

with key phrases



Help! I've only started studying now

Don't get stressed – get organised.

It may only be February but I believe that students who wish to get into the A-zone should be gearing up for mock exams and the June exams right now. This brings up the perennial problem of how best to study and revise and how best to organise your precious study and revision time. I include here a few pointers which have proven very beneficial for many students.

Revision time can be very stressful, especially if you have no definite plan or timetable. So here's a plan that should help students make better use of their revision time.

First you should try to study/revise in an environment that is comfortable, with sufficient heat, light and space. Ideally, it should be a place that you like.

Before you begin to revise/study, you should ensure that you have all notes, books, copies, pens that you will need close at hand.

Make a daily timetable and a weekly timetable that will enable you to use your valuable time efficiently. Hang your timetable up in a prominent place and tick off each task as you complete it.

It's important to timetable breaks in your revision plan and to reward yourself with chocolate, tea or whatever else you really like.

You should never begin revision/study without first setting yourself targets.

Therefore you should set yourself a daily target for each day and a weekly target for each week.

During my teaching career, I have always believed that nothing is taught until it is tested. So it should be with your study and revision. You should set yourself targets and give yourself little tests that will reinforce your knowledge of and memory of what you are doing.

The importance of getting out in the fresh air and going for a run or a gentle jog or even a good walk cannot be over emphasised.

Exercise stimulates the brain as well as the body. It is equally essential that you get sufficient rest and especially a proper night's sleep.

For routine revision, you should work in short bursts of say 25/30 mins and then take definite time limits for completing various revision/study tasks. This is also excellent preparation for the timing of answers at examinations.

Remember, it's never too late to begin revision for whatever exams you are doing.

Getting to grips with the reading comprehension

AN LÉAMHTHUISCINT

Many students experience great difficulty with the léamhthuisicint. There is no doubt that léamhthuisicint is hugely important in Irish exams at all levels.

The methodology and strategy that we outline in this feature applies to reading comprehensions in both higher level and ordinary level Irish examinations.

What do I have to do?

- ◆ Answer every question.
- ◆ Give full and complete answers.
- ◆ Make some effort to put some of your answers in your own words, as 90 per cent of the marks are for your ability to comprehend the passages.
- ◆ Sometimes the questions will require that you include more than one point in your answer, so you should include whatever points are required.

How do I do it?

- ◆ If you have no idea of the answer, use the word-matching technique.
- ◆ Be sure to answer all questions, even if you

have to use the word-matching technique or even an educated guess.

Essential skills

- ◆ Know your question and answer basics.
- ◆ Practise using the word-matching technique.

What not to do

- ◆ Do not forget to make an effort to put some of your answers in your own words. Even small changes will do.
- ◆ Do not give just half an answer – you will often need two separate points.
- ◆ Do not give too many points in your answer as you can lose marks by doing this.
- ◆ Do not copy out whole paragraphs or large portions of the text as you will lose marks by doing this.

Guidelines for the léamhthuisicint

- ◆ Even the best of students can have difficulty with the comprehensions. You may, therefore, have to guess some of the answers, but if you use the word-match system you should still get a good few marks.
- ◆ Remember you don't have to fully understand

the passages to answer the questions.

- ◆ Make sure that you write something for each part of the question, even a word or two can get you marks. Never skip a question. You can get no marks for blank spaces.
- ◆ As stated previously, do not copy out complete paragraphs.

Pick the sentences or phrases in the passage that match the question best and put them together to complete your answer.

- ◆ It may be necessary to make other subtle changes. If you change "mé" to "sé" or "sí" or first person plural to third person plural, eg "déanfaimid" to "déanfaidh siad", it may be sufficient.

You are nearly always told the paragraph in which the answer is to be found. The questions, and therefore the answers, usually follow the order of the passage.

- ◆ Once again, don't neglect to give a full answer in every case. This often means two separate points.
- ◆ Incidentally, it's not necessary to write full sentences to get full marks. A single word or a couple of words will sometimes be enough.

The word-match system

If you don't know the answer, use the Word-Match system.

Underline the main words in each question and then underline the same words where they appear in the appropriate passage.

As a general guide the following types of words should be underlined and used in the word-match system:

- ◆ place names
- ◆ people's names
- ◆ days and dates
- ◆ times of day
- ◆ any other words you think important
- ◆ words in inverted commas, because they are quotations from the passage
- ◆ words in capital letters

Additional guidelines

- ◆ You should answer the question in the tense in which it is asked.
- ◆ If a question begins with "Cén fáth" you should begin the answer with the word "Mar".
- ◆ Most of the marks (about 90 per cent) are for your comprehension ability.