), or narrative writing (telling a story). Question A (i) is usually a straightforward content question – in 2014, what impression you form of the landscape (text 1), outlining the main points (texts 2 and 3). Question A (ii) is usually on the visual text or an invitation to develop an issue introduced in the text – in 2014, what made an impact on you (text 2) or was thought-provoking (text 3).



■ Barack Obama, with wife Michelle, in 2008, accepting the nomination for the US presidency: key reading for Question B includes speeches, such as Obama's 'Yes, we can'.

PHOTO: JIM YOUNG/REUTERS

Question A (iii) is usually on style – in 2014, "lyrical beauty and concrete realism" in Ford's novel (text 1), effective rhetorical technique (text 2), complex ideas and clear language in Heaney's essay (text 3).

Key reading: The texts on the examination papers 2009–2014, and particularly those presented over the past three years.

Examination techniques

Select your Question A primarily on the basis of how comfortable you are with the questions, rather than with the text itself, although it is understood that you may have a preference for a particular genre of writing, such as narrative. Nevertheless, the texts don't vary greatly in terms of difficulty, and you are awarded marks specifically for answering the set questions.

In each question, highlight the important terms – this is what you are looking for while reading the text. Highlight passages in the text that correspond to the set questions and that you will use as quotations in your answer. In the margins opposite these

highlighted passages record the points you will make in your responses – if you don't physically record all points that occur to you, you will have forgotten a third of them by the time you come to writing your answer. Note which question – (i), (ii) or (iii) – each of your points refers to.

Writing

Provide three points in support of your answer. Begin by answering the question while drawing on its phrasing. For example, if the question is: "From your reading of Text 1 what impression do you form of the landscape in which the extract is set?" In your answer you should refer to both the book cover and the written passage above. (Text 1 2014 (i)).

Sample opening

"The landscape in which the extract is set is harsh and inhospitable, a dry and desolate vastness under an unforgiving sun, broken only by roads for passing through it as quickly as possible."

Avoid specific discussion or illustration in this opening paragraph. Each subsequent paragraph should consist of a clearly expressed point, quotations from the text to illustrate that point, and a brief discussion of the relevance and effectiveness of these quotations. For example, the answer above to Text 1, Question A (i) 2014 might continue:

"The first reference to the landscape in the extract, in the fourth paragraph, describes it as 'nothing but hot yellow wheat and grasshoppers and snakes crossing the highway'. The phrase 'nothing but' is revealing. The scene is obviously the same as far as the eye can see, in all directions. There is no relief, either visual or figurative. Everything on this piece of earth is hot. The adjective and its synonyms – 'the baking sunlight', 'melting', 'the hot blue sky' – are used repeatedly. The place seems incapable of accommodating life, other than that of insects and reptiles – 'grasshoppers and snakes' – creatures that can survive on little moisture and extreme temperatures. The only variations in the landscape are provided by the paths – highways, roads – that cut through it."

Marking scheme English Paper 1

All scripts are assessed with reference to the standard PCLM scheme:

■ P stands for 'clarity of purpose' and judges the relevance of your material to the task

■ C stands for 'coherence of delivery' and considers the organisation of your material

■ L stands for 'efficiency of language use' and assesses

your writing style

■ M stands for 'mechanics' and evaluates your spelling and grammar.

P, C and L are each worth 30 per cent of the available marks; M is worth 10 per cent. You cannot score higher in C and L than in P. In other words, if you're not answering the set question, it doesn't matter how impressive your structure and style are.

Focused revision for top marks



Cian Hogan

Learning sample essays by heart may be tempting but will very likely damage your prospects in the exam

Paper 2 is divided into three sections: the Single Text, the Comparative Study, and Poetry. Each of these sections has to be attempted. Remember you must answer on Shakespearean drama, either as a Single Text or as an element in the Comparative Study.

In the Single Text section you will be required to attempt a question on one of the prescribed single texts. Two questions will be set on each of the texts.

In the Comparative Study, you will be required to answer one question from the section. Normally two questions are set on each of the modes of comparison.

Poetry is worth 70 marks on the higher level paper – 50 marks for seen poetry and 20 marks for unseen poetry.

either wholly or in part, with the premise put forward in the questions. Teachers and candidates are advised that while it is essential that candidates fully engage with the terms of any question attempted, and where appropriate, support their answers with suitable reference to a text or texts, challenging the terms of a question, perhaps disagreeing with some part or the entire premise outlined, is an acceptable way in which to approach an answer."

Above all you need to move away from over-reliance on sample essays. Learning sample essays by heart does not constitute effective revision and will very likely damage your prospects in the examination.

Once you know your texts and have collated your resources you are then ready to embark on a focused revision programme. The past examination questions should lie at the heart of your preparation for the examination. You should endeavour to answer as many of these questions as possible.

Understand the marking scheme

Take the time to read the marking scheme carefully. The general marking scheme (PCLM) used for the entire examination tests your ability to:

- display a clear and purposeful engagement with the set task
- sustain the response in an appropriate manner over the entire answer
- manage and control language appropriate to the task
- display levels of accuracy in spelling and grammar appropriate to the required/chosen register.

Marks are awarded in the following manner:

- Clarity of purpose (P) – 30 per cent of the marks available for the task
- Coherence of delivery (C) – 30 per cent of the marks available for the task
- Efficiency of language use (L) – 30 per cent of the marks available for the task
- Accuracy of mechanics (M) – 10 per cent of the marks available for the task

Remember: you can never score higher marks in the C and L sections than the P section.

Once you have understood how the marking scheme works, you should see how it applies to your essay. Using the marking scheme to grade your essay can reveal weaknesses in your approach and highlight deficiencies in your critical thinking. Once you have refined your essay and feel that you can no longer improve it you should ask your teacher to correct it.

Write timed essays

At the end of your revision of a particular poet, theme, character or mode of comparison,



■ Studying at the Institute of Education, Dublin. PHOTOGRAPH: BRENDA FITZSIMONS

son, you should try to answer a question within the allotted time.

The Exam

Question selection

Given the recent changes in the wording of examination questions, selecting the correct question has never been more important. For instance, in the poetry section of the paper, a trend has begun to emerge where students flock to a particular poet because he or she is deemed likely to "come up". I have talked to many students this year who made that mistake in 2013. On the day of the examination, the questions may force you to abandon a topic that you had hoped to see on the paper in favour of a question that is more straightforward. This is not always an easy thing to do. It takes courage and confidence in your preparation.

Timing

You need to have a timing plan and you need to adhere to it on the day of the examination. According to the chief examiner's report of 2013: "Students are reminded of the necessity of organising their time efficiently when sitting the examination. Omitting questions or parts of questions inevitably has a deleterious effect on outcomes."

Answers

Answer your best question first and worst question last. This will give you the time

Timing

■ Section I – the Single Text
60 marks / 50 mins

You will be required to attempt a question on one of the prescribed single texts. Two questions will be set on each of the texts.

■ Section II – the Comparative Study
70 marks / 60 mins

You will be required to answer one question from this section. Normally two questions are set on each of the modes of comparison.

■ Section III – Poetry
70 marks / 60 mins

needed to think, if only on a subconscious level, about the areas of the examination that challenge you most.

Keep your answers focused. Ensure each answer contains focused paragraphs with strong topic sentences that deal clearly with an aspect of the question.

Finally, keep asking yourself: "Am I answering the question?"

Common errors

The most common error on the day of the examination is failing to answer the question asked. This sounds like such a jaded piece of advice, but the biggest risk to your success is a failure to engage with the question.

Before you begin to write, you need to identify the main and any associated tasks in each question. It is so important that you take the time to underline the key question words. Remember, recent examination questions have required you to deal with three separate points.

A failure to follow instructions is still a common problem. You should never assume that the question rubric is the same as previous years. For example, in 2014 the instructions for the Comparative section changed dramatically.

Avoid regurgitating essays you have learned by heart. Resorting to a prelearned essay can feel like the safe option on the day of the examination, but recent questions have attempted to undermine efforts by students to supplant proper preparation with rote learning.

Pay attention to your spellings and grammar. Take the time to read back over each paragraph in order to minimise any foolish loss of marks.

Ensure that your answer book is presented in such a manner as to make the corrector's job as easy as possible. Careless layout and poor labelling of answers can frustrate and annoy the corrector.

66

Although you have to answer on only one text, you cannot assume that any single genre will definitely appear on the paper – there was no narrative text in 2013

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Shall I compare three?



Martin Kelly

Know the key moments in each text, engage on a personal level with the questions and write in the 'comparative spirit'

The Comparative Study section of Paper 2 is worth 70 marks and is comprised of three texts, only one of which can be a film. (Your Single Text can not be used in your Comparative.) A mode is a specific way of comparing and contrasting texts. The modes of comparison for 2015 are:

- A theme or issue
- Literary genre
- The general vision and viewpoint

Two of these three modes appear on the exam paper. In each mode there is a choice of two questions:

- A single question worth 70 marks
- A question with two parts worth 30 marks and 40 marks each. The 30 mark deals with **one** text. The 40-mark question is a comparative.

Spend one hour on this section.

Theme or issue

Deal with **one theme** or **one issue**. This applies to the two-part question as well.

Advice for theme answers

Selecting a key moment that clearly shows the theme enables you to move back in time, as in the example here, or forward to show theme development. In *Babylon*, Alec awaits execution by firing squad. For the theme of family relationships this scene shows his isolation from family. He says he loves "no living person" although his parents are alive. They will hear of his fate from the military authorities in due course. Of his mother, he says, "My heart does not bleed for her." This scene is the culmination of what has been from youth a family relationship of manipulation and exploitation.

Theme questions, although phrased in different ways, often ask the same thing. Have material ready to discuss three valuable insights into life that the study of a theme provides in each text.

Example

The King's Speech – theme of friendship

- Friendships can mean pain and rejection at times. Remember the altercation in the park: "I'm the son of a king, the brother of a king. You are the disappointing jumped-up son of a brewer from the out-back!"
- Some friendships have a lifelong quality because of shared difficulties.
- Friendships in marriage mean total devotion to the real needs of the other. The

Duchess's persistent efforts to help Bertie.

Example

Introduction to the theme of family relationships

My comparative texts are *All My Sons* (AMS) by Arthur Miller, *I'm Not Scared* (INS) by Gabriele Salvatores and *Foster* by Claire Keegan.

My theme is family relationships.

The quality of family relationships in the life of any human being is a strong determinant in how people develop as individuals and live satisfying fulfilled lives.

In *AMS* the Keller family relationships are adult ones only, by contrast with those of my other two texts. This family has more history as a result. One event in the past has had a major influence on all family members. Joe Keller's decision to send damaged engine parts to the air force resulting in the deaths of twenty-one pilots, casts a long shadow over every relationship in the family and with people outside of it. In *INS* a similar pattern of one event affecting relationships occurs as well. The decision by Pino, to involve himself in kidnapping to get quick money has profound repercussions particularly for his son Michele and for that boy's relationship with his father. C Similarly in *Foster* the one single event that changes the girl's life forever is her summer holiday with the Kinsellas. Unlike the significant events in my other texts, this has dramatically positive results that are life-enhancing for the girl. Through the love and affection she receives there, she comes of age and gains a new perspective on life and relationships. C

Features in this introduction include:

- The standard listing of texts with abbreviations
- A statement of the theme
- A topic sentence (not compulsory but effective as a beginning)
- The C code that the corrector places in your script at the end of a link
- Three texts all compared in one paragraph for this topic sentence

Literary genre

The focus here is on how a story is told, the method of narration, how the plot progresses, a character is developed, a conclusion is reached.

Advice for literary genre answers

Think in terms of "devices" or "techniques" that a writer might use to convey what he/she wants.

Examples of techniques used

Write an essay on one or more of the aspects of literary genre (the way texts tell their stories) which you found most interesting in the texts you studied.

Techniques used

The techniques listed below are incorporated into topic sentences used to answer this question.

- The setting in *WH* is a vivid description of the Heights and the Yorkshire moors landscape which helps the reader to understand the violent passionate emotions that have been lived out there ...

- The use of flashback in *WH* enables us to understand why Heathcliff is so cruel, unfeeling and vengeful. We witness his usurping of Old Earnshaw's affections, Hindley's

cruel treatment of him afterwards and in turn Heathcliff's diabolic revenge on the raging alcoholic ...

- In *Citizen Kane* the central technique of narration is that of multiple narrators each adding a piece to the jigsaw of Kane's life through a series of flashbacks unified through Thompson's search for the meaning of "Rosebud".

- Graphic imagery is most memorable in *WH* when Nelly describes Heathcliff after Catherine's death. She sees him "lifting up his eyes and howling not like a man, but like a savage beast". It is the pain of his isolation from her that is so vivid here ...

- Each text opens with a dramatic event. In *Scared*, Michele must decide to either own up to being last or allow Skull to humiliate Barbara in forcing her to expose herself publicly. He hesitates momentarily but then raises his hand, saving the girl. This not only reveals the moral boy but foreshadows the moral decision he must make later in disobeying his father. Similarly in *TKS*, a series of close-ups of the microphone, script page, Bertie's face and that of his wife's, as she waits expectantly in Wembley Stadium, immediately engenders our sympathy, revealing the enormity of the challenge the man faces. And then a horse neighs in the deafening silence as if in mockery at his garbled attempts to speak. This opening scene shows the Duke's first broadcast as a media disaster ...

Other techniques include role of characters, use of dialogue/monologue, mise en scene, stage directions, key scenes, symbols and stage directions.

Note that no specific number of techniques is required. In general you might take four aspects of literary genre comparing them across your texts. However, you could for example contrast techniques by exploring how narrators are important in *WH* whereas in *A Doll's House* dialogue is the primary device.

General vision and viewpoint

This mode compares texts on the viewpoints they offer on life and on the human condition. Remember it is the overall impact a text makes on you in deciding whether the general vision is optimistic or pessimistic? What happens at the end is the most important but look also at the opening, key scenes, imagery, character development, camera angles and music etc.

■ **Theme of family relationships:** Beth Merrill, John Forsythe and Ann Shepherd in Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* in New York, 1947.

PHOTO: CONSTANCE BANNISTER CORP/GETTY

A comparison using end scenes

The concluding scene of *TKS* where the king looks back momentarily to Lionel before meeting his subjects on the balcony, was for me a heart-warming recognition and appreciation by Bertie of the years of speech therapy, "unorthodox" and "controversial" as they were. The on-screen information that they remained friends for life cemented the text's feel-good factor. It was a similar optimism I felt in *INS* with Filippo's courageous return even before the police were on the scene, risking his life in recognition of what Michele had done for him. Their outstretched hands for some in my class prompted the mime of playing violin strings but symbolized for me the bridge between social classes that was so much part of *TKS* as well.

Remember:

- Know the key moments – about five or six in each text – and why they are key.
- Never summarise.
- Genuine personal engagement (the use of 'I') with the characters in each text will make for insightful comparisons that examiners value. Show your involvement with your characters across the texts. Your admiration, surprise, disgust etc.

At a glance English Paper 2

- Each of the three sections must be attempted. You must answer on Shakespearean drama, either as a Single Text or as an element in the Comparative Study.
- **Section I – Single Text** 60 marks/50 mins You will be required to attempt a question on one of the prescribed Single Texts. Two questions will be set on each of the texts.
- **Section II – Comparative Study** 70 marks/60 mins You will be required to answer one question from this section. Normally two questions are set on each of the modes of comparison.
- **Section III – Poetry** 70 marks/60 mins Poetry is worth 70 marks on the higher level paper – 50 marks for seen poetry and 20 marks for unseen poetry.

Write in the "comparative spirit", ie make frequent comparisons /contrasts.

Practically speaking, at the most, eight or nine lines on any one text at a time.

■ Avoid the learnt off and over-rehearsed response that does not take account of the nuances of the question wording. Examiners repeatedly state that some candidates are "hampered by a rigid and formulaic approach" which inhibits engagement with the question and limits "the expression of independent opinion". Although you will naturally have well-prepared comparisons, be flexible.

■ Ground your answer in strong textual knowledge. This will give you confidence to trust your own personal response. Another element examiners praise.

■ Quotations, while not compulsory, are effective in capturing exactly a key moment. Know about six key quotes from each text.

■ Link words and phrases make for fluid movement between texts.

■ The phrase, "In the light of your understanding" of a named mode in a question, should be followed by a brief explanation of the mode before proceeding. Topic sentences make for focused discussion but remember flexibility.

