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Irish

How to get an A in the Junior Cert
Irish Exam



by **Eimear D.**

Eimear D got an A in the higher Irish paper. Here she shares what she learned.

Irish can be a tricky subject to get the hang of if you're not very familiar with it. If you're from the Gaeltacht, lucky you! If not, there may be a little extra work that you have to put in yourself to get the best mark you possibly can. At the end of the day, anyone can get a great mark in Irish if they put in the effort, follow this guide and you'll be one step closer to that A.

The Breakdown:

The exam is broken up into Paper One and Paper Two, which are marked together out of 240 marks. If your school chooses to do the optional oral exam, it will be marked out of 400 (The oral is worth 160).

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Paper One

An Cluastuiscint

- ▶ This is the first thing you'll do in your exam. It's broken up into 3 parts, Cuid A Cuid B and Cuid C and it's worth 40 marks.
- ▶ The first thing I would always do upon opening the paper before the CD started was **underline the key words** in each question. This way, I knew what words to expect and what to listen out for.
- ▶ Sometimes, the speakers can speak quite quickly and you don't have time to write down all the answers in one go. In this case, you should write quick key words in the space provided and when you have time after, write in the full answer.

An Léamhthuiscint

- ▶ There are two of them and you must do both. This section is pretty straightforward so you shouldn't have many issues with it. All you have to do really is "copy and paste" the sentence from the text into your answer book.
- ▶ Even if you don't understand the question or the text, you can usually get it right anyway if you just find the keyword from the question within the text. Write out that sentence then and chances are you'll be right.
- ▶ The instructions state to write it in your own words where possible but to be honest, there's usually no other way to say it other than how it's said in the text and you will not be docked marks for having the same sentence because at the end of the day, your information will be correct.



Trialacha Teanga Comhthéacsúla (Section A)

- ▶ This is worth 10 marks and it's all about grammar and changing a given text from one tense into another, it's to test how well you know your irregular verbs and your grammar tenses.
- ▶ This section can be hard, depending on what tense you're given to change the text into, everyone dreads getting the Modh Coinníollach, but you could be lucky and get the past tense.
- ▶ Basically, to do well in this section, you have to just learn the tenses off by heart. Know which tenses take a 'h', which don't, know the irregular verbs, know the endings for past/present/future/conditional tenses.
- ▶ If you take a lazy approach at this one, it will not pay off. Just put aside some extra time of study to perfect it. 10 marks out of 240 isn't huge though, so if you really just can't get your head around it, don't beat yourself up about it, just do your best.

Section B

- ▶ This is also all about grammar but more so prepositions and things like that. Again, it's just a case of learning off the rules, there's no easy way around it, just **learn all the essentials** (e.g. which prepositions take g/n/d before a noun) off by heart and you should fly through it.

Ceapadóireacht

- ▶ This is the composition writing part. Some people love this section whereas others hate it. You can either do an essay, an article, a story, a speech or a debate. It's really a case of playing to your strengths.
- ▶ The essay tends to be the easiest section, especially because you have so much choice and the topics are straight-forward.
- ▶ You should have a good intro, 2/3 paragraphs and a conclusion.
- ▶ If you're going to choose the Díospóireacht/Óráid, you have to **make sure you know the structure** of it. The Díospóireacht always begins with sometime like this: "A Chathaoirligh, a mholtóirí, a lucht éisteachta agus lucht an fhréasúra. Is mise _____ agus táim ag caint inniu i bhfábhar/in aghaidh an rún go/nách.....". Also, you'll need to **use phrases and techniques** used in debating, such as 'Nách gceapann sibh, a dhaoine uaisle...?' etc. The debating can sometimes be slightly more difficult, as you have to stick to one side of the argument, unlike in the essay section.



