

Speaking like the native you are

It's all about preparation and perseverance in the Irish exam – just ask Alex Ferguson or Mick O'Dwyer

The expert



Éamonn Maguire is a recognised authority on exam and revision technique. A native Irish speaker from the Eachléim Gaeltacht in northwest Mayo, for many years he was head of languages in St Oliver's Community College in Drogheda. He also spent over 20 years as an examiner with the Department of Education examining Oral Irish during those years. Several of his books have been published by Gill and Macmillan and he has written a number of books in the *Less Stress More Success* and *Shortcuts to Success* series. He also contributes regularly to exam supplements in *The Irish Times* and to *Countdown to the Leaving Cert* on 2FM.

ORAL EXAMINATION

Ouch – the Oral. There is little doubt that the oral is a source of great concern for many people, not least school principals who have to factor it into their school planning each year. The marks on offer are extremely high (150).

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many teachers leave oral Irish preparation until virtually the last minute. This is a shame because the oral Irish exam should be prepared for well in advance.

The following guidelines and list of most commonly asked questions should start you on the right road.

Guidelines

- ◆ The oral usually lasts for 13-15 minutes although it can stretch to 20.
- ◆ The reading of the passage happens in the first couple of minutes.
- ◆ Bring your own copy of the prose extracts into the oral exam.
- ◆ You are recommended to make phonetic changes to any words in the prose passages to help you read them properly.
- ◆ You are allowed to bring these changed passages into the oral with you.
- ◆ As 45 of the 120 marks are for cumas Gaeilge (the correctness of your Irish), you should practice answers in the various tenses and pay attention to séimhiús and urús.
- ◆ There are 75 marks going for your fluency and saibhreas so learn and practice as many nathanna cainte as you can.

What questions do examiners ask?

This is a question I often hear from pupils and is something that is put to teachers all over the country in the weeks leading up to the oral Irish examination.

For this reason, I have decided to include a comprehensive list of topics and questions that pupils can expect in the oral Irish exam. It should be noted, however, that the list, while comprehensive, could not possibly cover all topics and questions.

Na topaicí éagsúla i mBéarla

I have made a list of a number of topics that the oral Irish examiner may ask you about. It is wise to note that the oral exam is not

meant to be an examination of knowledge.

It is important, however, to have a certain amount of knowledge of the following and other topics, so that you have something to base your conversation on.

Home and neighbourhood

1. Your name and where you live.
2. Your family; number of brothers and sisters.
3. Your age and where you come in the family; your date of birth.
4. Your home; the house you live in; the number of rooms; furnishing in various rooms.
5. Helping out around the house.
6. Pocket money and what you do with it.
7. What grows in your garden.
8. Favourite television and radio programmes, and why.
9. Favourite hobbies; why, where, and with whom.
10. Your area, village, or town.
11. Things to do in your area; youth clubs.
12. Facilities in your area, eg sports fields, sports halls, discos.
13. Problems in your area; drugs, vandalism, violence.
14. Local places of historical interest.
15. Other local attractions.
16. Your local newspapers and radio stations.
17. The name and address of your school; the number of pupils.
18. Educational facilities in your school.
19. Sports and other recreational facilities.
20. Various clubs in your school, eg debating, quiz, chess, Irish clubs.
21. Competitions.
22. How you like your school, and why; school uniform.
23. School tours.
24. Your Leaving Cert subjects.
25. Favourite subject or subjects, and why.

Tar éis na scrúduithe

26. What you will do after the Leaving Cert; third level; choice of career, and why.
27. What further education or training is required for your chosen career.
28. Common national and local problems; unemployment, under-age drinking, the weather, crime, violence, drugs.
29. What you would do if you were Taoiseach/ Minister for Education/ won the lottery – modh coinníollach.
30. The Gaeltacht.
31. Holidays; last year, this year, holiday jobs.

CEISTEANNA COITIANTA

- Tú féin, do theaghlach, do cheantar**
Dia duit.
Cad is ainm duit?
Cén chaoi a bhfuil tú?/Conas tá tú?/Cad é mar atá tú?
Cén aois thú?
Cén lá breithe atá agat?
Inis dom faoi do theaghlach/do mhuintir.
Cá bhfuil tú i do chónaí?
Cén sórt áite é?
An bhfuil aon fhadhbanna ann?
Cad é an caitheamh aimsire atá agat?

Ar scoil

- Cén t-ainm atá ar an scoil seo?
Cén sórt scoile í?
Cén fáth a dtaitníonn/nach dtaitníonn an scoil seo leat?
Cad iad na hábhair atá á ndéanamh agat?
Cén t-ábhar is fearr leat? Cén fáth?
Cén sórt áiseanna atá agaibh sa scoil?
Dá mbeifeá i do phríomhoide ar an scoil seo, cad a dhéanfá?
Cad iad na cluichí a imrítear sa scoil?
Cad a dhéanfaidh tú tar éis an scrúdaithe? Cén post ba mhaith leat?
Cén sórt traenála atá ag teastáil?



A spell learning Irish in the Gaeltacht, such as here in

Fadhbanna

- Cad é do mheas faoin dífhostaíocht?
Cad a cheapann tú faoi fhadhb na ndrugaí?
An bhfuil tuairim agat faoi cholscaradh?
Cad é do mheas faoi thruailliú na timpeallachta?
Meas tú an bhfuil réiteach ar bith ar fhadhb na coirpeachta?
Cad í an fhadhb is measa atá againn in Éirinn, i do thuairimse?
Cad a cheapann tú faoin Tuaisceart?
An bhfuil leigheas ar bith ar an imirce?
Cad a cheapann tú faoi chúrsaí eacnamaíochta na hÉireann?
Cad é do mheas faoi ghorta sa “Triú Domhan”?

Ábhair eile

- Cad a rinne tu ag an deireadh seachtaine?
Conas a chaith tú do laethanta saoire anuraidh?
An raibh tú riamh sa Ghaeltacht?
Ca raibh tú? Inis dom faoi
Conas a chuaigh sé i bhfeidhm ort?
Dá mbeifeá i do Thaoiseach cad a dhéanfá?
Dá mbeadh an bua agat sa Chranncur Náisiúnta cad a dhéanfá?
Cad a cheapann tú faoi shaol na mban in Éirinn?
An raibh tú riamh thar lear?
Cá raibh tú? Conas a thaitin sé leat? Cad a rinne tú sa tír sin?
Cad iad na difríochtaí is mó idir an tír sin agus Éirinn?
Cad a cheapann tú faoi shaol an duine óig in Éirinn sa lá atá inniu ann?
Cad é do thuairim faoi bhrú na scrúduithe?
An ndearna tú ullmhú/cleachtadh faoi leith don scrúdú seo inniu?

GETTING THE MOST FROM THE MOCKS

There are many who regard the mocks as a nuisance and a distraction. In the first place, it's bordering on the ridiculous to expect hard-pressed students to undertake a full examination in, say, February, when in all likelihood they have only completed about half the course properly.

It can be demanding and dispiriting and can be confidence shattering. The best thing that can be said of the mock exams is that they can be a useful “dry run” for students. The mocks, however, are a fact of life and have to be dealt with and prepared for.

Preparation

Alex Ferguson, at Manchester United, and Mick O'Dwyer, with a