Build paragraphs around quotation

Look at the following simple Othello character question:

"It is easy to feel sympathy for Othello. He is a decent man who is undone by Iago, a consummate villain." Discuss this statement, supporting your answer with reference to and quotation from the play.

Now, look at the following quotes. They prove that the exposition of the play illustrates the fact that Othello is a man of importance. You need to write a paragraph using the information gathered through your study, and focus it on the specific question.

■ 1) *For I do know the state, However, this may gall him with some check Cannot with safety cast him* – Iago, Act I, sc(i)

■ 2) *Something from Cyprus ... It is a business of some heat ... You have been hotly called for* – Cassio, Act I, sc(ii)

■ 3) *Valiant Othello, we straight employ you against the general enemy Ottoman –*

A man of importance



Paul McCormack

Knowledge of the play, accurate quotation, and a clear understanding of the question are key to success

As with every section of Paper 2, success in this question depends on a basic detailed knowledge of the text. That means you should know all about the plot, characters, themes and stylistic features of the play. In addition to this, supporting quotation must be learned and understood in context. There is no point in preparing for specific questions if you are not familiar with the base material.

However, students often make the mistake of thinking that merely knowing the play is enough to ensure exam success. You must understand that this knowledge, which can only come about through the hard graft of study, is simply the starting point. It represents the ingredients, not the completed dish.

Once the study has been completed, successful students must then be able to analyse the specifics of a question, and use their knowledge to structure an organised, comprehensive and coherent answer to that question. The focus here must be on paragraphing skills and on a determination to produce clear phrasing. In English, the examiner will judge you both on *what* you say and *how* you say it.

You should use your allocated time for studying English to practise writing lucid and relevant paragraphs. Remember the Junior Cert trick:

- P – each paragraph should have a clear point that is relevant to the Q
- E – that point needs to be developed and explained and contextualised
- Q – All points must be supported by accurate quotation

You must also remember to **clean as you go!** Reread after each paragraph to ensure that basic avoidable errors in syntax, phrasing, spelling or punctuation are remedied.

Essential revision Othello

Once you know the play, focus your study on the following topics:

■ **Othello character study**

- Iago character study
- The role of women in the play
- The theme of deception
- The theme of loyalty and betrayal
- The play as a depiction of evil /corruption
- The language and imagery of the play
- Shakespeare's use of dramatic irony
- The modern appeal of the play

Remember, the only material you must learn "off by heart" is the quotation. Do not try to anticipate questions and learn off model answers. Rather, think about the question, and try not to panic. Once you know the base material, you will always be able to formulate an answer to at least one of the two questions asked.



■ Laurence Fishburne in a 1995 film adaptation of Shakespeare's *Othello*. PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY

The Duke, Act I, sc(iii)

■ 4) *You must therefore be content to slubber the gloss of your new fortunes with this more stubborn and boisterous expedition* – The Duke Act I sc(iii)

Sample paragraph

It is easy to feel sympathy for Othello. Act one establishes him as a noble, dignified man, who has earned himself a reputation as a man of importance. Even Iago recognises this when he predicts the Duke's reaction to Othello's marriage. He says 1) "For I do know the state, however this may gall him with some check, cannot with safety cast him." It is clear that Othello has earned a reputation as a serious man, as a man of substance.

This is confirmed when Cassio tells him of 2) "Something from Cyprus ... it is a business of some heat ... you have been hotly called for." The Duke needs 3) "valiant Othello ... against the general enemy Ottoman –

man" and asks him to 4) "slubber the gloss of your new fortunes" in order to lead the expedition to Cyprus. The importance of this commission cannot be overestimated.

Cyprus is a key strategic island in the Venetian empire. Loss of the island threatens the whole empire, and it is to Othello that the Duke turns.

He has clearly earned himself status in this society. He is respected and admired and is clearly a decent man. Othello has so much to lose. At the end, when we witness his disintegration and self destruction, we retain a degree of sympathy for him.

■ **Note:** This paragraph is 214 words – a little long, but if you write an essay with five to six development paragraphs of similar length, plus a 100-word (approx) introduction and a 50-word (approx) conclusion, you will have an essay of 1,400-1,500 words in length. This is sufficient to ensure a comprehensive analysis of any question.

■ **This is a well written paragraph. Why?**

- It has a clear **point** – Othello is important, therefore sympathy is possible, both in the sense of him being a sympathetic (likeable) character and of us feeling sympathy (sorry for, compassion for) him.
- The point is fully explained and contextualized.
- The point is supported by four accurate quotations.
- The paragraph is **easy to read** and does not contain any errors in **sentence structure**.
- It has been **re-read** and any basic errors (there were three that I spotted), have been identified and eliminated.

■ **Exam tips**

In this section, you will be asked two questions. You will then have to answer one. The section is allocated 60 marks from the 400 available, and you should spend 60-70 minutes on this section. In that time, you must:

- 1 Identify the key words and tasks in each question
- 2 Select a question
- 3 Brainstorm and plan your answer, ensuring you have figured out a logical progression from beginning to end before you put pen to paper
- 4 Write the essay, ensuring that all points are contextualised (explained in the context of the question)
- 5 Re-read and review

■ **Remember, the only material you must learn "off by heart" is the quotation. Do not try to anticipate questions and learn off model answers. Rather, think about the question, and try not to panic. Once you know the base material, you will always be able to formulate an answer to at least one of the two questions asked.**

Wit and wisdom



Denis Creaven

You need to be familiar with the background, themes and styles of the poets on the course

Robert Frost

Accessibility
Readers find Frost’s poems accessible because of the simple, often colloquial nature of his language. For the most part he uses monosyllabic and disyllabic words. For example, in the poem *Mending Wall*, a poem of 40 lines, there is only one word of more than two syllables. And in the poem, *Out, Out . . .*, a poem of almost equal length, there is again just one word of more than two syllables.

The rhythms which Frost employs further serve to make his poems accessible and familiar. His rhythms are the familiar natural cadences of the speaking voice, as may be found in the poem *Birches*:

“When I see birches bend to left and right
Across the lines of straighter darker trees,
I like to think some boy’s been swinging them”

Ordinary subject matter, ordinary settings
We feel “at home” in the ordinary subject matter and everyday settings of his poems. His poems spring from ordinary events in settings that are everyday, and usually rural :

- Turning hay in a meadow



■ Profoundly thoughtful: Pulitzer Prize-winning American Poet Laureate Robert Frost (1874-1963), in Miami, Florida, in 1958; below, an idea map of Frost’s poetry. PHOTOGRAPH: ROBERT LERNER/GETTY

- Picking apples
- Mending a boundary wall
- Reaching a fork in a woodland path
- Seeing a spider on a flower
- Walking the city streets at night
- Swinging from birch branches

Contemplative quality
Frost is a profoundly thoughtful poet. For him ordinary subject matter acts as a springboard for deep reflection on fundamental truths of life. Even in the simplest of his settings there is a profound truth beneath the surface.
The poem, *Mending Wall*, illustrates this. Here, an ordinary event in an ordinary

setting leads to deep reflection – reflection on two contrasting approaches to life.
Frost and his neighbour are repairing a boundary wall between their respective farms. Frost sees no reason for boundary walls where no livestock are involved, where there are only apple trees on one side and pine trees on the other:

“Before I built a wall I’d ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out”

In this scenario, the poet himself represents the questioning mind, the mind that is open to change. His neighbour, on the other hand, blindly accepts the proverb “Good fences make good neighbours” and insists on rebuilding the wall that the poet regards as unnecessary.

The neighbour is cast as an unthinking slave to tradition, as a man without imagination, unable to contemplate change – the poem states “He moves in darkness . . .” – “like an old-stone savage armed”.
So, in *Mending Wall*, an ordinary farming activity serves to present two contrasting attitudes to life and to stress the importance of imagination and of the open mind.

Richly metaphorical
Frost’s poems are rich in metaphor, metaphor that is grounded in ordinary situations. For example, in the poem *Birches*, he declares:

“I’d like to get away from Earth awhile”

And climbing a birch tree “toward Heaven” represents the human need to escape occasionally from the difficulties of life into the realm of imagination. The branch dipping and setting us back down on Earth represents return to reality. So the tree lifting us up and setting us back down again is a perfect metaphor for the balanced life – the balance between imagination and reality:

“One could do worse than be a swinger of birches”

Vivid description/imagery
Such is the vividness of Frost’s descriptions that we feel we are present with him at the scenes portrayed. In the poem *Out Out . . .* it is easy to imagine ourselves at the scene:

“The buzz saw snarled and rattled in the yard



■ Cian Hogan (above) teaching at the Institute of Education; metaphysical poet John Donne (top). PHOTOGRAPH: BRENDAN DUFFY

And made dust and dropped stove-length sticks of wood,
Sweet-scented stuff when the breeze drew across it.
And from there those that lifted eyes could count
Five mountain ranges one behind the other
Under the sunset far into Vermont.”

In the sensuous language of these lines we hear the snarl and rattle of the saw; we smell the wood-dust in the breeze; and we see the –

“Five mountain ranges one behind the other
Under the sunset far into Vermont.”

Use of the first person
Most of Frost’s poems are first person poems. Whether he is telling us about his own experience or adopting a persona, his use of the first person gives immediacy to his poems, gives them an intimate quality and an overall impression of spontaneity and naturalness.

Musical quality
Frost is a master of the various musical devices: rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, assonance, sibilance, onomatopoeia.

Pessimism
Frost’s frequent bouts of depression are reflected in some of his poems. This darker side of life is brought to such poems as *Acquainted with the Night* and *Out, Out . . .*

Acquainted with the Night is a powerful, confessional poem, with the opening lines making a striking impact: “I have been one acquainted with the night.” The night is clearly a metaphor for his depression. He tells us that he has “looked down the saddest city lane” – clearly a metaphor for the dark places in the mind to which his bouts of depression have taken him; he has “stopped the sound of feet” to hear “an interrupted cry” that is not intended “to call me back or say good-bye”.
Again, the poem *Out, Out . . .*, dealing with the tragic death of a boy whose hand was severed while sawing timber, gives a further view of the pessimism of Frost. The boy’s final breathing is described -

“Little-less-nothing!-and that ended it.
No more to build on there.”

The cruel, apparently random nature of life captured in this poem evokes feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.

John Donne

The main concerns in Donne’s poems on the Leaving Certificate syllabus are love and religious issues. The love poems focus on the poet’s feelings towards his lover, while the religious poems deal with sin, guilt, God’s mercy and forgiveness. (It is important to realise that religion was a huge issue in Donne’s time.)

Language
Donne reacted against the often flowery, ornate language and exaggerated descriptions used by some of the Elizabethan poets. He used instead clear, conversational language – the conversational language of his day, of course:

“At the round earth’s imagined corners,
blow
Your trumpets, angels and arise, arise
From death, you numberless infinities
Of souls, and to your scattered bodies go”

Metaphysical Wit
It is important that students understand what is meant by wit in the context of Donne’s poetry. In Donne’s time, the population of London was about a quarter of a million people, of whom only a tiny percentage could read or write. Donne and his fellow poets belonged to this tiny educated group. All the poets of the day were well-known to each other. You might refer to them as a “club” of professional gentlemen. They quite often circulated their poems in manuscript form among each other. Understandably, they wished to impress each other by their cleverness. Metaphysical wit, then, means showing off one’s cleverness – having a brain and exhibiting it. There was an element of show-off involved. Donne and his fellow poets displayed their cleverness by using puns, paradox, clever argument, conceits.

Metaphysical conceit
The conceit needs explanation. Put simply, the conceit is where the poet makes a striking, far-fetched comparison between two

“
Such is the vividness of Frost’s descriptions that we feel we are present with him at the scenes portrayed

things that seem, at first sight, to be totally dissimilar. Our first reaction on encountering the far-fetched comparison involved in a conceit is: what’s going on here? What’s the connection? Then, when we see the link, we admire the poet’s ingenuity in seeing similarity in the midst of dissimilarity and, indeed, we have an element of satisfaction ourselves for having “worked it out” – something akin to the intellectual satisfaction of solving a crossword. To enjoy Donne’s conceits just read the poem, *The Flea*, and to appreciate his brilliant use of paradox read the poem, *Batter my heart, three-personed God*.

Examples of conceits:
■ God presented as “adamant” (a magnet) drawing Donne’s “iron heart” (the heart hardened by sin) to Himself.
■ The “flea” represents the marriage bed.
■ Killing the “flea” becomes “sacrilege”.
■ Killing the “flea” is seen as murder and, indeed, suicide.

Dramatic quality
Donne achieves drama in his poems through the use of the following: sudden openings, the first person, address (addressing God, his lover, the sun), questions, commands, energetic verbs, exclamations, present tense (his poems happen in the here and now).

The mind at work
A Donne poem is a sort of process. We find him thinking on the page as it were: he will make a statement, then have second thoughts: contradict what he has said or qualify it in some way. See how in the poem, *At the round earth’s imagined corners*, he calls for the day of Judgement to happen only to change his mind and ask for it to be postponed to allow him time to repent.

Imagery
Donne, being one of the professional, educated class, draws his imagery from areas of interest to educated people of his day: religion, law, war, science, geographical exploration.

A final word
In a Donne poem, the heart is engaged: he feels love, the guilt of sin, the fear of damnation, the need for God’s grace. The head is equally engaged: he thinks – thinks clearly. In engaging head and heart, thinking and feeling, Donne’s poetry reflects the whole person.

How I Got My AI

■ Cian Murphy – Irish, the Institute of Education



Ná bí buartha! For me, a great deal of confidence and self-esteem came about having done the Irish oral. The aim of the game here is to keep talking! Even if you make a few grammatical/pronunciation errors over the course of the conversation, they won’t bear hugely on your grade. Should you become aware you’ve made a mistake, don’t be afraid to correct it.

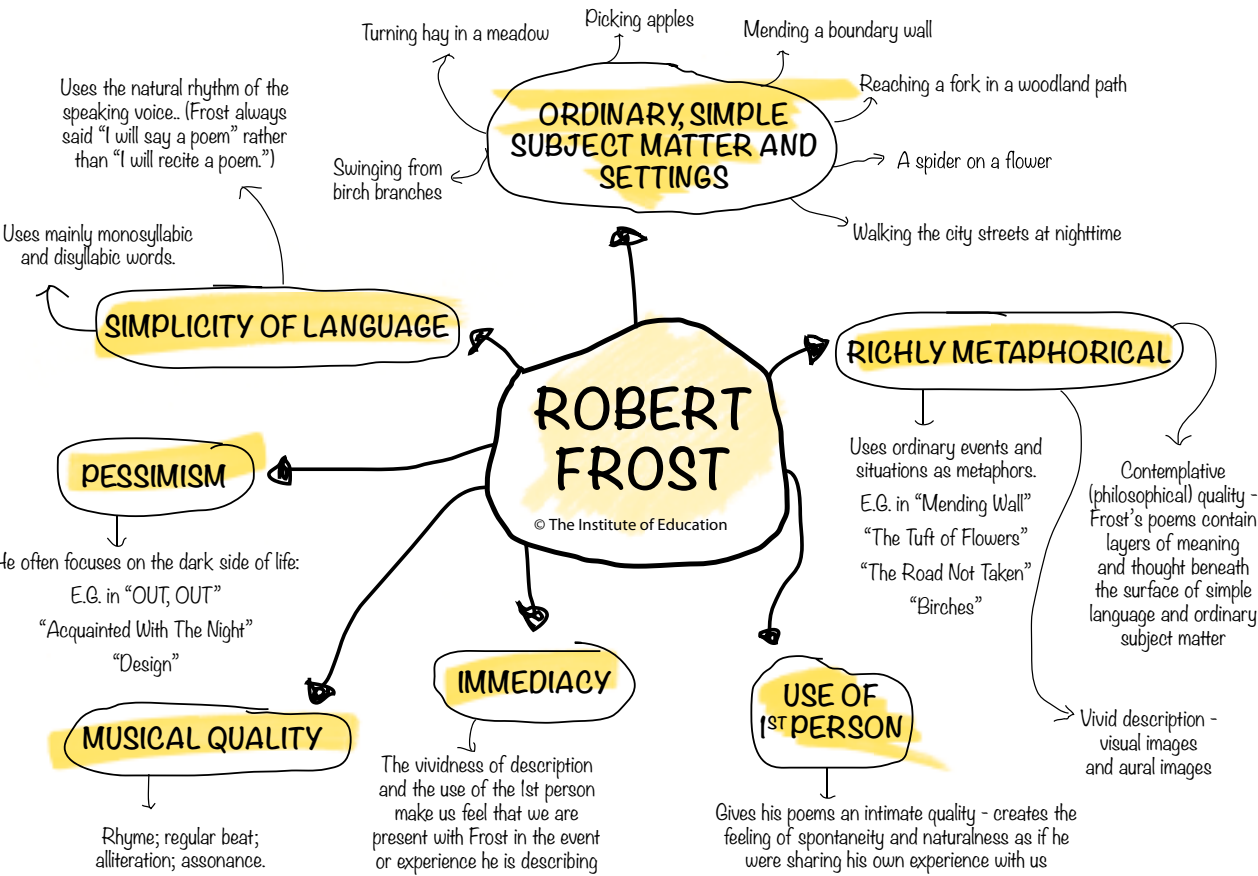
I would strongly advise knowing the 20 Sraith Pictiúr inside-out. Not only do they come at the beginning of the oral and get you off to a good start, but they also provide you with vocabulary on various topics such as the economy and education/health systems, which can prove invaluable when attempting an essay, story or debate in the Ceapadóireacht section of Paper I in June.

