



Whale watching on Tory Island, in the heart of the Donegal Gaeltacht

THE SCÉAL COMPOSITION

Páipéar 1: Roinn 1, Ceist 1

Am: 45 nóiméid
 Marcanna: 50 marc
 Fad: 1 go 1½ leathanach (350-400 focal)

WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO?

- ◆ Write a story of between one and one-and-a-half pages either:
 - beginning with the given opening paragraph
 - based on the heading given
- ◆ Use good, simple Irish (with as few mistakes as possible)
- ◆ Have an interesting story

HOW DO I DO IT?

Scan the heading and pick out the key words.
 Base your story around the key words you understand.
 Use verbs in the correct tense and phrases you have learned.
 Keep your sentences short and simple.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

- ◆ Having a good stock of useful phrases learned off;
- ◆ Having useful blocks of text and one-liners;
- ◆ Being able to use a good variety of verbs, in their correct tenses.

DO NOT DO THIS

Do **not** write long complicated sentences – you will make more mistakes;
 Do not write a half page, or three pages. If your composition is too short you can't get full marks; if it's too long you're wasting time;
 Do not forget to read your story again and correct any mistakes.

HOW DO I WRITE A SCÉAL COMPOSITION?

ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR THE SCÉAL

- ◆ Learn 15-30 good phrases that you can use in all stories;
- ◆ Learn some one-liners and block-paragraphs;
- ◆ Learn some different verbs for common situations (for example, instead of saying “chuaigh mé amach” try “d'imigh mé” or “d'fhág mé”). This will raise the overall standard of your writing.

ON THE DAY OF THE EXAM

Scan the title or opening sentence for keywords. From these, guess what the story is about.
 Don't worry. As long as your story is connected some way to the heading, you will be fine.
 Write short and simple sentences. Complicated sentences usually contain mistakes.
 Keep all your verbs in the past tense, and use “mé”. In other words, use “bhí mé”, “d'imigh mé, cheannaigh mé. . .”
 To raise the standard of your writing, use other verbs instead of the same old boring ones, eg use “Is amhlaidh go raibh mé” instead of “bhí mé”, and use “ghabh mé” instead of “chuaigh mé”.
 Use the one-liners or maybe some block-paragraphs you have learned that will fit with the story
 Afterwards check your story by using **VHI**
Verbs: check that all your verbs are in the past tense, ie bhí, chuaigh, chuala, etc.
H: Check that verbs that should have “h” do have one, like bhí, chaill, ghabh, bhris, etc.
I: Check that you wrote your story about yourself, that you used mé, orm, uaim, and so on.

The A student



Niamh Crosson got an A in last year's Junior Cert Irish exam. She's now in transition year in St Vincent's Secondary School, Dundalk

Junior Cert study only really starts in third year. I only started properly when we were leading up to the mocks, but I had kept up with what was going on in class the whole time.

I think the most important thing in every subject is to listen in class and try to get an understanding of what's being taught. It's useless trying to memorise things you don't understand. It takes longer and it doesn't stay in your head.

I liked Irish as a language, but as a subject I wasn't that gone on it. I studied it in small amounts, but often – maybe half an hour a day or something like that.

It's definitely worth putting a good bit of emphasis on the aural. In class we were told to listen to the aural CDs to sort of train our ears to the language. I actually watched TG4 and listened to Raidió na Gaeltachta from time to time and that really helped me to get in on it.

It's almost a frame of mind you have to get into. You don't have to understand every word. If you can familiarise yourself with the language and the way it works, that's half the battle.

My approach to studying Irish was to understand as much as I could. The important thing in the comprehension, for example, is to understand what's being asked. If you understand the question you have half the answer already. Going through past papers helped, because the questions are very similar from year to year. My teacher was really into giving us phrases that would be useful for essays.

We wrote an essay every week and that practice was useful. I actually got involved with Irish debating in third year. It was really useful for the exam because you have the option of a debate topic.

The mocks in Irish were actually more stressful than the exam itself. People have such a fear of Irish, but if you sit and look at the exam it's not actually as daunting as it seems.

There's still loads of time to get things done if you haven't been studying till now. The biggest thing is to do a little consistently. You can't really cram for a language. If you get a routine in place now, you'd be surprised at how much you can get done.

Tried and tested – sample answer

This story is about 350 words long. It is of Grade A standard. It is a good example of a student using phrases, one-liners and blocks of text to help gain marks.

(i) Ceap scéal go mbeadh an giota seo oiriúnach mar thús leis:
 “Fuair mé *teachtaireacht* dul go hoifig an Phríomhoide. Bhí a fhios agam go raibh *rud éigin tábhachtach* i gceist. . .”

KEYWORDS:

Teachtaireacht – message
Rud éigin tábhachtach – something important

Fuair mé teachtaireacht dul go hoifig an Phríomhoide. Bhí a fhios agam go raibh rud éigin tábhachtach i gceist. Bhí mé scanraithe i mo bheatha. Shiúil mé amach as an rang. Bhí mé i gcónaí i dtrioblóid. Bhris mé fuinneog na scoile trí thimpiste ach ní raibh an milleán orm.

Thug mé seal ag smaoineamh. Bheartaigh mé ar éalú. Bhí mé bailithe de. Bhreathnaigh mé timpeall. Ní raibh duine ná deoraí le feiceáil.

Thapaigh mé an deis agus d'éaligh mé amach ar nós na gaoithe. Níor amharc mé taobh thiar díom. Thosaigh mé ag spaisteoireacht amach i dtreo na tuaithe. Bhí an lá ina shamhradh agus ní raibh puth gaoithe ann. Bhí an ghrian ag spalpadh anuas ón spéir agus bhí súp allais liom.

Shiúil mé liom gan stad agus thug mé faoi deara sa deireadh thiar thall go raibh mé i bhfad ó bhaile.

Is amhlaidh go riabh mé stiúgtha leis an ocras. Shuigh mé síos ar mo sháimhín só agus d'ith mé greim bia. Bhí mé go breá compordach agus lig mé mo scfth. Ní raibh gíog ná míog asam. Go gairid ina dhiaidh sin thit néal codlata orm. Nuair a dhúisigh mé bhí scath na hoíche titithe

agus ní raibh éinne le feiceáil.

Bhí mo thuismitheoirí ag teastáil uaim. De réir a chéile d'éirigh an ghaoth. Bhailigh na scamail bhagracha. D'oscail an spéir agus bhí foscadh de dhíth orm. Bhí tintreach agus toirneach ag reabadh na spéire.

Bhí mé i gcuachás ceart. Rith mé agus bhéic mé in ard mo chinn is mo ghutha. Níor airigh éinne mé. Bhrostaigh mé go dtí an bóthar. Bhí mé beagnach gan aithne gan urlabhra. Gan choinne, chonaic mé carr ag teacht i mo threo. Bhí ionadh an domhain orm. Sciorr an carr agus bhí an t-ádh orm nuair a stop sé.

Thug an tiománaí íde béil dom. Mhínigh mé an scéal. Thug sé síob abhaile dom. Ghabh mé buíochas leis. Nuair a shroich mé mo theach bhí mé spónta caite. Bhí mo thuismitheoirí ar deargbhuile.

Ní dheanfaidh mé dearmad ar an lá sin go deo na ndeor.



Picnicking in Errigal in the Donegal Gaeltacht