Paper Two

Prós Liteartha

- ▶ This is broken up further into 2 sections. The first section is similar to the Léamhthuiscint in Paper 1 where all you have to do is answer questions following a piece of text.
- ▶ Like in Paper 1, my advice is to just find the word that's in the question within the text and copy and paste the sentence.
- ▶ There are 6 questions in total but you only need to answer 3 of your choice, just so long as one of them is from the 'A' set of questions and one is from the 'B' set.
- ▶ Some of 'B' set of questions are less straightforward and you will have to try a little harder to find the answer but there's no reason you shouldn't be able for this section if your Irish and your vocab is up to scratch.
- ▶ The second section is to do with a text you've studied in class. You have a choice to write roughly half a page about either the theme, subject or emotion in the text you studied.
- ▶ Make sure you **know the full title and author of the text**. You're getting marks for just writing that down so it would be a waste to lose marks there.
- ▶ If you choose the first option, it usually asks you to compare it to the above text so make sure you don't choose that option if the stories are completely different.
- ▶ The second option gives you several emotions/themes/subjects and all you have to do is choose one that relates to the text you studied and discuss how it's evident in the text giving good reference to the text you read.
- ▶ Don't worry if none of the options given to you really match the text you studied. At the end of the day **it's your opinion and they can't argue against it**. So long as you have a well written piece with good quality Irish and that it's clear you studied the text well, you can't go wrong.
- ▶ **Practice a lot of these questions at home** if you get a chance and give them to your teacher to correct. That way you can have a good answer prepared before you go into the exam and you'll have covered most bases.

Filíocht

- ▶ The poetry section has the same layout as the prose section. For the first section, you answer the questions just like you did with the prose, 3 in total and one has to be from both A and B.
- ▶ The second section is also treated the same way as prose, but instead of answering it on the text you studied, you do it on a poem you've studied. You should have studied a couple of them so there shouldn't be any problem with you finding a poem to match one of the emotions/themes.

- ▶ Again, poetry is very easy to get marks in even if you don't understand it because no one can argue that your opinion is wrong. Just **use a lot of**

emotive language such as “Bhí tionchar mór ag an dán seo orm mar..” and so on.

Litir

- ▶ Here you must write about half a page of a letter. You have 3 options to choose from.
- ▶ Each option gives you instructions on what to say in the letter. Follow these instructions and you're well on the way of getting a great mark.
- ▶ It might be worth improving your vocab for this section so that you could talk about any of the three

options, plus, **impressive vocab will look really** good and the examiner will reward you for it.

- ▶ Make sure you **know how to format a letter**. It's an easy thing to learn and get right so don't lose pointless marks on it. For example, know how and where to write the address and how to sign off, etc.

The Oral (optional)

If your school choose to do the orals then there's a few things you should know before you go in.

- ▶ Don't panic. Remember that at the end of the day, it's just a conversation, you're well able for it.
- ▶ **Have the sraithpictiúirí learned off perfectly**, that way you're guaranteed good marks in that section.
- ▶ **Have some sentences prepared** for the comhrá section, they nearly always ask very general stuff that you can have canned answers to, such as “what are your pastimes” or “describe your family”, etc. However, **make it sound natural**. The examiner will want to have a nice, flowing conversation with you, not something that sounds obviously rehearsed.



General Tips

- ▶ **Practise your timing** when you're doing out questions for homework. You get 2 hours for Paper One and an hour and a half for Paper Two so you'll be a bit under pressure to finish in time, don't let this affect the quality of your writing. You can have a lot of the content you're going to write prepared before the exam so save time there!
- ▶ **Absorb Irish everywhere that you can.** Turn on TG4 or Radió na Gaeltachta at home if there's nothing else on, even if you don't feel it's beneficial, I promise it is. You're passively learning the language and it will make you more comfortable with it.
- ▶ Equally, **try and speak Irish as much as you can**, this will be particularly useful if you're doing the oral. I know that a lot of people think it's uncool to talk in Irish now but just rise above it, it's a great language so be proud of it!
- ▶ It would be no harm to **learn off some common Irish phrases or seanfhocals**. You can throw them in at the end of an essay or in the conversation in the oral and it'll really impress the examiner.
- ▶ **Check Studyclix regularly** for new resources on Irish, there's some really helpful information and tips out there and don't feel shy to ask a question on the Discussion Forum, someone out there might be having the same problem as you or can offer help.





Ádh mhór!

I'm sure you'll do great.