The first of the written papers is, in my opinion, the easier of the two. The Cluaitiscint takes place first so it gives you an opportunity to settle down. How to practise? Bí ag éisteacht! Tuning in to RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta every couple of days really boosted my ability to listen to Irish speakers at a natural and fluent speed. This helped in catching as much information as possible at the one time, as each track in the Cluaitiscint is played only twice.

Next comes the Ceapadóireacht. The most important thing to bear in mind when attempting anything here is to maintain a ‘ceangal cinnte leanúnach’ (definite, continuous connection) with the title. I found that a good plan really helped. You have two hours to complete the composition so make a solid foundation and show the examiner exactly where you’re going. Grammar wise, know where to use the séimhiú and úrú and make sure to give plenty of examples of the Tuiséal Ginideach and Briathar Saor.

Paper II involves two reading comprehensions as well as questions on studied literature. I found it useful to do the paper backwards – start with the literature questions and finish with the comprehensions. In that way, my time wasn’t consumed by looking for answers in the reading comprehensions. The most important thing with literature questions is to have a good basis on all pieces of prescribed prose and poetry and not hedge your bets on what came up last year. Go n-éirí libh go léir!

“You have two hours to complete the composition so make a solid foundation and show the examiner exactly where you’re going



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Lean leis an gcaint



Clare Grealy

The oral is a conversation between two people so avoid monosyllabic answers like 'sea' nó 'ní hea'

Looking back on the Leaving Cert higher-level Irish exam last summer, the general consensus was that it was one of the most student-friendly examinations yet. There is no reason to believe the examination in 2015 will be any different.

Questions in all sections of the paper were clear, concise and straightforward, and if students were well prepared the exam presented no major obstacles. The aural tape was by far the clearest it had been in years, and the phrases and vocabulary used would have been familiar to most students. The picture sequence (all 20) has been of enormous assistance in raising the overall result, and while there may be 20 to do they are student-friendly and accessible in the exam itself.

Over the five months of revision time that are left adhere to the guidelines that follow in this article and success will be sure to follow.

Oralexam

The oral Irish examination accounts for 40 per cent of the entire mark for Gaeilge. Therefore, you should prepare yourself thoroughly.

The best method of preparing is to find someone who is willing to converse with you for a while in Irish at least once a day. As the saying goes, "Is in ithe na putóige a bhíonn a tástáil!" (The proof of the pudding is in the eating!) It would also be a great idea to spend some time listening to programmes on Raidió na Gaeltachta or on Raidió na Life, or to watch TG4.

The oral examination lasts about 15 minutes and takes the following format:

Fáiltiú

Welcome (5marc)

This section will last about one minute (or less) and you will be asked for the following details: ainm, aois, dáta breithe, seoladh baile agus uimhir scrúdaithe (scrúduithe). Every candidate will be asked the following five questions – so bí ullamh!

- C: Cad is ainm duit?
F: Síle Ní Riain is ainm dom.
C: Cén aois thú?
F: Táim sé bhliana (16) déag d'aois. Táim seacht/ócht mbliana (17/18) déag d'aois.
C: Cá bhfuil tú i d chónaí?
F: Táim i mChónaíar Bhóthar na Trá, uimhir a trí, Trá Mhór. Contae Port Láirge.
C: Cad é do dháta breithe?
F: Rugadh mé ar an séú lá déag Mí Lúnasa, naoi déag nócha a seacht.

C: Cén scrúduithe atá agat?
F: Is é a dó, a naoi, a trí, a seacht, a ceathair (29374).

Aithris filíochta

Poetry reading (35 marc)
This is the poetry reading section. The examiner will choose the poem and also the 10-12 consecutive lines that you will read.
Read the lines out loud and slowly, showing in your tone and expression that you understand what you are reading.
Be attentive to your pronunciation, especially the séimhiú and urú.
In relation to *An Spailpín Fánach*, a student may sing this song if they so wish.
Practice, practice, practice is the key to obtaining full marks.

Sraith Pictiúr

Picture sequence (80 marc)
You will be shown all pictures, face down and asked to choose one. You will then be given about half a minute to study the pictures before you describe the sequence for the examiner. Try to use a variety of verbs. It is acceptable to keep it simple but many students like to describe the pictures by telling a story. If so tell it in the Aimsir Cháite – a tense few students have difficulty with.

Ardteist 2015: Imreoir Gortaithe (right)

Ní dhéanfaidh mé dearmad riamh ar lá an chluiche cheannais idir Scoil Mhuire agus Colaíste na Rinne i bpáirc Uí Chrocaigh an-raidh. Bhí an áit plódaithe le daoine agus bhí an-atmaisféar san áit le scataí daltaí ag canadh agus ag luascadh a lámha suas san aer thuas sa staid. Bhí an dá scoil go h-iontach san iománaíocht agus bhí cluiche maith i ndán dúinn go léir – seo mar a cheapamar.

Bhí an dá thaobh ag imirt go maith le beagnach fiche nóiméad ach bhí an lámh in uachtar ag Scoil Mhuire. Bhí dhá phointe acu ar an scoil eile. Go tobann rith Peadar suas chun an liathróid a bhuail nuaire a thit sé anuas go trom ar a chos dheis. Bhí an pian go h-uafásach agus ní raibh sé in ann seasamh suas gan bacadh le rith. Thuig an réiteoir ar an bpointe go raibh a chos briste agus ghlaoch sé ann ar na scribhísí éigeandála chun síntean a fháil chun Peadar a thógáil go dtí an t-ospidéal chomh tapaigh agus ab fhéidir.

Chaith Peadar breis is dhá uair ina luí ar shintéan san ospidéal agus bhí sé ag dul as a mheabhair leis an bpian. Is maith an rud é nach raibh an áit plódaithe le daoine. Ní raibh ach beirt roimhe leis na gortaithe céanna.

Faoi dheireadh tháinig banaltra agus thug sí instealladh dó chun an pian a mharú agus dúirt sí leis go raibh air dul suas go dtí an Roinn Raideolaíochta toisc go raibh siad beagnach céad faoin gcéad cinnte go raibh cnámh briste – agus ní amháin briste ach briste go dona.

Bhí an ceart acu! Thóg siad x-gha agus ansin bhuaill sé le máinlia (doctúir) amháin a dúirt go raibh na gortaithe go dona – i bhfad ní ba mheasa ná mar a cheap siad ar dtús. Bhí air dul faoi scian agus nach mbeadh sé in ann aon spórt a imirt le breis is cúig mhí. Bhí Peadar croibhriste! Cad a dhéanadh sé san idirlinn?



At a glance Irish

Paper 1
2 hours 20 minutes
■ Cluastuiscint/aural (60 marks)
■ Ceapadóireacht/composition (100 marks)

Paper 2
3 hours 5 minutes
■ Léamhthuiscint x 2 (100 marks)
■ Prós (30 marks)
■ Filíocht (30 marks)
■ Litríocht Bhreise (40 marks)

An Scrúdú Béil (oral exam)
■ Fáiltiú/welcome (5 marc)
■ Aithris filíochta/poetry reading (35 marc)
■ Sraith pictiúr/picture sequence (80 marc)
■ An comhrá/the conversation (120 marc – stór gaeilge: 75 marc; cumas labhartha 45 marc)

Ar feadh cúig mhí d'fhan sé sa bhaile ag imirt fichille, cartai, ag éisteacht le ceol nó ag féachaint ar fhíseáin. Ach creid é nó ná creid tá dhá thaobh ar gach scéal. Rinne sé go leor staidéir freisin agus d'éirigh leis breis is cúig chéad pointe a fháil san Ardteist an samhradh dar gcionn. Faoi láthair imríonn sé ar fhoireann Colaíste na Tríonoíde agus tá sé arís chomh h-actaí is lúfar is a bhí sé riamh!

You will then ask the examiner three questions about the story in the pictures. Keep these questions simple. Ideally ask questions that the examiner can answer in one sentence.
■ Cén spórt a bhí siad ag imirt?
■ An raibh aon duine eile ag fanacht sa roinn timpiste éigeandála?
■ Cad a chonaic an dochtúir ar an X-gha?

The examiner will then ask you three questions which will require slightly more detailed answers.
■ Cén sort atmaisféar a bhí ann an lá sin?
■ Cad a dúirt an dochtúir leis?
■ Conas a chaith sé an cúig mhí ina dhiadhin sin?

Freagra samplacha
Bhí sé ag imirt fichille, ag éisteacht le ceol, ag dul go dtí an phictiúrlann agus an amharclann, ag ullmhú agus ag cleachtadh don scrúdú HPAT, gach rud seachas (except) spóirt.

An Comhrá

The conversation (120 marc – stór gaeilge: 75 marc; cumas labhartha 45 marc)
Is é seo an chuid is tábhachtaí den scrúdú béil agus tá ort a thaispeáint go bhfuil tú in ann an teangea a labhairt go cruinn (accurately), go líofa (with fluency) agus le Gaeilge shaibhir!

Lean leis an gcaint

Do not give monosyllabic answers like "sea" nó "ní hea". It is a conversation between two people and you have to show the ability to converse.
Remember, if you can keep the conversation flowing from your side then there are fewer questions the examiner will have to ask you.

Direct the conversation to suit yourself. For example, you can say that you have no interest in a certain topic of conversation and that you'd prefer to speak on a different topic, and by doing so will enable the examiner to direct the conversation to a subject you are interested in and therefore should have the ability to speak upon.

Popular topics for discussion

- Mé féin agus mo chlann
- Mo cheantar dúchais
- Caitheamh aimsirí
- An Ghaeilge agus an Ghaeltacht
- Laethanta saoire
- An scoil, ábhair, rialacha na scoile srl

Additional topics

- Fadhanna an déagóra
- Fadhanna sóisialta
- An coras oideachais agus córas na bpointí
- Cursairí domhanda (bochtaineacht, ciníochas, tubaistí nádúrtha, an cúlú eacnamaíochta, imirce).

Finally, make sure you have revised both verbs and tenses, as making basic fundamental mistakes in the verb and the tense can cost you dearly. Ná bí neirbhiseach ar chor ar bith! Go n-éirí an t-adh leat!

Irish Paper 1 – Aural and Composition (Higher Level)

Clóigh leis an ábhar

Clare Grealy

Ceapadóireacht on Paper 1 is by far the most important question in the entire written exam for Irish

Cluastuiscint

Aural (60 marc)

- Cuid A: Fógraí x 2
- Cuid B: Comhráite x 2
- Cuid C: Píosaí Nuachta x 2

If you understand the question, you will have a far better chance at arriving at the answer. Éist go cúramach – do not day-dream as no section will be played for a third time!

Is leor freagraí gearra – there is no need to answer any of the questions with full sentences. Do not be too concerned with the standard of spelling. According to the marking scheme laid down by Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit 2013, "Bainfead ó 0 go 3 ar chaighdeán na Gaeilge."

In the tables below you will find some useful vocabulary.

Ceapadóireacht

Composition (100 marc)

The ceapadóireacht section is by far one of the most important questions in the entire written exam as it is in this question that your true competence in the language comes through and can be tested.

The question will have three sections (each with internal choices) and the student will have to write on one of the nine topics given. Irrespective of your choice, heed this three-word guideline: "Ceangal Cinnte Leanúnach" – which means there has to be a continuous and close connection between the title you choose and the essay/story/debate or speech you write.

For example, if "Fadhb an óil i measc na nÓg" (the problem of alcoholism among the young) were to feature as an essay topic, you would have to point out "gur fadhb

mhór í sin an t-alcól agus gur fadhb í a bhaineann le daoine óga/déagóirí".

Clóigh leis an ábhar – adhere rigidly to the title. Remember this is the title "you choose" out of the nine titles given so why would or should you deviate from it in your answer? This is a trap that can cost you dearly in relation to the marks awarded.

The Ceapadóireacht section is divided into three; seo mar a leanas:

- A. Aiste
- B. Scéal
- C. Díospóireacht/Oráid

1 Aiste/essay
You can write on any one of the topics given in the form of an "aiste" or "agal-lamh" (interview).

2 Scéal/story
This section tends not to be a popular choice among candidates. As well as "cruinneas na teanga" agus "gaeilge shaibhir", students should also be able to demonstrate an "imaginative" style of writing.

3 Díospóireacht/Oráid Debate/Speech
Tá dífriocht mhór idir an díospóireacht agus an oráid. In the debate you will be required to argue "ar son nó in aghaidh rúin ar bith". You cannot argue both sides. Ach maidir leis an oráid, is "caint aonar" é sin ina bhfuil tú ag caint faoi ábhar ar leith agus is féidir leat caint faoi na buntáistí agus na míbhuntáistí a bhaineann leis (ná tá dhá thaobh ag baint leis).

■ NB Neither the díospóireacht nor the oráid should be attempted unless a suitable opening and end has been learnt and practiced by the student.

Díospóireacht: tús samplach

A chathaoirleach, a mholtóirí, a chomhdhaltaí agus lucht an fhreastóra.

Is mise . . . agus tá áthas orm a rá libh go bhfuil anseo chun labhairt libh ar son/in aghaidh an rúin seo.

Beidh an fhoireann thall ag



■ Laura Ganter, a student at the Institute of Education

iarraidh a gcuid tuairimí a chur ina luí orainn, ach molaim daoibh an chluas bhodhar a thabhairt orthu.

Ar an gcéad dul síos . . .
Ní amháin sin ach . . .
Níos tábhachtaí ná rud ar bith eile . . .

Tá orainn smaoineamh ar . . .
Mar fhocal scoir . . .

Díospóireacht: an deireadh:
Agus faoi dheireadh, a dhaoine uaisle agus a bhaill na foirne eile táim beagnach tagtha go deireadh mo chuid cainte ar an rún seo. Táim cinnte go n-aontóibh sibh leis an gcuid is mó de mo chuid tuairimí.
Chun deireadh agus críoach a chur le mo chuid cainte is mian

liom mo bhuíochas a ghabháil libh as an éisteacht chineálta a thug sibh dom. Go gcuítí Dia sibh agus go raibh míle maith agaibh.

Oráid: an tús

A dhaoine uaisle go léir . . .
Is mise . . . agus tá an-áthas orm deis a fháil labhairt libh inniu faoi . . .
Ar an gcéad dul síos . . .
Ní amháin sin ach . . .
In éineacht leis sin . . .
Ar lámh amháin . . .
Ar an lámh eile . . .

Oráid: an deireadh

Da bhrí sin, a dhaoine uaisle tá an ceann scríbe bainte amach agam agus tá súil agam gur bhain sibh taitneamh (enjoy) as a raibh le rá agam. Go raibh míle maith agaibh agus guíom rath Dé oraibh go léir.

Cluastuiscint Téarmaí coitianta/common terms

Ceadúnas fógraíochta	Advertising license	Léitheoir nuachta	Newsreader
Scileanna rúnaíochta	Secretarial skills	Taighdeoir	Researcher
Riarachán	Administration	Líofacht sa Ghaeilge	Fluency in Irish
Breis is	More than	Coiste na dtuismitheoirí	Parents' committee
Sa bhreis	Additional	Comharcho-mann Inis Meáin	Inis Meáin Co-op
Dualgais breise	Additional duties	Ag déanamh urraíochta	Sponsoring
Scéim scoláireachta	Scholarship scheme	Seoladh leabhair	Book launch
Ríomhaire	Computer	Foireann Teagaisc	Teaching staff
Léacht cuimhneacháin	Remembrance lecture	Á chur chun cinn	Promoting
Céiliúradh	Celebration	Bronnadh gradam air	He was presented with an award
Foirm iarratais	Application form	Fóluantas	Vacancy
Iriseoir	Journalist	Scór	Twenty
Láithreoir	Presenter		
Léiritheoir	Producer		

Character building

Clare Grealy

Know your poems, know your characters, and always answer the question asked – not the one you wish you were asked!

