

The expert



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Top tips

Students should be very familiar with the layout of a paper, the number of questions to be answered, timing, the style of questions and, most of all, the content of the syllabus. Planned revision is of the essence. Home Economics is a very long and detailed course made up of a written paper and practical journal.

For students taking both the higher and ordinary level, the journal is worth 20 per cent of the overall grade. For students studying the textiles, fashion and design elective, the written paper is worth 70 per cent, and it is worth 80 per cent for all other students. Ten per cent of the overall grade is allocated to a garment which students have already submitted for the textiles elective.

At this stage the Food Studies practical journal has been examined and graded for 2008; therefore this article will cover the written paper.

LAYOUT

Section A – 12 short questions. Students are required to answer 10. Each question carries six marks.

Section B – Five questions of which students must answer question one (80 marks) and two others (50 marks each).

Section C – Three questions on the elective topics. Students must answer one question (80 marks) and must answer Part A and either Part B or Part C.

TIMING

- ◆ The exam lasts two hours and 30 minutes.
- ◆ Answer question one (section B) first, and spend 30 minutes on this question.
- ◆ Next, spend 40 minutes on the Elective question.
- ◆ Answer the two 50-mark questions after the Elective question, spending 20 minutes on each.
- ◆ Finally, the short questions should be filled in. There are spaces provided on the examination paper for the answers to these questions. Thirty minutes should be allocated to answering this section.
- ◆ If students follow the above timing guide there should be approximately five minutes left to read over the exam paper before you start the exam.

As mentioned earlier, home economics is a very broad subject covering a number of different areas. It is unlike some subjects where whole questions are devoted to one specific topic.

For example, in the old home economics syllabus, question one might have been on protein only. However, if protein were to appear on the new style paper, it may appear with other topics, such as vegetarianism, menu planning, the Irish diet and food choices.

Therefore, study inter-related topics together.

- ◆ Practise answering questions from past and sample papers.
- ◆ Timing is important in the exam. Efficient time management is crucial to complete the exam on time. Therefore, when practising exam questions, you must try to answer them in the time allowed in the exam. There is no point writing out an A-grade answer that takes an hour, when you are only allowed 35 or 40 minutes in the exam.
- ◆ Follow the revision plan given above to ensure that you have the whole course covered.
- ◆ Practise drawing diagrams, particularly from the area of microbiology, household technology and the home design and management elective.

A common downfall is students studying diagrams from their textbook or notes. They know the different parts of the diagram from a given picture, but if asked to replicate the diagram in the exam, they cannot do so.

Small, perfectly

Nailing the short questions will set you up for top marks in the Home Economics exam

SHORT QUESTIONS

Students should note that eight out of 12 short questions are Food Studies questions. The remaining four questions are from Consumer Studies, Resource Management topics and Social Studies (Core).

It has been mentioned earlier that students should answer these questions last. If timing has not gone to plan the short questions can be done quickly compared to the structuring of a long question. Also, by the time you get to this section you will have answered questions on a lot of key topics and will be in a better frame of mind to tackle specific short questions than at the beginning of the exam.

The following short questions have appeared on previous papers at both levels.

HIGHER LEVEL

Explain two factors that contribute to the spoilage of fish (6)

- (i) Fish struggle in nets before being caught, using up their store of glycogen and leaving no lactic acid which acts as a preservative.
- (ii) Bacteria feed off the moist flesh of raw fish and produce trimethylamine (a nitrogen-based compound) that gives spoiled fish a bad odour.

(a) State two functions of lipids in the body (2)

- (i) Lipids are a source of fat soluble vitamins A,D,E,K.
- (ii) They protect delicate organs eg heart, kidneys.

(b) Complete the following table in relation to the digestion of lipids. (4)

	Answers	
Digestive Gland	Pancreas	
Secretion	Pancreatic juice	
Change	Pancreatic Lipase	
	Triglycerides split to fatty acids	

State the function of each of the following parts of a refrigerator (6)

The thermostat regulates the temperature of the fridge. It is based on the working principle of a bimetallic strip where metals contract on cooling.

The refrigerator absorbs heat from warm food placed in the fridge. Liquid refrigerant absorbs heat from food and converts it to gaseous refrigerant.

ORDINARY LEVEL

(a) State two functions of calcium in the body (4)

- (i) Calcification – the laying down of calcium phosphate.
- (ii) Blood clotting along with vitamin K.

(b) List two good dietary sources of calcium (2)

- (i) milk
- (ii) cheese

(a) Name two types of fatty acids and list one food source of each type. (4)

Type of Fatty Acid:	Saturated	Unsaturated
Food Source:	Meat	Vegetable Oil

(b) What is an essential fatty acid? (2)

This is a fatty acid that cannot be produced by the body and therefore must be included in the diet.

Students should try (particularly at higher level) to give as much information as possible when answering short questions. Use all of the available space on the paper regardless of the language used in the question eg “state”, “list”, “enumerate” might suggest one word answers, but the fact that each question is worth six marks indicates that a lot of detail is required.

Higher-level questions will require a more comprehensive knowledge of the course. The question above on fatty acids is quite basic. If this type of question were asked at higher level, students would probably have to name specific fatty acids rather than just give food sources.

SECTION B

As mentioned earlier, Section B is made up of five questions. The first question must be answered and two other questions out of the four remaining questions.

Question one

This question is worth 80 marks (ie 20 per cent of the overall grade). It is usually made up of four of five parts. It is important to remember that this is an integrated question covering a couple of



Know your food inside out? Then you could clean up on short-answer questions. Photograph: iStockphoto

topics in the one question – higher level 2006 Q1 was on Meat and Protein, higher level 2007 was on folic acid, fortified foods and carbohydrates, higher level 2005 was on carbohydrates and food labelling. In 2004, this question was on fish, vitamin D and heart disease. Therefore, it would be very unwise to pick random topics to revise as the end result might be a student being unable to answer this compulsory question.

Ordinary level students should be aware that the above information applies to them as well.

Full answer to the sample department paper Q1 Section B Higher Level (80 marks)

(a) Vegetable fat source: sunflower oil

◆ Sunflower oil has 66 per cent polyunsaturates which are known as essential fatty acids. These are thought to make blood sticky, therefore easier to flow and less likely to cause clots, which may lead to a heart attack or stroke.

◆ There is only 10 per cent saturated fatty acids present. Too many saturates can raise low density lipoprotein (LDL) levels of cholesterol.

Animal fat source: tuna fish

◆ It has 37 per cent polyunsaturated content, including omega 3 fatty acids, which reduce the risk of atherosclerosis.

◆ In total, tuna is made up of 63 per cent unsaturates which are thought to raise HDL levels of cholesterol in the blood, or raise “good” cholesterol.

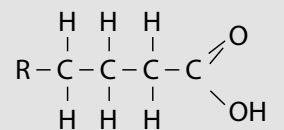
(b) Fatty Acids

Saturated

Structure (right)

Source: Mainly animal origin eg stearic acid (meat)

Effect on coronary arteries: Raises LDL (bad) cholesterol

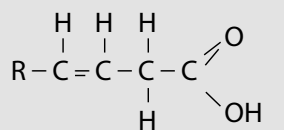


Monosaturated

Structure (right)

Source: Olive oil (oleic acid)

Effect on coronary arteries: Raises HDL (good) cholesterol



Polyunsaturated

Structure (right)

Source: Mainly vegetable or marine source eg linoleic acid (cereals), arachadonic acid (cod)

Effect on coronary arteries: Lowers LDL cholesterol

