



THE A STUDENT

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I didn't feel the stress that people talk about with science for the Junior Cert. It definitely wasn't as bad as I had been told by students who had done it already. I'd always liked science anyway, and I want to do physiotherapy, sports rehabilitation science, so I knew that I'd need to do well at it. That really gave me the motivation to work hard.

My school introduced a study group a few months before the exams, so I did that. On a typical day, I'd go to the study group, then go home for dinner and do a little more later on. The study group was supervised – you could do whatever subject you liked in it. That, generally, was where I got most of my work done.

It was an hour and a half every day, so I probably did about two and a half hours a day in total, including the work I did at home.

I had good notes, because I'd always taken everything down in my copybook, so that was very useful for study, very easy to go through. I'd taken down all the key things, which luckily enough, came up in the exam. I found that topics such as respiration all shared similar qualities, so that made it easy for me to remember them. I didn't have any special tricks or anything like that – they just clicked with me – so I had no problem recalling them in the exam.

I didn't do too much study for my mocks because I wasn't very concerned about them, I just did a brief outline. But the results I got weren't too bad, considering, so I wasn't that worried. I knew that what really mattered were the exams at the end of the year.

For me, the mocks were mainly about telling me what level I was at in all my subjects, and they worked out fine in that way. I didn't change my approach to science based on the mocks, I was comfortable enough with how I was going. I made changes to how I worked for other subjects, such as maths, because of the mocks, but not science.

The science course is very full – you struggle to fit everything in, but we did do past papers towards the end.

Our teacher always said that things do get repeated since there's only so many things you can be asked, so if you do enough of the papers, something is bound to come up that you've already seen.

I didn't panic going into the exam. I knew the marks and the time I had for each section, the layout and what was required. Our teacher warned us that we'd be foolish to leave the exam early, that we should get every last minute out of it. I sat there for the whole time, even though I'd finished. I just kept going over it and over it, to make sure I had done the best that I could.

One thing I'd say to anyone is: don't leave it to the last minute.

Do your work throughout the year and it won't become overwhelming. It will make it much easier and it won't turn into the hugely stressful situation it is for many.

In conversation with Eoin Cunningham

Scientifically proven study tips

- ◆ It is important to study somewhere you feel reasonably comfortable. Turn off the television and computer. Now turn off your mobile phone. Believe it or not, the world can get along fine without you for a few hours. Besides, if somebody texts you, you can catch up on it later.
- ◆ Make out a study plan. Don't just keep it in your head. Put it down on paper and post it just above your desk.
- ◆ Be realistic. Plan to study for two hours at a time broken up into 25- to 30-minute sessions.
- ◆ If you have covered a topic in school, revise it briefly that night while it is still fresh in your mind. Don't say "I'll wait until the end of the week and then revise it all". Remember, it is easier to learn in small pieces.
- ◆ Concentrate on trying to understand the areas you have difficulty with.
- ◆ Study definitions, not just so that you will be able to repeat them, but so that you will be better able to understand the topic. Several of the questions which have appeared on past papers simply ask for definitions.
- ◆ From time to time, attempt a question from a past paper. Try to do it within the appropriate time then check your answer.
- ◆ Occasionally go over chapters you studied a month ago.
- ◆ Draw a diagram. It doesn't have to be a work of art, and see if you can label all the parts properly.
- ◆ Now see if you can give the function of each part.
- ◆ Finally, take advantage of the weekend to get in some extra study.

Exam Structure

The exam consists of a single paper divided into three

sections: biology, chemistry and physics. Each section contains three questions.

Biology.

Question one – 52 marks

Question two – 39 marks

Question three – 39 marks.

The same structure applies in Chemistry and Physics.

- ◆ Read through the entire paper before deciding what questions to do first.
- ◆ It is unlikely that you will run out of time, but just in case do your best questions first. This way, if you do run out of time, at least your best questions will be done. Also, doing your first questions well makes you feel better and more relaxed for the rest of the paper.
- ◆ Make sure to bring a watch in with you and time your questions roughly as follows: question one – 15 minutes; question two – 10 minutes; question three – 10 minutes; and so on. Don't panic if you go over time on a question in which, say, you have to draw a graph. You can make it up elsewhere.
- ◆ Remember, there is no choice, you have to do all questions.
- ◆ Don't ever leave a part of a question blank. Even if you haven't a clue, make a guess. If you leave it blank you get no marks. If you make a guess you might get something.
- ◆ In a mathematical type question, be sure to give units with your answer eg 5 ohms rather than just 5.
- ◆ If you need a calculator, get one well in advance of the exam so that you will be quite familiar with it.
- ◆ If you are finished before time, go back over the paper to make sure you have answered everything. Never leave the examination hall before the time is up.