Ceist 1

Léamhthuisicint/Comprehension (100 marc)

There will be two comprehensions on the paper and students must answer *both*, with 50 marks going for each one. There is no longer any need for students to answer this question “i d’fhocail féin”, with the exception of question 6B which must be in your own words.

In general all questions will carry an (a) and (b) part, so ensure that your answers reflect this, ie 1a agus 1b, 2a agus 2b, etc. If you are required to give “dhá phointe”, make sure you do so and lay out your answer in such a way as the examiner correcting your script will see “an dá cheann”.

Ceist 6 in its entirety carries 15 marks. In question 6A, you will be required to “aim-sigh” certain grammatical parts; cuir i gcás: ■ Saorbhriathar – dúntar, dúnadh, dúnfar, dhúnfaí

- Breischeim nó Sárcheim na haidiachta – níos mó, is mó
- An Tuiseal Ginideach – Firinsneach uatha – hata an fhir – Baininsneach uatha – i lár na cathrach – Uimhir iolra – tréithe na gcaointe
- Aidiacht sealbhach – mó bhróg
- Aidiacht san uimhir iolra – móra, deasa
- An uimhir phearsanta – beirt, triúr

Question 6B will be a question encompassing the entire léamhthuisicint and your answer must reflect your “comprehension” of the “entire” piece. Cuir i gcás:

- “Bunaithe ar an eolas sa sliocht thuas an dtaitníonn Steve Jobs leat mar dhuine?” (*Scrúdú na hArdteiste 2013*) nó
- “Cén cineál (genre) scríbhneoireachta lena mbaineann an sliocht seo? Luaigh dhá thréithe a bhaineann leis an gcineál seo scríbhneoireachta. Aimsigh sampla amháin de gach ceann den dá thréithe sa sliocht. (Bíodh an freagra i d’fhocail féin. Is leor 60 focal.)”

Ceist 2

Prós ainmnithe nó Prós roghnach/ Prescribed prose or nonprescribed prose (30 marc)

Whichever section you have studied, you will cover four pieces of prose and either a film or play for the fifth choice.

In the Prós Ainmnithe section, all the works are based closely on characters so you should study these in depth and the relationships they have with each other. Ensure you have a very good knowledge of each piece, especially “ar imeachtaí agus ar eachtraí na sleachta”.

In recent years, candidates were given one question based on one of the works studied and had to answer that question with no choice. A departure from this style was evident on the Leaving Cert paper of 2013 where the question was in three parts and candidates could choose any two parts. This applied to the Prós Ainmnithe and Prós Roghnach sections, eg:

2A Prós Ainmnithe
Maidir leis an scéal béaloideas Oisín i dTír na nÓg, déan plé gairid ar do rogha dhá cheann de na ceannteidil seo a leanas:
(i) An pháirt a ghlacann Niamh Chinn Óir sa scéal.

(ii) Cruachás Oisín ón uair a d’fhág sé Tír na nÓg.

(iii) An tréith bhéaloidis is mó a thaitníonn leat sa scéal. (Tabhair dhá fháth le do fhreagra.)

2B Prós Roghnach
Nil cead aon ábhar a bhaineann le Prós Ainmnithe a úsáid i bhfreagra ar bith ar an bPrós Roghnach.

Maidir le scéal béaloideas roghnach a ndearna tú stáidéar air le linn do chúrsa, déan plé gairid ar do rogha dhá cheann de na ceannteidil seo a leanas:

(i) Saol an phríomhcharactair (na príomhphéarsan) sa scéal

(ii) Criche na scéil

(iii) An tréith bhéaloidis is mó a thaitníonn leat sa scéal. (Tabhair dhá fháth le do fhreagra.)

Ní mór teideal an scéil bhéaloidis sin a scríobh síos go cruinn.

Teicnící Scannaíochta/Filming Techniques

Cáca Milis

In relation to the film, Cáca Milis, be sure to watch it regularly during the year, as your answer will be based on auditory and visual perception. As it is a film there is no text to read.

■ Miondhearcadh

Úsáidtear é go forleathan sa scannán seo agus bíonn fócas na gceamairí ar a n-aigheanna.

Maidir le Catherine díríonn an ceamara ar a súile an t-am ar fad - ar na súile dorchá agus mailiseacha atá aici ach le Paul tá an fócas ar a bhéal agus don chuid is mó tá sé ar oscailt agus é lán le seile..

■ Fad-dhearcadh

Tá go leor radharcanna éagsúla le feiscint ó fhuinneog na traenach –radharc an mhuilinn adhmaid agus na hoibríthe go léir ag obair ann –radharc an chósta timpeall Cill Mhantáin –an reilig – an bhean ag siúl síos an ardán i bhfad amach ón bhfar marbh

■ Éadaí

Tá difríocht mhór idir an bheirt sa tsli ina raibh siad gléasta Bhí Catherine gleasta suas i gcuailth oibre a bhí corra agus le bróga faoi shála arda uirthi ach bhí sean t-éine ar Paul in éineacht lena bhróga reatha

■ Imeartas táisté

–An cáca milis – is é ceann de na cinn is tábhachtaí toisc go bhfuil imeachtaí an scan-



■ Students outside the Institute of Education in Dublin.

PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN BETSON

náin bunaithe air.

– An t-ionánálaitheoir – is é sin an gléas a choimead an fear bocht beo.

– An bata siúil agus na spéaclaí a chuireann chun cinn cruachás an fhir toisc go bhfuil sé dall.

– An chathaoir rotha a thaispeán dúinn spleáchas na seannmhá (máthair Catherine) ar a h-iníon agus ar an bhanaí.

– An mála siuca – feicimid ciotail an fhir nuair a bhí sé sin á oscailt aige agus an siuca ag titim mórtimpell an bhoird.

– An lámh ag titim I laige. Is é an ceann is éifeachtaí mar ní aon amhras againn ach go bhfuair sé bás ag an deireadh

■ Soilsiú

Is beag an fócas a chuirtear ar na soilse toisc go dtarlaionn imeachtaí an scannáin i rith an lae. Ach tá radharc amháin ann nuair a théann an traenín trí thollán agus éiríonn an scáileán dorchá agus bíonn sé sin an-éifeachtach ar fad toisc go dtarlaionn sé sin díreach ag an mbomaite nuair a dúirt Catherine leis gur thóg se plaic as an péist – mar dheia!

■ Fuaimeanna

Cloisimid ineall na traenach agus í ar a bealach go Loch Garman agus ta an torann rithimeach agus toll. Ach nuair a théann an traenín tríd an tollán cloistear fuaim ghéar na h-adhairce a chuireann chun cinn uafás an fhir a chreid ag an nóiméad sin gur thóg sé plaic as an péist agus go bhfaigheadh sé bás dá bharr.

Common errors

■ If in any question you are asked for two points, make sure to lay out the two points clearly.

■ Daydreaming during the aural exam, which can mean missing the point. Each section is only played twice.

■ Choosing the Díospóireacht

and writing in the style of Oráid, and vice-versa. Muna dtuig-eann tú teideal na h-aiste, ná roghnaigh é – be sure you understand the title of the essay. “If in doubt, leave it out.” ■ For the Scrúdú Béil, practice is the key – cleachtadh! Especially reading the poetry.

Ceist 3

Filíocht ainmnithe nó filíocht roghnach/ Prescribed poetry or nonprescribed poetry (30 marc)

Students will have studied either the prescribed poetry (3A) or nonprescribed works (3B). The major difference between these two sections is that the poem itself is printed on the paper for question 3A (prescribed works) but not for question 3B.

Make sure that you can translate the five prescribed poems as this will be of enormous help to you in answering all questions.

Tá ceisteanna ginearálta le foghlaim agus a bhí an-choitianta ar scrúdháipeir sna blianta beaga anuas, cuir i gcás:

- a) Príomhthéama an dáin agus conas a chuirtear é sin os ár gcomhair.
- b) Na mothúcháin éagsúla sa dán.
- c) Dearcadh an fhile.
- d) Atmaisféar an dáin.
- e) Codarsnacht nó iomhánna
- f) Friotal, dathanna, fuaimeanna
- g) Oiriúnacht an teidil.

■ NB: Always read the question carefully and be sure that you answer what you are in fact being asked, for example: “Cad iad na mothúcháin a bhí ionat féin tar éis an dán seo a léamh?” This question should not be mixed up with: “Cad iad na mothúcháin is treise atá le fáil sa dán seo?”

Technical questions may appear to be difficult when in fact they are straightforward. See sample answer below, based on adjectives.

Freagra samplach/sample answer based on adjectives in An tEarrach Thiar

■ Nóta a scríobh ar éifeachtach na n-aidi-achtaí sa dán seo.

Bíonn go leor aidiachtaí le fáil sa dán seo agus a scéal féin ag gach ceann díobh:

– “shéimh”: Bhí an-bhinneas ag baint leis an gciúnas an lá sin agus an t-aon rud a bhí

How to achieve those extra marks

This depends on the question. In the literature/poetry sections, answer the question asked. For example, in the poetry questions, if you are specifically asked for “your feelings”, then your answer will be personal as opposed to writing on the feelings of the poet.

In the Ceapadóireacht section, watch “cruinneas na teanga” agus “Gaeilge Shaibhir” and adhere to the title.

Remember: “Ceangal Cinnte Leanúnach”.

ag cur isteach air ná scríbeheadh na crafóige ón lá.

– “mbrothall”: Ní raibh aon leoithne ag sé-ideadh an lá sin. Bhí an aimsir meirbh.

– “dhearg” agus “bháin”: Tá an dá dhath seo an-éagsúil óna chéile agus is cumhach-tach an chodarsnacht seo le deirge na fea-mainne ag glioscarnach ar an trá bhán.

– “niamhrach”: Dar leis ní raibh aon áit ní ba niamhraí.

– “slothacht”: Arís tá sé ag cur na béime ar shiocán is suaimehneas.

– “fanna”: Bhí na h-iascairí ag rámhaocht go mall leis an tuirse mhór a bhí orthu: bhí easpa nirt sna buillí.

– “mhall”: Toisc go raibh an aimsir meirbh an lá sin gan puth gaoithe ann bhí tonnta beaga bídeacha ag briseadh ar an trá agus tháinig siad i dtír go mall.

– “ór”: Is dáth álainn é ór: dar ndóigh ceann de na dathanna is áille DÁ BHFUIL ANN.

B’álainn radharc na ngathanna gréine a bhí ann an lá sin is an ghrian ag dul faoi.

Freagra samplach/sample answer based on Colscaradh

■ Very often a question will require you to “read between the lines” of a poem, so to

speak: “An féidir leat ionannú leis an dán seo?”

Is féidir liom ionannú leis an dán seo dar ndóigh.

Um an dtaca seo anuraidh fuair m’uncail is m’aintín colscaradh agus ní nach ionadh toisc go raibh an bheirt acu an-éagsúil ar fad agus níor stop said riamh ag argóint.

Fear na cathrach a bhí ann a rugadh is a tógadh suas i mBaile Átha Cliath agus bhí an-aithne aige ar an áit agus ar a lán daoine anseo.

Fear gnó a bhí ann anseo freisin agus sin é an fáth gur chaith sé uaire sa bhreis san oifig i rith na seachtaine.

Ní dhearna sé obair tí agus ní raibh sé sásta cabhrú leis na leanaí ag an deireadh seachtaine – dar ndóigh nuair a chuir m’aintín aon saghas brú air d’éaligh sé síos chun an tí tabhairne.

Tháinig m’aintín ón Iodáil ait ina bhfuil an chlann an-tábhachtach ar fad agus níor thuig sí an sort iompair sin chor ar bith.

Ba é colscaradh an réiteach ab fhearr don bheirt.

Certain questions will be synonymous with a certain poem and ONLY that poem: Géibheann

“Is dán fáithchiallach é seo.” É sin a phlé. “Is dán meafarach é seo.” É sin a phlé.

“Tá i bhfad níos mó i gceist ná ainmhi i sáinn.” Do thuairim uait faoi sin.

An Spailpín Fanach

“Taispeán gur amhrán polaitiúil é seo.” Colscaradh

“Déan comparáid idir an bheirt sa dán seo.”

Ceist 4

Litríocht bhreise/Additional literature (40 marc)

This question will be divided into six sections, and students will be required to answer from one section only:

- 4A An Triail
- 4B A Thig ná Tit Orm
- 4C Tóraíocht Dhiarmada agus Gráinne

Tips for the exam

■ Always do out a plan for the composition question – no marks are going for the plan and you will lose no marks if you have no plan, but it guarantees you will have enough material to write between 500-600 words on your chosen subject. It is a guarantee to yourself that you won’t “run out of steam” halfway through an essay or debate or scéal or óráid.

■ In the ceapadóireacht section you must adhere to the title you choose – a continuous connection between the chosen title and subject you write upon is essential: Ná téigh ar strael

■ Léigh go cúramach an cheist sa scrúdú. Remember you do not have to like a question to do well, but you do have to answer what is being asked.

■ In the Léamhthuisicint section, lay out your answers according to the question asked.

■ “Luaigh dhá phointe eolais”. Please ensure the examiner sees an dá cheann – don’t put them into the one sentence but separate each point clearly.

■ In recent years there has been a tendency in the “filíocht” sections to ask the candidate how they related to the poem or identified with it and what feelings they had. Ensure this is addressed; in other words, how you felt and not the poet.

■ In the dráma An Triail, make sure you have a good, factual knowledge of the play, plot and characters – 35 marks out of the 40 will go for this knowledge.

- 4D Gafa
- 4E Canary Wharf
- 4F Dánta Breise (a collection of five poems in addition to those of Ceist 3)

The marks for each section are divided up as follows: 35 marks for “eolas” (knowledge) and five for your standard of Irish.

To date, sections 4A-4E have had *one* question only with no internal choices. In the Dánta Breise section, one of the five poems will be listed and *three* questions will have to be answered on that poem (see sample answer below on *Colmáin*).

The poetry in this section is slightly more difficult than the “prescribed poetry” in question three but it is still a popular choice among students due to the fact the poem will be printed on the exam paper.

The play *An Triail* is by far the most popular choice among candidates. If choosing from this section, you need to know the characters: it is hard to imagine answering any question on this play without basing it on characters, apart from Teicnící Drámaíochta.

Irrespective of what section you choose from, freagair an cheist atá le freagair! Answer what you are asked and not what you might have liked to have been asked.

■ Fógraí (two sections)

■ Comhrá (two sections)

■ Píosa Nuachta (two sections)

■ Ceapadóireacht

This question is divided into three sections. Each section contains internal choices and candidates will be required to answer from one section only.

■ Paper 2

Paper 2 consists of four questions: Ceist 1 – Léamhthuisicint (reading comprehension); Ceist 2 –

Prós (prose); Ceist 3 – Filíocht (poetry); and Ceist 4 – Litríocht Bhreise (literature).

■ Léamhthuisicint

Consists of two questions, both of which must be answered. There is no choice in this question.

■ Prós

There will be an internal choice in the question between: Prós Ainmnithe (A) nó Prós Roghnach (B)

■ Filíocht

Again provides an internal choice between: Filíocht Ainmnithe (A) nó Filíocht Roghnach (B).

■ Litríocht Bhreise

You will have studied one or possibly two out of the following six sections but need only answer from one section:

- 4A: An Triail
- 4B: A Thig ná Tit orm
- 4C: Tóraíocht Dhiarmada agus Ghraíne
- 4D: Gafa
- 4E: Canary Wharf
- 4F: Dánta Breise

The exam

■ Paper 1

Paper 1 consists of two questions: Ceist 1 – Cluastuisicint (Aural) and Ceist 2 – Ceapadóireacht (Composition)

■ Cluastuisicint

This part of the exam will last for the duration of the tape – 20 minutes – and comprises three sections and a total of about 30 questions, with two marks going for each

■ Fógraí (two sections)

■ Comhrá (two sections)

■ Píosa Nuachta (two sections)

■ Ceapadóireacht

This question is divided into three sections. Each section contains internal choices and candidates will be required to answer from one section only.

