

The expert



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Several of Éamonn's books have been published by Gill and Macmillan and he has also written a number of books in the *Less Stress More Success* and *Shortcuts to Success* series. He is a regular contributor to exam supplements in *The Irish Times* and to *Countdown to the Leaving Cert* on RTÉ 2FM.

A guide for study and revision

Students who wish to get into the A zone should really begin a campaign of study and revision that will bring them right up to the exams in June. Revision time can be very stressful, especially for those who don't have a definite plan or timetable. So here's a plan that should help you make better use of your remaining revision time.

Firstly, you should try to study in a comfortable environment with sufficient light, heat and space. Ideally it should be a place you like. Before you begin your study you should ensure that you have all the notes, books, copies, pens and so on that you need close at hand.

◆ WORK FROM A TIMETABLE

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

◆ SET YOURSELF TARGETS

You should never begin your revision without first setting yourself targets. You should set yourself a daily target and a weekly target; you'll have something to work towards, and a feeling of achievement as you get things done.

◆ TEST YOURSELF

During my teaching career I've always believed that nothing is taught until it's tested. So it should be with your study and revision. You should give yourself little tests that will reinforce your knowledge.

◆ REWARD YOURSELF – HAVE A BREAK

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

◆ RECREATION, REST AND SLEEP

The importance of getting out in the fresh air and going for a run or a good walk cannot be over-emphasised. Exercise stimulates the brain as well as the body. I know a Leaving Cert student who swims three or four times a week; she even writes it into her revision plan. It is equally essential that you get sufficient rest and a proper night's sleep. Remember, those batteries have to be recharged regularly.

◆ WHEN TO REVISE/STUDY

It is certainly a case of different strokes for different folks, as students have widely differing ideas about the optimum time for revision and study. Some people get up at the crack of dawn and work efficiently very early in the day, as in the 'early bird catches the worm' scenario. Others are late birds, and cannot function properly until well into the evening. Find out what your best time is and stick to your plan.

◆ AND FOR HOW LONG?

For routine revision you should work in short bursts of 25 to 30 minutes, and have definite time limits for completing various tasks. This is also excellent preparation for timing answers at whatever exams you're doing, be it the Junior Cert, Leaving Cert or third-level exams, so get cracking.

The best of luck with your efforts.



Watch your language get you good results

Take your time, read the question, and do try and use a few different phrases – these are the types of actions that can help you get the best results from your Irish exams

CEAPADÓIREACHT

AN AISTE – AN SCÉAL – AN tALT – AN DÍOSPÓIREACHT/ÓRÁID

Páipéar 1: Roinn 1, Ceist 1

Am: 45 nóiméad

Marcanna: 50 marc

Fad: 1½ leathanach A4 (350-400 focal)

WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO?

- * Write a composition of about one-and-a-half pages in length
- * Stick to the subject
- * Write in the correct tense

HOW DO I DO IT?

Pick a title/subject that you understand.

Be sure that you're writing in the correct tense. If you're writing about the past, you should write in the past tense. To add variety you can use the present tense at the end, to speak of how things are now.

Include Irish phrases that you have learned (such as 'ritheamar ar nós na gaoithe' and 'lá breá griannmhar a bhí ann' as 40 of the 50 marks are given for your standard of Irish. These will show the extent of your vocabulary and "saibhreas teanga" (richness of language).

Check your writing as you go along, and again at the end.

See that your verbs are in the correct tenses.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

A good beginning and ending are important, so practise writing these – being able to write a punchy opening is a handy skill to have. Prepare a few different topics and learn a selection of useful phrases to suit those topics.

Write short sentences, in the correct tense, that show your vocabulary and 'saibhreas'.

DO NOT DO THIS

Don't write long, complicated sentences. These are more likely to contain grammatical errors that will lose you marks.

Don't stray from the point or the title of the piece.

GUIDELINES FOR CEIST 1 (The Composition Question)

The length of your composition should be approximately one-and-a-half A4 pages (350-400 words).

◆ In choosing which composition to write, be sure that you have sufficient vocabulary and set pieces learned off to cover your choice. It's discouraging to get halfway through a composition only to realise that you have run out of ideas and vocabulary.

◆ Practise planning how to write compositions. Think about the following questions when thinking about your plan: Who? Where? What? When? How? Why?

◆ It helps to brainstorm before you begin. Think of the title and write down every idea, word and phrase that occurs to you.

◆ Then organise those ideas and words in logical order as follows:

Tús

This should be a short paragraph that introduces the topic of the composition.

Corp

You need three to four paragraphs here, each dealing with a different aspect of the topic.

Críoch

In this, the final paragraph, mention again very briefly the main point

of each paragraph and, in addition, give your own opinion.

It is really important to choose a topic that you feel you have the vocabulary for. Remember, most marks are given for the standard of your Irish, not for your point of view. It is, after all, an language-based exam.

Take great care with your tenses, spellings and the síneadh fada.

Continually ask yourself: Is this the correct tense? Is this the correct spelling? Do I put a fada here?

With each question, leave enough time to read over and correct your work. You'd be surprised how many marks you could save by doing this.

Write short sentences that are to the point; try not to get distracted, and try not to repeat yourself – this can appear to the examiner as if you are trying to fill space.

Remember that, in the composition question, the examiner is marking you mainly for your Irish, so build up a treasure chest of good phrases that show off your 'saibhreas', or richness of Irish. Your treasure chest might include phrases like 'bhi áthas an domhain orm', 'ar an gcéad dul síos' and 'dála an scéil'. Some work on your phrases will help you to get an A, B, or C in higher level Irish.

Use these expressions in your school and home work to help you learn and use them with confidence. This is your key to success.

10 useful verbs for the scéal composition

CHUIMHNIGH sé ar a leaba the

He remembered his warm bed

SHOCRAIGH sé rith i bhfad ó bhaile

He decided to run far from home

THOSAIGH sé ag cur báistí

It started to rain

GHORTAIGH mé mo chos

I hurt my leg

SHIÚIL mé ar aghaidh

I walked on

D'ULLMHAIGH mé mo mhála

I got my bag ready

BHUAIL mé le Seán

I met Sean

MHÍNIGH mé an scéal

I explained the situation

BHEARTAIGH mé ar imeacht

I decided to go

BHROSTAIGH mé abhaile

I hurried home

