

SPANISH

Oralexam

Viva la conversación

Spanish is spoken by nearly half a billion people so a good command will come in very useful



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As I'm sure you're aware, Spanish is not just a Leaving Cert subject. There are over 400 million native speakers of Spanish, making it the second most spoken language in the world. It is not surprising then that many people choose to learn Spanish as a second language. In fact, Spanish is the most popular second language studied by native English speakers. You will benefit greatly from your

ability to speak Spanish if you ever choose to visit any of the 21 countries that speak it as a primary language.

With recent economic developments in South America, your skills in Spanish will also offer a variety of new working prospects. I hope you enjoy studying Spanish and I hope you put your skills to good use in the years to come.

The following articles concentrate

on the oral exam and section B of the written exam, which both present different challenges to students.

Marking breakdown:
 Oral exam – 100 marks (25 per cent), 15 minutes
 Listening exam – 80 marks (20 per cent), 40 minutes
 Written exam – 220 marks (55 per cent), 2 hours and 30 minutes

400m

Number of native Spanish speakers worldwide

Oral exam

100 Marks – 25 per cent
 General conversation – 70 marks 17.5 per cent
 Roleplay – 30 Marks – 7.5 per cent

GENERAL CONVERSATION

Preparation tips

- Use every opportunity to practise speaking Spanish.
- Prepare responses to common personal questions. Avoid memorising scripts.
- Practise speaking Spanish with a friend from class. Ideally make a day or lunch (perhaps with tapas) when you can only speak Spanish to each other. Chat about your daily routine and try introducing current affairs.
- Practise vocabulary and expressions you find difficult to pronounce.
- Rehearse questions in different tenses.
- Use as many verbs as possible in your response, a minimum of seven verbs in each tense. Avoid making the examiner work to assess your ability.
- For example, if the examiner asks “What did you do last weekend?”, don't merely respond with a single activity. To demonstrate a good grasp of the language and an extensive vocabulary, cover the entire day from getting up in the morning to going to bed at night.
- Link vocabulary with different verbs. Use both regular and irregular verbs for each tense.
- Read your responses out loud once a day, to improve your pronunciation and intonation.
- Record the conversations and listen to them during the day instead of your music.
- Listen to your classmates when the teacher is engaged with them, you will benefit from it. Avoid switching off.
- Become acquainted with Spanish culture and traditions.
- Be aware that the oral examination is good preparation for the written exam in June.
- Don't wait until the last minute.

An A1 student

- Has a broad vocabulary relating to different topics.
- Has a good grasp of grammar; recognises a tense in the given question and is able to respond in the correct tense.
- Demonstrates knowledge of both regular and irregular verbs.
- Has good pronunciation and fluency.
- Uses intonation in their speech.
- Demonstrates an element of spontaneity in their responses.

Common errors

- Being too nervous. The examiner is not looking for holes in your knowledge, steer the conversation to things you are comfortable speaking about.
- Making the examiner work to assess your ability. Always attempt to expand on your answer as much as possible.
- Repeating the same verb.
- Responding in the incorrect tense.
- Incorrect grammatical agreement be-



Marking scheme for general conversation

Grade	Ability	Grammar	Pronunciation/Communication	Examiner
65-70	- Fluent - Spontaneous	- Excellent syntax - Self-correction	- Very Good	- Mainly a listener
55-60	- Competent - Willingness to elaborate	- Good syntax - Minor errors but attempted correction	- Some mistakes but does not impede communication	- Prompter/facilitator
45-50	- Adequate - Relevant material used	- Good syntax with prepared questions but difficulty engaging with the examiner	- Fair - Inaccuracies but meaning never in doubt	- Intervener, may need to rephrase
30-40	- Limited - Problems in comprehension	- Fair syntax - Basic vocabulary and grammar	- Impeded occasionally - Inaccuracies	- Intervener - Assists with difficulties and adjusts
20-25	- Limited - Minimal	- Poor Syntax - Frequent grammatical errors - Needs regular assistance from examiner	- Persistent difficulties in understanding the intended meaning	- Continuously assisting

tween adjectives and nouns, and singular and plural.

- Using the incorrect article. Make sure to use for example: *el problema/un problema/este problema.*
- Using *ser* instead of *estar* (the verb “to be”).
- Incorrect use of *gustar/encantar + infinitive*, eg *me gusta ir al cine.*
- Not using the subjunctive where required, eg *cuando termine los exámenes iré de vacaciones.*
- Not paying attention or responding to the examiner's questions.
- Not correcting a grammatical mistake or mispronunciation when you recognise you have made one. Don't just continue talking, correct it.

ROLEPLAYS

The roleplay comes after the general conversation. The examiner will ask a student to play one role from the five prepared. Normally, students have a few minutes to revise the selected roleplay. Take this opportunity to ask the examiner to explain any words or phrases in the roleplay that you may have forgotten. You will not be penalised for this. The examiner will then ask if you are ready to begin.

Preparation tips

- Read the roleplays aloud once a day.
- Record and listen to them during the day.
- Once you are familiar with the role plays, practise with a classmate.

- Avoid monotony. Have fun with it. Play the role. This makes it more enjoyable for you and the examiner, leaving a positive impression.
- Learn the five roleplays, not just one.

Common Errors

- Not using intonation in your speech.
- Memorizing the roleplays without understanding what is being said.
- Not making eye contact with the examiner and looking at the sheet the entire time.
- Responding with a single “si” or “no” in the “open question” at the end of the roleplay. Answer with a full sentence, if in doubt use the same verb as the examiner uses in the question.