■ Paper 2

Paper 2 consists of four questions: Ceist 1 – Léamhthuisicint (reading comprehension); Ceist 2 –

Prós (prose); Ceist 3 – Filíocht (poetry); and Ceist 4 – Litríocht Bhreise (literature).

■ Léamhthuisicint

Consists of two questions, both of which must be answered. There is no choice in this question.

■ Prós

There will be an internal choice in the question between: Prós Ainmnithe (A) nó Prós Roghnach (B)

■ Filíocht

Again provides an internal choice between: Filíocht Ainmnithe (A) nó Filíocht Roghnach (B).

■ Litríocht Bhreise

You will have studied one or possibly two out of the following six sections but need only answer from one section:

- 4A: An Triail
- 4B: A Thig ná Tit orm
- 4C: Tóraíocht Dhiarmada agus Ghraíne
- 4D: Gafa
- 4E: Canary Wharf
- 4F: Dánta Breise

French Reading comprehensions and the oral exam

Be clear, be spontaneous



Corinne Gavenda

Don't lose marks by rushing through questions and always be clear of what you are being asked

Spontaneity and clarity are keywords to the French Leaving Cert exam. We will approach here the five different skills required from the candidates, focusing on the two most commonly chosen exercises of the productive writing: the opinion piece and the diary extract.

On the paper, students might also be given the option of writing a narrative (*un récit*) as part of the compulsory question and, for Question 2, either a more formal type of writing (fax, note, letter) or an email similar in style to the informal letter. You will therefore have plenty of choice.

Reading comprehensions

Each question usually carries five points. To get full marks, you need to understand clearly what you are being asked to do.

1 Cut and paste question

Trouvez, relevez, citez all mean: quote. Use the text without changing a single word if the question continues with the following terms: *Un mot, une expression, une phrase*.

- *Un mot* – one word only, anything else would be considered as overquoting.
- *Une expression* – more than one word, usually not the full sentence.
- *Une phrase* – a full sentence from one end of a full stop to the other.

Marks are often lost because students rush through the questions. Look out for the following question words: *Quand* (when), *Où* (where), *Comment* (how), *Qui* (who), *Pourquoi* (why), *Combien de temps* (how long), *Lequel* (which one), *Que, Qu'est-ce-que, Qu'est-ce-qui* (what).

2 Manipulation question

This is when you must ask yourself whether or not to manipulate the text. So, what is manipulation?

First, you do not need to change the words of the text, all you may have to do is readapt the grammar in such a way that it matches the question. The most obvious example is when the text is in the *je* form, first person narrative:

■ *First comprehension text, 2014, Q4 (ii):* “Comment Alexis se comporte-t-il envers les animaux dans son cirque?”

Students should have answered: “Il ne les frappe pas” because “je ne les frappe

pas” does not match the structure of the question and is worth only four marks.

■ *First comprehension text, 2010, Q2 (ii):* “Pour un candidat qui brûlera un feu rouge, quelle en sera la conséquence?” Students read: “Pour être reçu, le candidat devra obtenir au moins 20 points sur 30 et ne pas commettre de fautes éliminatoires, par exemple griller un feu rouge.”

Here, the reformulations were slightly more difficult. Students should have answered “Il échouera” or “C’est une faute éliminatoire”. Lack of reformulation will generally be penalised by one mark.

■ **Be careful:** When a line (a) and a line (b) are given for the answer, they must both be used. If you were to write the full answer on one of these lines only, you would only get half the points.

3 Grammar question

This may be either a question based on pronouns or on the recognition of a grammatical term.

You will read: “Pour le pronom en italique, trouvez le mot auquel il se réfère.”

You must find the word in the text that is replaced by the pronoun. The answer will always be one word. Each extraneous word will be penalised by one mark.

■ “Bonjour Jeanne, répondit Claire. Je t’attendais justement. Tu as fini de taper le rapport que je t’ai donné hier?”

Dès le matin, cela commençait! Jeanne n’avait même pas le temps d’allumer son ordinateur et de prendre un café.”

“Oui, Claire, vous le trouverez dans le dossier électronique RTM05 sur le serveur.”

– (*Leaving Cert 2013*)

Answer: “le” replaces “rapport”

■ Nous avons signé un contrat de neuf ans avec le gouvernement. Si les huit années restantes passent à la vitesse de la première, nous le prolongerons sans doute.”

– (*Leaving Cert 2009*)

Answer: “le” replaces “contrat”

For the recognition question, you must be familiar with the glossary of grammatical terms you are given during the year. You might be asked to recognise adjectives, adverbs (*LC 2009, 2014*), prepositions (*LC 2011*), possessive adjectives (*LC 2012*), but very often this question is based on verbs and their tenses (*LC 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014*).

Here is a brief summary of what you are looking for. The answers required are simply the words highlighted. Do not quote anything else but the verb.

One word tenses

■ *Présent de l’indicatif:* This is the present tense you are used to. Do not be put off by the word l’indicatif – this is to differentiate it from the subjunctive. Make sure you are in a present context. For example (*je vais* (I go, I am going)).

■ *Impératif:* Identical to the present tense. You will recognise it because there is no subject – it is an order or an advice. For example *Viens!* (Come!) *Faites attention!* (Be careful!)



■ **Eiffel Tower, Paris: Building your vocabulary for Leaving Cert French is a long-term task.**

■ *Futur simple:* You must have the full infinitive with the following endings: -ai, -as, -a, -ons, -ez, -ont. For example, (*je*) *travaillerai* (I will work).

■ *Conditionnel:* You must have the full infinitive with the following endings: -ais, -ais, -ait, -ions, -iez, -aient. For example, (*je*) *travaillerais* (I would work). Don’t mix it up with the imperfect.

■ *Imparfait:* Stem of the present tense in the nous form with the following endings: -ais, -ais, -ait, -ions, -iez, -aient. For example, (*je*) *travaillais* (I was working, I used to work).

■ *Participle passé:* This is not a tense, this is the form of the verb we use to form a *passé composé*. For example, *pris* (taken), *nourri* (fed).

■ *Participle présent:* again this is not a tense but a form of the verb. Easily recognisable because it always ends with the letters “-ant”. Just make sure it is a verb. For example, *Je travaillais en écoutant de la musique* (while listening).

■ *Passé simple:* Based on the stem of the past participle. Look for verbs finishing with -a, -as, -irent, -èrent. For example, (*je*) *pris* (I took).

■ *Présent du subjonctif:* Based on the present tense of the nous or the ils form. Revise the irregular verbs, always check that there is a form requiring the subjunctive. For example, (*il faut que je*) *prenne* (I have to take).

■ *Imparfait du subjonctif:* This has come up. An unusual tense to ask but students would be expected to spot expressions, such as *bien que*, which requires the subjunctive.

Two word tenses

■ *Passé composé:* avoir in the present + past participle. For example, (*j’) ai écrit* (I wrote). If the auxiliary is *être*, double check that you are dealing with an *être* verb (see below). Aller – rester – rentrer – retourner – arriver – entrer – partir – sortir – monter – descendre – tomber – venir – revenir – devenir – naître – mourir.

■ *Plus-que-parfait:* avoir in the imperfect + past participle. For example, (*j’) avais écrit* (I had written). Same thing for *être* verbs.

■ *Conditionnel passé:* avoir in the conditional + past participle. For example, (*j’) aurais écrit* (I would have written). Same thing for *être* verbs.

All of these tenses can be asked with *un verbe pronominal* (a reflexive verb). You must then also quote the reflexive pronoun placed directly in front of the verb.

In the second comprehension of 2014, Q5(ii) read: “Trouvez dans la quatrième section un verbe pronominal.” The answer required was: “s’enfuir”, ie the verb and its reflexive pronoun.

4 Vocabulary question

You are asked to find a synonym (a word of similar meaning) in the text.

■ *Leaving Cert 2010:* “Relevez le mot qui veut dire ‘à partir du moment actuel.’”

Answer: désormais

■ *Leaving Cert 2012:* “Relevez l’expression qui veut dire ‘son téléphone sonne encore une fois.’”

Answer: L’indicatif musical de son portable retentit à nouveau

■ *Leaving Cert 2013:* “Relevez le mot qui veut dire ‘sans réfléchir.’”

Answer: machinalement

■ *Leaving Cert 2014:* “Trouvez l’expression qui veut dire ‘Georges devenait de moins en moins compréhensif.’”

Answer: Georges se montrait de plus en plus intolérant

Here answering by giving the full sentence would have been penalised because you were not asked for “la phrase” but for “l’expression”.

5 Comprehension question in English

Finally, in Question 6, you must find two distinct points and elaborate on each by using examples out of the text. This is not about giving your personal opinion. This is about your understanding of the text. Avoid quoting in French without making it clear that you understand the quote.

■ *First comprehension text, 2014:* “Circus

life for Alexis and his family is tough. Do you agree? Refer to the text in support of your answer. (Two points, about 50 words in total.)”

Here is a sample answer:

(a) I agree because, as Alexis explains, there are less people coming to watch the show – they used to have 90 spectators, this year they have only 30. It is also a family business where children, cousins and parents must work together; Nancy, for instance, does not only take part in the acts, she also does all the administrative tasks along with her housework. “Il faut savoir tout faire” – the show itself is not the hardest part of the job.

(b) What’s more, circuses face far more restrictions and criticisms nowadays. They have to ask authorisations from town halls to set themselves up and these requests must be done in advance and in writing. Alexis explains also that associations against cruelty to animals are very critical and he feels this is unfair: “Il y a peut-être des problèmes mais il ne faut pas mettre tout le monde dans le même sac.”

Keep your answer as concise and as clear as possible. Avoid waffling but do not waste time either counting words – 50 words is merely a guideline and you will not be penalised for going over it.

At a glance Leaving Cert French

Knowing the lay out of the paper and the time allocated to each exercise is crucial.

Section 1: reading comprehensions

30 per cent / 60-65 mins

There are two texts. You must do both. Each has six questions: the first five must be answered in French; the last must be answered in English.

Always answer in the language used in the question and do not use brackets as part of an answer – they will be taken as cancellation.

Section 2: productive writing

25 per cent / 75 mins

You must write three exercises in total. Q1 is compulsory (30 mins). Choose another two exercises from Q2, 3 or 4,

but not within the same section (20 mins each on average).

- Q1 compulsory (a) or (b): reaction or narrative
- Q2 optional (a) or (b): diary or note/email/letter
- Q3 optional (a) or (b): reaction/discussion
- Q4 optional (a) or (b): reaction/discussion

Aural exam (20 per cent)

Five sections. You must answer them all in English. The first four sections are heard three times, the fifth section only twice.

Oral exam (25 per cent)

A 13-minute interview based on personal and abstract topics and aimed at checking the ability of a candidate to communicate naturally.

You have the option to bring in a document/ project.

French Oral Keep the conversation going

You will be graded on four categories in the French oral exam.

Pronunciation (20)

Reasonably accurate pronunciation is crucial. Here are some of the most common pronunciation rules to remember:

- Consonants at the end of words such as *ils, nous, etare* are **not** pronounced.
- The third person plural ending of the present tense is **never** heard: *ils regardent, ils pensent...*
- The *e* with no accent at the end of a word is **not** pronounced, it only stresses the last letter: *je regarde*.

This is a serious mistake because the wrong sound leads to confusion in communication – your examiner assumes you are using a past tense. ■ “h” is never pronounced: *compréhensif*.

- “ch” is pronounced like “sh”: *chimie, architecture*.
- “qu” is pronounced like “k”: *qualifié, tranquille, qui, quand*.
- “ss” is pronounced like “s”: *pression*
- “ill” is pronounced like a “y” sound: *famille, embouteillage (yage)* – but not for *ville* or *village* where you hear the “i” sound

■ Watch difference between *ain/aîne, ier/ière, gens/jeunes*.

Vocabulary (20)

Building your vocabulary is a long-term task, however it will help if you can identify the main topics you will be talking about and if for each of these topics you have practised the key words in sentences that relate to you.

- Vous, votre famille, votre maison et votre quartier.
- Votre école, vos amis et votre routine.
- Vos loisirs et ce que vous faites le weekend.
- Vos projets pour l’avenir, vos études, votre carrière, vos débouchés.
- Vos vacances, vos voyages.
- Ce que vous avez fait l’été dernier, le weekend dernier, hier.
- Ce que vous ferez l’année prochaine, l’été prochain, le weekend prochain, demain.

The following abstract topics can then derive from your conversation:

- L’école: les problèmes et les pressions.
- Devrait-on changer le format de l’examen?
- Les difficultés à rentrer en fac, le système de points.
- Les débouchés, la récession et

l’émigration.

- Les loisirs tels que l’usage d’internet et les dangers de face-book.
- Les problèmes sociaux tels que la pauvreté et les sans-abri, la drogue et l’alcool, tout cela menant à la criminalité.
- Les problèmes de l’environnement et le recyclage.
- Les catastrophes naturelles (tremblements de terre, inondations).
- Les actualités (grèves, élections, émeutes).

Also be careful if you bring up a subject such as “Je vais au cinéma au moins une fois par semaine”. Obviously you must expect the question, “Quel est le dernier film que vous avez vu?” Failing to discuss this for lack of vocabulary would be noted.

Structures (30)

Grammar is a worry to many students during the conversation. If you are overanxious, it may slow you down.

You are meant to be able to differentiate between the following tenses and use them appropriately: 1) présent, 2) passé composé, 3) imparfait, 4) futur, 5) conditionnel.

Subjunctive and use of pronouns will also enhance a lot your conversation.

Communication (30)

Communication relates quite closely to the three previous skills. Keep the conversation going; convey as much information as you can.

Remember, a conversation means you look at the person you are talking to, you answer their questions, and in doing so, you do not drift off in some passage you have learnt off but you develop your response to the full.

Simply **keep talking**.

Example: “Vous sortez souvent le weekend?”

Pas souvent mais de temps en temps. C’est important de se détendre et de retrouver les copains mais mes parents veulent que j’étudie cette année parce que j’ai besoin de beaucoup de points pour entrer en fac! Je sais que ça en vaut la peine et l’année prochaine j’aurai plus de temps pour m’amuser!

Example: “Où allez-vous quand vous sortez?”

Ça dépend. Parfois on va au cinéma ou on va manger un morceau ensemble. Mais en ce moment on est tous fauchés, donc on va chez les uns et chez les autres.

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French Writing and aural

Structured expression and steady timing

Corinne Gavenda

The most common errors in the French exam are due to carelessness and rushing through exercises

The examiner will first check if the question is clearly answered and not skimmed over to be replaced by a learnt off passage. Linking ideas and using appropriate vocabulary is very important. This is where the examiner assesses the communication worth 20 marks. He will then look for a structured answer. Paragraphs will help achieve clarity and bring continuity to your discussion. General grammar is what is assessed in the language worth 20 marks.

La réaction

Read the question carefully, underline the keywords, prepare a plan (introduction, development, conclusion) and then start writing. The following phrases can be used as a guideline:

Je pense partager l'avis de beaucoup en disant que	I think I share the opinion of many when saying that (identify issue)
Certains pensent que	some people think that (argument 1)
D'autres prétendent que	others claim that (argument 2)
Personnellement, j'estime que	personally, I believe that (your own opinion)

Developing your vocabulary to put across your point of view is important:

Expressing agreement
■ je suis d'accord avec...
■ Je suis pour.
■ Je suis de cet avis.
■ C'est tout à fait normal.

Expressing disagreement
■ Je ne suis pas d'accord avec...
■ Je suis contre.
■ Je suis opposé(e) à...
■ Ce n'est pas normal.

Expressing anger
■ Cela me met en colère!
■ C'est une honte!
■ Je suis furieux(se) à l'idée que...

Expressing disappointment
■ Quelle déception!
■ Quel dommage!
■ Je suis tellement déçu(e)!

Expressing worry
■ Je trouve cela très inquiétant.
■ Cela m'inquiète beaucoup.

Expressing joy
■ Quelle bonne nouvelle!

■ Je suis tellement content(e)!

Expressing surprise
■ Quelle surprise!
■ Je suis vraiment surpris(e)! / étonné(e)!

