

High Examination Performance – A 10 Point Plan

As you **start** the exam

1. **Think positively** and **relax** at your exam desk. Your thought patterns are very important. Think, *“I am ready, I am good enough to get the result I want. I can do this. I know what is expected of me in this exam subject. I know how to read the questions carefully and write answers within the time allowed.”* Remember you are prepared and good enough to sit this exam right now.

NOTE: One can never be COMPLETELY and PERFECTLY prepared for anything in life. Visualise successfully completing the exam paper.

Focus on and practise your **breathing** exercises. Gently become relaxed, calm and grounded.

2. Read questions carefully and **tick off** the ones you may answer.
3. **Decide** which questions you will answer using the **BUG** technique (see technique and examples below).

4. **Decide on the order** in which you will answer the questions. Begin with the ones you are most confident about.

During the exam

5. Brainstorm an answer plan. **Categorise and group relevant points.**

6. Write your answer in the time allowed.

Note: Some questions may have many parts with different marks allotted to each part. This will influence how much time you will spend on each part.

7. Keep your **attention focused** on the question you are working on. Avoid thinking about past answers or future answers

8. If you get *stuck* on a point or can't remember some details, leave a space on your answer book and **continue writing on the next point**. It is likely the information missing will come into your mind and you will then be able to fill in the blank spaces. **The idea is to keep your concentration and answering flow going and uninterrupted**. Many students when they can't remember some details panic, worry and lose concentration and this adversely affects their time management and the quality of the other answers.

9. **Present all your answers clearly marked and labelled**. When cancelling material, simply draw a line through the sentence(s). **Include all your answer plans and rough work in your answer book.**

Attempt the required number of questions and all the relevant parts of each question.

After the exam

10. Avoid post-mortems and checking answers with other students.
Focus your *attention and energy* on relaxing and preparing for your next exam.

Handling Examination Nerves

Almost everybody feels anxious and nervous about examinations. Likewise, all top performers in their chosen fields i.e. sport, public speaking, actors, comedians etc., experience some sort of anxiety prior to performing. When faced with an important task or challenge like the leaving cert exam, lots of nervous energy, known as adrenalin is pumped into the body. It is important to harness this nervous energy to help your exam performance. This nervous energy may increase your alertness, allow you focus / concentrate for longer periods and help speed up what you do.

Some student let the 'nerves' control them. They panic and worry, usually over what they have no control over.

Remember: The way to exam success is being prepared by knowing what to expect and responding appropriately.

Should you begin to worry, **CHANGE** you focus of attention away from your thoughts and feelings **to the revision task or exam question at hand**.

By looking at a focal point outside yourself, you break up feelings of absorption such as worry, self-doubt and guilt. The practice of conscious breathing centres you and returns you to the present moment.

Four Corner Breathing

This exercise is a tried and tested way to calm yourself quickly any time, anywhere.

First look around and find something that has four corners – a picture, your desk, a window, a door or draw a rectangle on a page.

1. Look at the upper left-hand corner and inhale for the count of four
2. Move your gaze to the upper right-hand corner and hold your breath for the count of four.
3. Move your gaze to the lower right-hand corner and exhale for the count of four.
4. Move your gaze to the lower left hand corner, silently say the words relax, relax, smile, and just do that.

Breathe in ...2,3,4

Hold...2,3,4

Relax... Relax... Smile

Breathe out...2,3,4

Understanding the Exam Question

Each question on the exam paper has been carefully worded so that you can answer it within the timeframe allowed.

To help you understand the question, you might use the **BUG technique** when appropriate

1. **BOX**
 2. **Underline**
 3. **Glance back to check**
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1. Put a box around the action / instruction / directive word(s). An action word tells you **what is expected**, e.g. discuss, explain, evaluate etc.
 2. **Underline the key words** in the question. This will help you sort out not only the contents required, but will also tell you any limitations, e.g. if there is a specific time frame or if only one element is to be discussed
 3. **Glance back** – have you missed out any words which are important and change what you have to do?

Some Examples:

Geography:

Examine the part national debt and global trade patterns play in continuing the cycle of poverty in many countries.

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English:

“Essentially the play *Macbeth* is about power, its use and abuse.” Discuss this view of the play, supporting the answer with the aid of suitable reference to the text.

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