Watch out the following grammar structures:

	de voir (to see)
Je suis content(e), déçu(e)...	d'avoir vu (to have seen)
	de ne pas voir (not to see)
	de ne pas avoir vu (not to have seen)
de + noun (with + noun)	que + subjunctive (that ...)
	à l'idée que + indicative (normal tenses)

Do not forget to conclude: *Donc, en conclusion, pour conclure, par conséquent ...*

■ *D'après la Section 1, Q1 (2014):* "Les cirques font l'objet de critiques régulières de la part d'associations de défense des animaux". Il semble cruel de garder les animaux sauvages en captivité dans les zoos et les cirques, ou même en semi-liberté dans les parcs animaliers. Qu'en pensez-vous?

Sample answer

Je pense partager l'avis de beaucoup en disant que les animaux sauvages ne devraient pas être derrière des barreaux, emprisonnés dans une cage mais devraient pouvoir au contraire profiter de la liberté de leur habitat naturel. Néanmoins, je ne crois pas que l'on puisse mettre les cirques et les parcs animaliers au même niveau.

Prenons tout d'abord le cirque. Ses dresseurs parlent de tradition où les bêtes ont leur place aux côtés des trapézistes et des jongleurs et où les dompteurs d'animaux féroces font rêver les enfants. Je suis tout à fait contre cette opinion car ce n'est qu'une image faussée de l'animal. Verrait-on vraiment dans la Savane un lion sauter dans un cerceau en feu? Certainement pas. Leurs conditions de vie sont souvent inadaptées, il subissent un dressage violent et sont obligés de faire des déplacements fréquents dans des cages beaucoup trop étroites. C'est bien la raison pour laquelle ils sont souvent drogués.

En revanche, j'estime que les zoos et les parcs animaliers, pourvu qu'ils donnent l'espace nécessaire aux différentes espèces, remplissent d'une part un rôle pédagogique en montrant aux enfants les animaux des différents continents et donnent d'autre part l'exemple en prenant part à des projets de protection des espèces et en aidant à la reproduction de celles qui sont menacées. Ils ont donc besoin de notre soutien.

En bref, je suis contre les cirques et leur façon anormale de traiter les bêtes mais quant aux parcs zoologiques, je pense que vu l'intensité du braconnage et la disparition des espèces, ils sont nécessaires à la survie de tous ces animaux magnifiques.

Translation
I think I share the opinion of many by saying that wild animals should not be behind bars, imprisoned in cages, but should be able on the contrary to enjoy the freedom of their natural habitat. Nevertheless, I don't think one can equate circuses and animal parks.

Firstly, let's consider the circus. Its advocates talk about a tradition where animals have their place beside trapeze artists and jugglers and where tammers of ferocious beasts make children dream. I am completely against this opinion because it is the wrong image of an animal. Would we really see a lion jump through a hoop on fire in the savannah? Certainly not. Their living conditions are often unsuitable; they undergo a violent training and are frequently forced to travel in cages that are far too narrow. It is in fact the reason why they are often drugged.

On the other hand, I believe that zoos and animal parks, providing they give the necessary space to different species, fill on the one hand a pedagogical role by showing children animals from different continents, and give on the other hand the example by taking part in projects for the protection of species and by helping the reproduction of those that are threatened. They therefore need our support.

In short, I am against circuses and their unnatural way of treating the animals but as for animal parks, I think that, considering the extent of poaching and the extinction of species, they are necessary to the survival of all these magnificent animals.

Tips for the aural

1 Read the instructions carefully and highlight words such as 'when', 'who', 'how many'

2 LISTEN to the first listening. WRITE only at the second listening – the pauses give you an indication of where the answers are located. Be precise! CHECK at the third listening.

3 For sections 1, 2, 3 and 4, each answer is generally worth three marks. For section 5, answers are worth two marks each.

4 Practice listening and translating simultaneously. Last year, students struggled with the following words:

■ Assister au lever du soleil (to watch the sunrise)

■ dans les bois à la recherche de champignons (in the woods looking for mushrooms)

■ au début du siècle dernier (at the start of last century)

■ les associations caritatives (charities)

Each of these words, if missing, meant a loss of three marks.



Le journal

The style of Question 2 (optional) is informal and you are expressing an emotion. Read the instructions carefully; in 2008, the mention of "plusieurs projets" had to be developed. In 2009, the account of an argument was the focus of the diary.

Expressing shock, disbelief (use exclamation marks)

■ Je n'en reviens pas! (I can't get over it!)

■ Je ne peux pas y croire! (I can't believe it!)

■ Je suis atterré (e)! (I'm devastated!)

■ Attends que je te raconte un peu ce qui s'est passé! (Wait till I tell you what happened!)

■ Je ne suis pas près de l'oublier! (I'm not about to forget it!)

Expressing positive thoughts, towards life, parents, friends and romances

■ Je viens de gagner ... ! Youpi! (I've just won ... ! Yippee!)

■ J'ai de l'énergie à revendre! (I've got energy to burn!)

■ Je sens que ça va me plaire! (I think I am going to like it!)

■ J'ai peur de me réveiller et de découvrir que ce n'est qu'un rêve! (I'm afraid to wake up and discover it is only a dream!)

■ Je ne sais vraiment pas comment les remercier ! (I don't know how to thank them!)

■ Ça y est, les examens sont finis! (That's it, the exams are over!)

Expressing anger, against friends, parents, life in general!

■ J'en ai tellement marre! (I'm so fed up!)

■ Ça me met de mauvaise humeur! (It puts me in bad humour!)

■ Je suis tellement en colère! (I'm so angry!)

■ C'est fichu! (It's ruined!)

Expressing being fed up, sad, doubtful, bored, exhausted, sick

■ Je ne sais pas quoi faire. (I don't know what to do.)

■ Je n'ai rien à faire, je m'ennuie. (I've nothing to do, I'm bored.)

■ Je me fais vraiment du souci ! (I'm really worried!)

■ J'ai vraiment le cafard! (I'm down in the dumps!)

■ J'ai le moral à zéro! (I'm feeling really low!)

Expressing worry about money

■ Je suis complètement fauché(e)! (I'm completely broke!)

■ Je n'ai pas un sou! (I don't have a cent!)

■ Je vais être obligé(e) de demander à mes parents de me prêter un peu d'argent! (I'm going to have to ask my parents to lend me some money)

■ Je leur dois déjà 50 euros! (I already owe them €50!)

■ Je n'ai pas les moyens de me payer(I can't afford to buy ...)

■ *Question 2 (a) 2014:* "Un(e) de vos ami(e) vient de se faire tatouer. Un grand dessin, très visible! L'idée d'avoir un tatouage vous intéresse, mais vous hésitez. ... ! Quelle décision prendre? Qu'est-ce que vous notez à ce sujet dans votre journal intime?"

Key point: You are indecisive, mention the pros and the cons.

Remember: No specific layout is required for this exercise. Communication and language are worth 15 marks each. Every point given in the instructions should be taken into account. The examiner is looking for a spontaneous, natural style. Don't overuse clichés, make this exercise as personal as you can and use plenty of exclamation marks.

Sample answer
Cher journal,

J'ai passé une super journée avec Amy mais attends que je te dise ce qui s'est passé!

Elle s'est fait tatouer un énorme cœur avec le nom de Marcus, son petit copain, à l'intérieur! C'est de la folie!

Mais, par contre, moi, quand j'étais dans le salon de tatouage avec elle, j'ai feuilleté un catalogue qui montrait plein de dessins vraiment mignons; un petit papillon ou une petite étoile sur le poignet par exemple. Je crois que j'aimerais bien me faire tatouer ...

Je ne suis pas trop sûre pour te dire la vérité! C'est une décision importante parce

que c'est quelque chose qu'on va garder toute sa vie et qui risque d'avoir une influence un peu négative dans des entretiens d'embauche. Peut-être un tatouage dans la nuque serait plus raisonnable. Si mes parents savaient ça, ils me tueraient! Ils m'ont toujours dit de ne jamais me faire tatouer, sinon gare!
On verra bien, maintenant je vais aller me coucher, la nuit porte conseil!
Grace

Translation
Dear diary,

I have had a great day with Amy, but wait till I tell you what happened!

She got a tattoo of a huge heart with the name of Marcus, her boyfriend, inside it! Crazy!

But on the other hand, when I was in the tattoo parlour with her, I flicked through a catalogue which showed lots of really cute designs; a small butterfly or a little star on the wrist for instance. I think I would quite like getting a tattoo ...

I am not too sure, to tell you the truth! It is an important decision because it is something you are going to have all your life

■ **Linking ideas:** Corinne Gavenda with student Sorchha Whooley at the Institute of Education. PHOTOGRAPH: BRENDAN DUFFY

and it might have a bit of a negative influence in job interviews. Maybe a tattoo on the back of the neck would be more sensible. If my parents knew that, they would kill me. They have always said to me never to get a tattoo or else...

We'll see – now I'm off to bed, I'll sleep on it!
Grace

Questions 3 and 4

Questions 3 and 4 are about giving your opinion on any given topic. Last year Q3 asked for a discussion on either the use of the iPad in the classroom or shopping being a social activity. Q4 dealt either with the topics of banning entirely cigarettes or of equality between men and women.

Be as spontaneous and clear as you can without forgetting to structure your answer in a similar fashion to Q1.

French revision Seven top tips

1 **Work on exam papers within the exam time, one every second day.**

2 **Divide your notes into two categories:**
■ **Opinion pieces with thematic vocabulary** (these are the abstract themes you covered during the year and prepared for your interview)

■ **Informal style to cover diary, letters and fax/message (remember that only letters have a particular layout which will be graded separately.)**

3 **On a single page, set out the sentences you have chosen for both the opinion pieces and the informal texts, such as:**
■ **De nos jours, il ne fait aucun doute que....** (opinion)
■ **Vivement les vacances, je suis vraiment crevé(e)...** (familiar)
Some colloquialisms, used appropriately, will enhance your informal style but be careful not to overdo it!

4 **Scan the list of key words you have made for comprehension texts questions.**

5 **Scan the list of key sentences you have decided on for reaction / informal writing.**

6 **Listen to a French audio extract you are already familiar with.**

7 **Relax, have an early night, remember that the work you have done for the oral will be of use again.**

How I Got My AI

■ **Edwina Hilton, French, the Institute of Education**



The most important advice I could possibly give to any student facing the Leaving Cert French higher level paper in June would be to immerse yourself in the language as much as is possible between now and then.

I attribute my grade primarily to all the extra work I did outside of class time and homework. French is a living language and one is not going to improve by simply devouring class notes.

The French exam is different in that literally any topic could come up across the part of the paper, from particular subjects and vocabulary in the listening comprehension, to the titles of the own-opinion questions. Therefore it is imperative that you have a good and confident command of the language so that you are able to think on your own feet if surprised with a question on the day, in either the oral or aural and written exam. This will not only enable you to understand the questions being asked and show

off what you have learned, but it will also give your work an individual and original dynamic that is vital in order to achieve the top grade.

The Leaving Cert year is tough in terms of time management and the idea of going outside what is required of you can appear daunting and overwhelming. However, simply watching French movies as a form of relaxation during study breaks, listening to French music or reading a book when travelling can dramatically improve your linguistic skills and fluency. Even if you find it difficult to understand, it is far from a waste of time!

In terms of literature, I started out with simple children's books moving to well-known translations I had already read in the English language. I also had the opportunity to converse weekly on a one-to-one basis. Constant oral practice is key to securing the A-grade in the oral and even doing this with a friend is a great habit to get into! If this resource is not available to you, reading your notes aloud can help as well as recording yourself and playing it back whenever you have a chance.

“ simply watching French movies, listening to French music or reading a book can dramatically improve your linguistic skills and fluency

The exam Top tips and common errors

DOs
■ Read each question twice and highlight the key words.

Answer in the spaces provided; if given line A and line B, make sure to use both. Check that you are working in the right section of the text and read over your quotes for possible spelling errors.

■ Clarify the tenses you need for each of the written exercises.

■ Make a simple plan, consisting of an introduction, development and conclusion before you start writing. Avoid writing in pencil and using Tippex. Remember also that rewriting answers wastes time.

■ Familiarise yourself with the questions first in the aural test and avoid writing during the first listening. The second listening provides the necessary breaks for accurate answers and the third will allow you to recheck. Always re-read your answer and ask yourself: Am I clear? Does this make sense?

■ As with the oral, examiners are looking for relevance, spontaneity and natural flow in your writing. It is crucial, therefore, that you carefully read each of the questions and give your personal opinion.

■ All questions in English must be answered in English. All questions in French must be answered in French.

■ Reading over what you have written is essential. Keep in mind that it is better to write

simply than to use indiscriminately everything you have learned.

■ On the written paper, take the time to read the questions properly. For instance, in the comprehension if the question states: "En quels mois..." – the 's' at the end of "quels" means you are looking for more than one month.

■ In the reaction pieces, a document on the Gathering is not a discussion on tourism only.

DON'Ts
■ The most common errors are due to carelessness and students wanting to do more than the required number of exercises and in turn rushing them.

■ Too little time is spent reading over what has been written. Proper time management should leave you with 5-10 minutes to spare to check tenses and endings of verbs, agreements of nouns and adjectives, and general coherence.

■ Don't learn chunks of text by heart. You'll be tempted to use them and, in doing so, will not answer the specific question.

■ Don't copy any part of the comprehension texts to use in your reaction pieces.

■ Don't keep writing without frequently checking the time. Writing too much may mean you are repeating yourself or drifting off the point.

Achtung!



Orla Ní Shuilleabháin

Attention to detail in all sections of the paper, and staying relevant at all times to the task required, is key to achieving the top grade

German is spoken by nearly 120 million people worldwide and is the most widely spoken native language in Europe. It is the second most widely used native language within science and opens the door to low-cost third-level studies in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Many jobs vacancies are currently available in Ireland for students with German; it is the language of Goethe, Schiller Boll and Brecht; and it will no doubt lead to greater career opportunities for you in the years to come.

It is an invaluable subject to study and accessible to all levels. The German paper is a fair paper which, with proper preparation, gives scope to students at all levels to achieve their maximum potential. It tests the student's proficiency in the language, as well as their skills in answering technique. Attention to detail in all sections of the paper, and staying relevant at all times to the task required, is key to achieving the top grade. Timing is a critical factor on the higher paper for all students hoping to achieve a high mark.

Reading Comprehension

Key points to note to get the top grade in this section:

- Give as many points as possible when answering questions where the amount of detail is not specified.
- Use the key language in the text to formulate your own sentence/ answer.
- Answer in the specific language asked.
- Answer in German if you do not understand how to answer in English.
- Work through lines given, marking off each separate point.
- Practise and study previous past comprehensions – it will pay dividends.
- Practice makes perfect – it is a skills-based test!

This section is of vital importance for all candidates as it carries most marks. At higher level, there are two main reading comprehensions: one literary comprehension (a passage or an extract from a German novel or short story) and one journalistic comprehension (from a newspaper or magazine). Allow yourself at least 75 minutes to complete this section.

Four questions follow each comprehension, some in German and some in English. It is important to answer the question in the language it has been asked, ie if asked

in German, answer in German. If answered in the language not specified, you are awarded only half of the allocated marks.

Try to be as accurate as possible and use the language in the text to help you structure your own sentence. Remember that your comprehension is being tested here, but marks are also deducted for grammatical errors that affect the meaning in the original answer.

Direct quotation without manipulation of the language where required or adding of extraneous material will result in half marks or none. There is no need to give full sentences. The essential requirement is to extract the appropriate answer and manipulate the language where necessary, ie change it from first-person to third-person (*Ich bin gegangen* becomes *Er ist gegangen*).

Line references are given in each question, and these will help you to narrow down where your answer can be found. Read the questions carefully before you start to read the comprehension. Underline what you are being asked for in each question. Highlight the areas where your answers can be found.

Question 4 on the higher-level paper, the final question on the first comprehension, can carry 15 marks, and it is always answered in English. It requires you to review the whole passage, as no lines are given, and to look at the structure and content of the passage, ie how the passage has been written. The question may also sometimes include the author's use of language. No marks are awarded for German quotation unless translated into English. Great care is required here.

Lack of detail often results in the biggest loss of marks for students in the comprehension section. Questions do not always specify the amount of detail required – the reason why many students lost a lot of marks on last year's paper. Be careful with any questions that instruct you to give details. Give as many as you can.

Grammar Section

Key points to note to get the top grade in this section:

- Learn modal verbs/basic present tense
- Learn basic der/die/das table and prepositions
- Practise verbs in different tenses
- Look over relative pronoun table
- Practise how to ask questions
- Learn basic word order rules
- Study all past papers over the past 14 years (similar tasks are repeated over the years)
- Familiarise yourself with different grammatical terms in German

Following Text I or II, this section tests the student's ability to recognise and to apply grammatical structures. Both question 1 and 2 are based on the reading text given on the paper. This ensures that the candidate is already familiar with the content and relevant vocabulary and should now be able to identify and manipulate the structures.

Here is a range of areas that have appeared over the past 10 years:

- Label nouns in different cases
- Form questions to answers specified
- Fill in the correct modal verb
- Label verbs in different tenses
- Fill in correct adjectival endings
- Put verbs into the imperfect/present tense
- Label/fill in relative pronouns
- Label pronouns

Written Section

It is impossible to predict the topics that may appear in this section, and it is a big mistake to learn off material on certain topics as you will most likely not get the opportunity to use it. In this situation, it is more tempting to write down what you have learnt and ignore the question. This will result in huge loss of marks.

All of the written section is content-controlled – you get marks only for answering what you are asked. Keep it simple, relevant and brainstorm ideas in German. Make sure to always write more points than required as you are more likely to score a higher content grade. Some written sections reflect topics covered in the oral material so make sure to revise all oral material before your written exam.

Task 1: Written expression

Each reading comprehension is followed by a short written exercise – of about 100 words – related to the theme(s) explored in the passage. You are required to choose one of two tasks. An understanding of the comprehension passage is required to do task (a) but not to do task (b). As such, if you found the comprehension difficult to understand fully, consider doing task (b). Task (b), although related to the theme explored in the comprehension passage, provides a new stimulus (set of instructions, possibly accompanied by a picture) to which you have to react. Usually you have to deal with a number of points, which will be indicated in the question.

Keys points to note to get the top mark in this written section

- 13 marks are awarded for content, ie covering each of the tasks required.
- 12 marks are awarded for expression: vocabulary, spelling, grammar, sentence structure, and word order. Points are deducted for grammatical errors.
- It is important not to wander off the point. Keep your language simple, accurate and cover all points mentioned. When writing, refer back repeatedly to the original question/set of instructions.
- Be careful: If the content is not there, the marks cannot be awarded and your expression mark will also be affected.

Useful phrases for the Äußerung zum Thema

Erstens	Firstly
Ich habe den Eindruck, dass	I have the impression that
Ich halte es für wichtig, dass	I think / believe that
Meiner Meinung nach	In my opinion
Jeder weiß, dass	Everybody knows that
Was ____ betrifft/ angeht	As far as ____ is concerned
Ich muss zugeben, dass	I must admit that
Schließlich	Finally
Zum Schluss	To conclude

Marks and timing

Below is the breakdown of marks awarded to each section and a guide to timing for each section during the exam.

HIGHER LEVEL

Comprehension 1 – 60 marks / 15 per cent / 40 mins
Comprehension 2 – 60 marks / 15 per cent / 35 mins
Angewandte Grammatik – 25 marks / 6.25 per cent / 15 mins
Äußerung zum Thema – 25 marks / 6.25 per cent / 20 mins
Schriftliche Produktion – 50 marks / 12.5 per cent / 30 mins

ORDINARY LEVEL

Comprehension 1 – 60 marks / 15 per cent / 35 mins
Comprehension 2 – 60 marks / 15 per cent / 30 mins
Comprehension 3 – 40 marks / 10 per cent / 25 mins
Angewandte Grammatik – 15 marks / 3.75 per cent / 10 mins
Äußerung zum Thema – 15 marks / 3.75 per cent / 15 mins
Schriftliche Produktion – 30 marks / 7.50 per cent / 25 mins

■ **Berlin: German is the second most widely used native language within science and opens the door to low-cost third-level studies in Germany, Austria and Switzerland**

Task 2: Letter or Short Essay

This last section requires you to produce a longer piece of writing. There will again be a choice of two tasks. Both tasks should be of 160 words in length.

Key points to note to get top marks in the written section

- Always answer what you are asked.
- Prepare a few suitable opening and closings.
- Have some phrases learnt to help you express your points.
- Choose which conjunctions you are going to use/and the necessary word order.
- Be familiar with basic present tense, perfect and modals.
- Reread over all your oral notes in the weeks coming up to the exam.
- Have some nice phrases be able to express your opinion /preference.

This section carries 50 marks and will take 30-35 minutes to complete. Marks are divided equally between content and expression 25/25.

Letter

It is important to learn some suitable opening phrases as they will help you to get started and get the all-important first few words on the page. Here are a few examples:



■ *Lieber Paul / Liebe Paula*
■ *Ziemlich lange ist es schon her, seit ich dir das letzte Mal geschrieben habe. Seitdem ist auch sehr viel passiert.*
■ *Vielen Dank für deinen Brief. Es war wirklich nett von dir, dass du dir mein Netzwerk so viel Mühe gegeben hast. Ich weiß es zu schätzen, Herzlichen dank auch für die Glückwünsche.*
■ *Schönen Dank für deinen Brief, der letzte Woche ankam. Es tut mir leid, dass ich nicht eher darauf geantwortet habe, aber ich hatte so viel für die Schule zu lernen, dass ich nicht dazu gekommen bin.*

In the letter, it is important to choose the correct form of register. One would mostly use *du* when the person is familiar/singular; *ihr* is used when writing to more than one person/familiar.

Essay

You may be asked to produce a detailed written response to a picture or cartoon. It will provide a set of instructions for writing a continuous piece of German (which must not be in the form of a letter).

Answer all points mentioned or questions asked in the stimulus material. Assume all points are generally of equal importance, but remember that there may be slightly more marks for some than others.

You need to be careful with your forms of expression; pay attention to your verb endings, tenses, word order, relative pronouns, pronouns, agreements, capital letters, punctuation and appropriate idiomatic use of phrases and vocabulary.

The short essay may require you to give your opinion on certain issue/topics. Prepare a number of main topics before the exam – some of the themes in the picture sequences for the oral are worth studying. Schule; das deutsche Schulsystem; Jugend; Arbeit; Umwelt; Aufenthalt in Deutschland; Spracherlernen; Reisen; Schüleraustausch; Feste; Gesundheit Wirtschaft. They may occur in some form throughout the written paper.

Learn key phrases and the main vocabulary associated with your chosen topics to prepare yourself for writing about them on the spot in the exam.

Useful phrases to add panache to your letter

Ich hätte Angebot A am allerliebsten	I would prefer offer A best of all
Würdest du mir bitte einen Gefallen tun?	Would you do me a favour?
Angebot B würde mir am allerwenigsten gefallen	Offer B is my least favourite
Der große Nachteil / Vorteil ist, dass	The biggest disadvantage/advantage is
Wenn nichts schief geht	If nothing goes wrong
Was hältst du von meinem Plan?	What do you think of my plan?
Wie schon erwähnt	As already mentioned
Das kommt nicht in Frage	That is not an option
Im Bezug auf den Zeitraum	As regards the time frame
Also wie du sehen kannst, bin ich von Angebot B sehr begeistert	I am very enthusiastic about offer B
Das einzige, was mir nicht gefällt ist, dass	The only thing that I do not like is
Das Beste daran ist, dass	The best thing about it is
Meine Entscheidung hängt von meinen Noten/ Ergebnissen ab	My decision depends on my results
Nach langem überlegen habe ich mich für-----entschieden	After long consideration I have decided to
Der Grund dafür ist	The reason for this is
Das ist eine Menge wert	That is of great value
Ich muss ehrlich sagen, dass ----- mir gar nicht gefällt	To be honest I do not like----- at all
Schönen Dank mal für deine Hilfe	Many thanks for your help
Ich würde es ohne dich nicht schaffen	I would not manage without you
So, jetzt mache ich Schluss	I will finish now
Schreib mir, wenn du was für mich findest	Write if you find something for me
Ich hoffe, dass ich deine Fragen einigermaßen beantwortet habe	I hope I answered your questions to some extent
Ich melde mich in ein paar Wochen wieder. Bis dann mach's gut	I will be in touch in a few weeks until then take care
Schreib bald wieder, wenn du Zeit hast	Write when you have time
Schönen Dank nochmals für alles	Again, many thanks
Lass bald von dir hören	Hope to hear from you soon
Dein / Deine	Your
Grüß deine Eltern von mir	Greetings to your parents

Short essay Tips, guidelines and vocabulary

1 **Stichwörter (indicators) are guidelines around which you should construct your answer. Answer/Respond in detail to all the Stichwörter provided on the page.**

2 **Marks are awarded only for proper answers containing information relating directly to the question.**

3 **Additional marks will be awarded for elaboration on each of these relevant points. It is better to err on the side of providing too many points of information/elaboration, rather than too few.**

4 **Remember to remain within the 30 minutes you allot yourself for this task.**

5 **No extra marks will be given for complex structures with mistakes or grammatical errors, so – above all – make sure of the basics.**

To the right is some useful vocabulary to use when reacting to visual material.

Dieses Bild / Diese Statistik zeigt, dass	This picture/statistic shows that
Es scheint, dass dieser Prozentsatz steigt / sinkt	It seems that this percentage is rising/decreasing
Für mich ist das wichtigste / interessanteste, dass	For me the most important thing is
Im Vergleich mit / Vergleichen mit	In comparison with
Das Bild stellt.....dar	This picture portrays
In diesem Bild handelt es sich darum, dass	In this picture it is about
Man vermutet , dass	One assumes that
Es handelt sich um / Es geht um	It is about/dealing with
Auf dem linken/ rechten Bild sieht man ,dass	On the left/right picture one can see
Natürlich könnte das Bild auch etwas anders zeigen	Of course the picture could be saying something else
Man gewinnt den Eindruck ,dass	One gets the impression that
Es scheint mir, als ob	It seems to me as if
Von mir aus	As far as I'm concerned
Wie ich es sehe	As I see it
Dieses Bild schildert	This picture portrays
Ein Junge /ein Mädchen wird dargestellt . Zwei Jungen werden geschildert	Is/ are portrayed /depicted
Der Junge sieht deprimiert aus / Die Jungen sehen sehr froh aus	The boy looks depressed/ the boys look happy



GERMAN ORAL PREPARATION COURSE

Saturday, 7 March 2015

Learn from and practice with Orla Ní Shuilleabháin, author of this supplement, who will be teaching on our Leaving Cert 2015 German Oral Preparation Course.

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German Oral exam

An invitation to converse

Orla Ní Shúilleabháin

Make sure to talk, expand and show the examiner the structures, vocabulary and phrases you know

The secret to the oral exam is in your preparation. Examiners say that students who prepare well perform very well in each section.

Candidates who treat each question as an "invitation to converse" with the examiner perform best in the general questions. Don't be overcautious or hold back when answering. You are reducing your chances of obtaining the best grade possible.

Remember: you are rewarded marks for everything you say that is relevant to the question. It is your job to expand on the examiner's questions and to show your enthusiasm.

Avoid reproducing learnt off material, as students can lose a lot of marks on pronunciation and communication when concentrating too hard on recalling the information. Repetition and practice of different questions will help you add fluency to your answer.

Make sure to talk, expand and show the examiner the structures, vocabulary and phrases you know.

The entire oral exam is carried out in the polite form (Sie) and you should only use this form with the examiner.

Section 1 – General conversation

There are seven main topic areas to prepare for this section – each topic should be prepared in detail, as it is easy to anticipate the type of questions asked.

The past tense (Perfekt) is guaranteed to be tested during the general conversation, eg *Waren Sie schon in Deutschland? Was haben Sie letzten Sommer/letztes Wochenende gemacht? Was haben Sie in den Osterferien gemacht?*

Below are two sample answers for oral topics.

Sport

Ich bin Feuer und Flamme für Sport und bin von Hockey und Camogie sehr begeistert. (enthusiastic) Ich war Mitglied der Schulmannschaft und musste mindestens zweimal in der Woche zum Training gehen. Wir haben an Hockeeturnieren teilgenommen und haben einmal in der Woche ein Freundschaftsspiel gegen andere Schulen gespielt. Obendrein haben wir Spiele in der Schulliga und in der Schulpokalmannschaft gehabt.

Hockey war für mich eine Art Leistungssport, Camogie spiele ich hauptsächlich zum Spaß. Wie Sie sehen können, ist Sport offenbar sehr wichtig für mich. Man bleibt dadurch fit und außerdem gefällt mir das Teamgefühl beim Spielen sehr. Es ist nicht zu leugnen, dass Sport ein guttural Ausgleich zum Schulstress ist. Meiner Meinung nach ist Sport das A und O des Lebens.

Das Abitur und Lernen

Dieses Jahr ist wie im Fluge vergangen. (this year has flown) Das Abitur steht kurz vor der Tür. Ich muss mich aufs Lernen konzentrieren und muss mich täglich anstrengen (make an effort) um gute Noten zu bekommen! Ich lerne rund um die Uhr, tagaus, tagein (day in, day out) Das ist die reinste Hölle! Ich brauche dringend einen Tapetenwechsel! (change of scene)

Meine Freizeit fehlt mir. Ich wünschte, ich hätte mehr Zeit für mich selbst. Ich kann es kaum erwarten, bis die Schule vorbei ist und die Prüfungen hinter mir zu haben



Marks and timing

Total: 100 marks – 25 per cent

Section 1 – General conversation

40 marks / 10 per cent / 4–5 mins

Section 2 – Project/picture sequences

30 marks / 7.5 per cent / XX mins

Section 3 – Role play

30 Marks / 7.5 per cent / XX mins

Leaving Cert German Extra marks, common errors and helpful websites

How to get those extra marks

- Marks are awarded in the written section to students who answer what is being asked. This was obvious when viewing scripts last year.
- Students scored very high points if they stayed relevant to the task.
- Students who did not give enough detail in comprehension questions in both reading and listening lost many marks – especially where the amount of detail needed was not specified.
- The examiner is looking for accuracy in word order, verb declension and basic use of cases.
- Extra marks are awarded for good use of idiomatic phrases and nice structures in the written section.
- The comprehension will make or break your exam! Students who practise comprehensions on a regular basis build up their skills and gain high marks.
- If the question does not specify the amount of detail required or the number of points needed, it is wise to assume that at least three main points are needed. If there are more to give, then give more!

Common errors

- It is a shame to lose marks for carelessness in word order and basic tenses.

- Avoid the temptation to rote learn for the written section, as you will have little or no opportunity to use it.
- Focus instead on learning how to write simple and accurate structures, in a relevant manner and to respond naturally to the question asked.
- It is very important not to wander off the point.
- Do not lift chunks of language out of the comprehensions to answer questions or for the written section. You will get no marks for this!

Helpful websites

- german.about.com
- The German Language section of About.com is a brilliant learning resource and contains information on everything from the grammatical foundations of German to articles on contemporary German culture, as well as quizzes and games in the language itself. I recommend signing up for the weekly newsletter to your email and adding this extra dimension to your study.

Online German radio

Sometimes you just don't feel like studying a language in the traditional way. Perhaps the last thing you want to do is take out a book and repeat

new vocabulary over and over again. Putting on some German language radio as ambient background noise can be the perfect compromise

- dradio.de
- ard.de/radio
- ndr.de
- mdr.de

German language newspapers and magazines

- It is becoming increasingly important to use online and print media to expand your vocabulary and improve your German comprehension beyond that which you learn in the classroom.
- welt.de
- zeit.de
- faz.net
- sueddeutsche.de
- zeitong.de

How I Got My A1

■ Eleanor O'Riordan – German, the Institute of Education

Languages are all about immersion. The more vocabulary you can cram into your head, the better the exam will go.

Although practising exam technique is a crucial part of German, it's tough to get the motivation sometimes to complete endless comprehensions and letters. It's really easy to underestimate the aural exam, but it's worth 20 per cent of your overall mark and could be the deciding factor of your final grade. You need to practise aural at least once a week, and try to write down as much information as possible for each question, and get as comfortable with the sometimes difficult to interpret accents that are used in the tapes.

Speaking your oral vocabulary out loud is also an essential technique before your oral exam. Your marks will rise considerably the better you know your oral material, as topics that are common in the oral also often appear in the written and aural exams, especially in the short note and letter.

What really made the difference for me was downloading my favourite books in German

The past and conditional tenses are really important topics, they are difficult to get to grips with, but if you can show a good grasp of them, you'll impress the examiner and increase those all-important expression marks. If you can arrange practice orals in your school, even just among your fellow students, you'll become much more comfortable with speaking the language.

What really made the difference for me was downloading my favourite books in German. I got both the print version and the audiobook, and I would listen and follow along with the text. This really helped with several parts of the exam. Listening to the tape helped with extracting the meaning of large passages for the aural and helped improve my pronunciation for the oral.

Reading the text shows you how to write realistically in German and also helps with the difficult vocabulary and grammar used in the first comprehension on the paper.

The main thing is to become as familiar as you can with the format of the paper and work out how much time is available to complete each section of the paper, and as a last piece of advice, ALWAYS refer to your oral examiner in the polite form and rehearse any greeting you will give them – a confident start will both impress them and calm your nerves before the real questions start. I wish you all of you the best of luck with your Leaving Cert German examination and into the future!

The examiner will assess (1) your ability

Spanish Oral exam

Spanish steps to success



Begonia de la Fuente

To perform well in the oral, it is important to be prepared. This will also help you to remain calm and confident

Congratulations on choosing Spanish! You have chosen to learn the world's second most spoken language, one which is used by more than 500 million people and is second only to English as a language for international communication. Spanish is the third most prevalent language on the internet, social networks and on the official websites of international organisations.

In these pages we are going to focus on a number of different sections of the Leaving Cert higher-level Spanish exam. You will find useful advice on how to develop the skills you need to reach your full potential in each of these sections. Remember, it is important to cover the entire syllabus in your preparation for the exam . . . ¡Buena suerte!

Oral examination

The 2015 Leaving Cert Spanish oral exams will take place from April 13th to 24th, 2015. The exam lasts about 15 minutes and consists of two parts: general conversation (70 marks) and role play (30 marks; 3–4 minutes).

According to the last report from the chief examiner, the three principal reasons students lost marks in the Spanish oral exam were:

- 1) Insufficient vocabulary
- 2) Lack of ability to structure sentences
- 3) Over-reliance on memorised material

To perform well in the oral exam, therefore, it is important that you are well prepared. This will also help you to remain calm and confident.

General conversation

This lasts a minimum of 10 minutes. You will be asked questions on topics such as:

- Family
- School
- Daily routine
- Your birthday
- Pastimes
- What you did last summer
- Plans for the future
- Trips
- Exchanges to Spain
- Cultural differences between Ireland and Spain

The examiner will assess (1) your ability

to understand and respond to questions, (2) your pronunciation and fluency, (3) your range of vocabulary, and (4) your grammatical accuracy.

Prepare sample answers related to the topics listed earlier. Get your teacher to read the answers to ensure there are no mistakes. Don't learn them off by heart, just make sure you have enough material ready for the day of the exam.

Know your grammar well: use a variety of verbs, in the present, past, future and conditional, and appropriate vocabulary for each response. (If you want to get those extra marks you should also be familiar with the subjunctive.)

Prepare enough material to be able to expand on the answers. Don't let the examiner do all the work.

For example, if the examiner asks you: ¿Qué hiciste el verano pasado? Mention what you thought of the place, the experiences you had, etc. Here is an example:

El verano pasado fui a Mallorca con unos amigos. Pasamos allí una semana. Nos alojamos en un apartamento justo al lado de la playa.

Hacíamos las cosas típicas de las vacaciones. Por la mañana desayunábamos en la terraza del apartamento, luego íbamos a la playa, tomábamos el sol y nos bañábamos en el mar. Bueno, un día no pudimos bañarnos porque había bandera roja, pero ese fue el único día que no nos metimos en el agua.

A mediodía volvíamos al apartamento a comer y por la tarde dormíamos la siesta. Hacía las cinco o las seis bajábamos a la piscina de la urbanización donde estaba el apartamento y pasábamos toda la tarde charlando con un grupo de chicos españoles que conocimos allí.

Por la noche íbamos de tapas o cenábamos en un restaurante italiano que estaba muy cerca del apartamento.

Fueron unas vacaciones estupendas. Lo pasamos fenomenal y aprendimos un montón de español. ¡Estoy deseando que



How to get those extra marks

If you have not visited Spain, make an extra effort to learn about Spanish culture and traditions – immerse yourself at every opportunity

Become familiar with idiomatic expressions and try to use them in the oral and written exam

In the oral exam, be willing to expand on the questions the examiner asks you

The best way to get an A1 is through diligence and preparation. The time you devote to studying and being proactive in your pursuit of the language will result in you being more confident and at ease on the day of the exam

Practise with friends or family any time you have a chance. If you have any Spanish-speaking friends, ask them to record the role plays for you and listen to them as often as you can.

Try to predict the open questions you could be asked after each role play and prepare answers.

During the oral exam

- Relax – the examiner is on your side.
- Keep eye contact and respond with spontaneity to the examiner.
- It's all about communication. Smile and try to make it interesting for the examiner.
- Avoid conversation killers: Sí and No answers close down potential avenues of conversation and give the impression you are not well prepared.
- Elaborate on topics introduced by the examiner at every opportunity.
- If you make a mistake, don't panic: correct it during the course of the conversation and you are less likely to be penalised.
- If you are having difficulty with a topic or don't have much to say, steer the conversation towards something you feel more confident about.

At a glance Leaving Cert Spanish

■ **Oral exam**
100 marks
(25 per cent)

■ **Listening comprehension**
80 marks
(20 per cent)

■ **Reading comprehension and written production**
220 marks
(55 per cent)

Section A

70 marks, 50 mins
■ Question 1 (50 marks, 35 mins)
Either (a) prescribed literature (Sin noticias de Gurb) or (b) journalistic text
■ Question 2 (20 marks, 15 mins)
Two short comprehensions.

Section B

100 marks, 60 mins
■ Comprehension (50 marks, 40 mins)
■ Opinion (50 marks, 20 mins)

Section C

50 marks, 40 mins
■ Question 1 (30 marks, 20 mins)
Either (a) dialogue construction or (b) letter writing.
■ Question 2 (20 marks, 20 mins)
Either (a) diary entry or (b) note

Spanish Written exam and aural

Immerse yourself

Begoña de la Fuente

Strong vocabulary and sentence structure are vital to attain a good mark in Leaving Cert Spanish

Listening comprehension

Build up your vocabulary. Go through the transcripts of previous exams and assemble together expressions that have come up in previous years and learn them.

In particular, familiarise yourself with the specialist vocabulary relating to the weather forecast. Here are some examples:

previsión	forecast
cielos poco nubosos	cloudy skies
cielos despejados	clear skies
lluvia	drizzle
lluvias débiles	light rain
chubascos	heavy showers
de componente este	easterly
sur	south
norte	north
oeste	west
noreste	northeast
nor oeste	northwest
suroeste	southeast
soleado	southwest
rachas	sunny
el litoral	gusts
empeorar	the coast
mejorar	to get worse
soplar	to get better
permanecer	to blow
oscilar	to remain
a lo largo del día	to vary throughout the day

Get the transcriptions of the audio from past exams and read them aloud, especially numbers and key words related to the weather forecast (*niebla, nieve, noreste, noroeste*). This will help you to identify them better when you hear them.

Do as many listening comprehensions from previous years as you can. You will find them (and the marking schemes) at examinations.com. Watch Spanish films or television series and listen to Spanish music and radio. Many newspapers and magazine websites now contain multimedia elements that can be useful.

During the exam

- Read through the questions and find out exactly what information you have to look for. Attention to detail is crucial in this part of the exam.
- Even if it is tempting to start writing as soon as you hear the audio, it is better that during the first hearing you just listen and concentrate fully on the context. If you start writing straight away you may miss important information. Start writing your answers after the second hearing of the audio extract.
- Listen carefully and pay attention to details. You will lose marks if you omit information.
- Always double-check your answers. You may change your mind about some of the things you wrote.

Reading comprehension

Before you start reading the articles in this section, always read the questions first. This will help you identify the information you have to find.

Before you start writing your answers, make sure you know if you need to answer in English or Spanish.

Questions in English

When you are asked to explain in English the meaning of sentences from the article, try not to translate word for word because you could lose the meaning altogether. You will lose marks if the answer does not make sense in English. Don't worry if you need to use more sentences than the one taken from the text.

In Question 4 of section B you are asked to give some information as a partial summary of the content of the article. The main mistake people make here is to fall short and not provide enough information. If no instruction is provided as to how many details you need to include, write as many main points as you can, with a minimum of three.

Questions in Spanish

Giving the exact number of words is crucial to answer questions where you are asked to find equivalent phrases from the text. Marks are often lost for writing too many words.

If you don't know the answer in these type of questions, you can try to figure it out. Here are some tips to help:

- Use your knowledge of grammar. For example, if the verb of the phrase you are given is in the infinitive, chances are that the one you have to find in the text will also be in the infinitive.
- Find similarities between Spanish and English words (if you have to guess what *audaz* means, knowing the English word audacity will help). But be careful with "false friends" (remember for example that *atender* does not mean to attend).

- Find similarities with other Spanish words that you know (you can guess what *tristeza* means because you know *triste*).

Here are some examples of the phrases that came up in 2014:

Phrase provided	Answer
un índice de desempleo	una tasa de paro
existen numerosas formas	hay muchas maneras
ahorrar	guardar

In Section A1(b), the journalistic text, Question 4, you are asked to explain in Spanish the meaning of a phrase taken from the article. The best way of preparing for this question is to do plenty of work with synonyms.

When you learn a word or expression in Spanish try to look for other ones with the same meaning. You should try to replace as many words as possible in the sentence.

This question is worth six marks so it pays to make an effort preparing well for it.

Here are some examples from previous years:

Phrases provided	Possible answers
En principio...	A primera vista...
...métodos convencionales...	...maneras tradicionales...
...hace descuentos a estudiantes...	...ofrece precios rebajados a personas que están en el colegio o la universidad
...adaptarse a los nuevos tiempos...	...modernizarse...
...un avión procedente de...	...un vuelo proveniente de...

Written production

Opinion piece

In Question 5 of section B, also known as the link question, you can choose between two topics related to the article and you have to express your personal opinions about those statements.

You will be marked on the coherence, relevance and accuracy of your writing. The marks will be allocated as follows:

Content – 25 marks
Language – 25 marks

According to the marking scheme, to get full marks your piece should have:

Content/Communication

- High level of coherence
- Clear argumentation
- Communicative intention fulfilled
- Little or no irrelevant material

Language

- Idiomatic Spanish
- Good level of vocabulary
- Few grammatical/spelling mistakes
- Correct usage of tenses

Remember: if no marks are awarded for content, no marks will be awarded for language.

Before you start writing, read the statement carefully and make sure you understand what it means. What is your opinion about it? Plan your response well. Note down the main points of your argument (you can make a mind map) and try to organise them in a coherent way. Look for the best way to structure your ideas. Then attempt to express your opinion using your own words.

It is best to write about the topic from a personal point of view. Normally candidates would argue in favour or against the statement, but you can also include ideas that justify both sides of the argument. Make it personal, original and, if possible, entertaining and engaging.

You must prepare in advance material about different topics, but bear in mind that you can't use the statement as an excuse to write an essay that you had already prepared. You will not gain marks if you write a brilliant essay on the wrong topic or if you use sentences that are learned off and obviously out of place.

Structure is important in the opinion



Eight common errors

- 1 Insufficient vocabulary and lack of ability to structure sentences
- 2 Over-reliance on memorised material
- 3 Uses of the verbs ser, estar and gustar
- 4 Nonagreement of adjectives and nouns
- 5 Answering questions that were not asked or providing answers that are not logical
- 6 Incorrect use of verb tenses
- 7 Not using the subjunctive when required
- 8 Lack of attention to detail when answering the questions in the reading and listening comprehensions

■ **Spanish is the second most spoken language, one which is used by more than 500 million people and is second only to English as a language for international communication.**

piece. You can start the first paragraph with a sentence like *Estoy de acuerdo con esta afirmación* or *No estoy de acuerdo con esta afirmación*, and explain briefly your reasons.

You should include three or four key ideas and dedicate one separate paragraph for each one of them. Leave the last paragraph for the conclusion.

You can go back to the article to look for useful vocabulary but remember that you can't lift whole sentences. You will not gain marks by doing that because the aim is that you express your own ideas.

Recheck!

When you finish writing go over the text with the following points in mind:

- Do same words appear too many times? If so, could you replace them with other words with similar meanings?
- Have you used expressions that are direct translations from English but don't sound right in Spanish? Could you find out some idiomatic Spanish expressions that you could use instead?
- Are nouns, adjectives and articles in the

Online resources

Practice your Spanish

- You will find past examinations papers, audios for the listening comprehension, marking schemes and chief examinations reports at examinations.ie
- practicaespanol.com
- videoele.com
- bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/spanish/
- notesinspanish.com
- marcaespana.es/es/educacion-cultura-sociedad/fiestas-y-tradiciones/
- spain.info/es/informacion-practica/consejos-viaje/

Watch Spanish TV, read the papers and watch short videos

- rtve.es
- cadenaser.com
- el-pais.com/elpais/videos.html
- 20minutos.tv
- diezminutos.es

Learn about Spanish culture and traditions

Expert tips Spanish revision and the exam

Revision

- Good preparation for the oral examinations will also help you with the written examination in June.

- Take any opportunity to practice your Spanish with your classmates, your teacher or your friends.

- Build up your vocabulary by learning some new words every day. Get together with a classmate and have a competition to see who has learnt the most words at the end of the week.

- Regular practice is vital.

When learning a language you can't leave everything until the last moment. Even if you know the rules well your brain needs time to assimilate them.

- Get used to thinking about the pros and cons of different topics.

- Use the articles from past papers to build vocabulary and increase your language awareness: observe how the different tenses are used.

- Read in Spanish about the same topics that you enjoy reading in English: sport,

espero que no creo que ojalá que

If you have used any "if clauses", check that the verbs are in the correct form. For example:

- Si + present indicative + future. (*Si todos ponemos nuestro granito de arena, el problema se solucionará*)
- Si + imperfect subjunctive + conditional. (*Si todos pusieramos nuestro granito de arena, el problema se solucionaría*)

But remember, it is never correct to use Si + present subjunctive.

Example of an opinion piece

No hacemos suficiente para proteger el medio ambiente.

Estoy completamente de acuerdo con esta afirmación. A pesar de que nuestro planeta se encuentra seriamente amenazado por el cambio climático yo no veo que a la gente que me rodea le preocupe mucho.

How I got my A1

■ Erika Cooper – Spanish

When studying any language, consistency over a long period of time is key. Last-minute cramming may have its place but it probably won't save you and the stress isn't worth it. That said, it's never too late to start putting more work in. You can still make up for lost time with quality study time and I'm going to suggest a few ways that you can do it.

If you want to rise above the ordinary, it is essential that you can rely on a basic knowledge of Spanish as a given. You cannot afford to make straightforward grammatical mistakes as that is what may ultimately separate the A from the B student. So make sure you are confident about the fundamentals of the language.

A strong vocabulary is also vital as it both enriches your written work and gives you a better chance of understanding the text in the exam paper. I found that learning a few new words a day, ideally along with a synonym in each case, and noting them in a dedicated notebook was a doable approach to expanding my vocabulary. Tackling words daily makes the process less daunting.

Know the format of the exam papers inside out and do as many



of them as you can. While practising past papers, I highlighted words and phrases I didn't understand; however, I only looked them up after I had tried to answer the questions in order to best replicate exam conditions. There will always be words you don't understand in a paper: it's how you cope with this situation that matters, and you improve your chances by experiencing the sort of conditions you could encounter on exam day.

When finally it comes to doing the real written exam, stick to

I learned a few new words a day, along with a synonym in each case, and noted them in a dedicated notebook

what you are asked: while writing my opinion piece, I constantly reread the question to ensure that I was not going off track in my answer (this applies to all aspects of the exam).

With regard to the oral test, practice is crucial: talk aloud to yourself or to a friend – the more you speak, the more comfortable you will be. The key is to be as natural as possible: avoid learning passages off by heart so that you don't risk a "trigger" word from the examiner setting you off in the wrong direction, losing marks in communication. While this sounds challenging, the focus is not to have perfect, complex Spanish but rather clear coherent language and engagement with the examiner. Remember also that you are in control of your response so try to steer it towards your interests, as long as it is relevant to the questions asked.

Finally, for the aural, I thoroughly studied the weather vocabulary as this comes up every year and is an opportunity to get (almost) guaranteed marks.

Train your ear to familiarise yourself with different paces, intonation and accents by watching films, TV series or other sources, including audio. And don't panic if you don't understand everything – that's completely normal. Just concentrate on getting the gist of things and try your best.



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