

HOW TO ACE YOUR EXAMS

You're weekly guide to help you achieve your potential



Sticking with the sticky subjects

It is easier to revise and work on subjects you enjoy and are good at, but you must not ignore the others



JOE MCCORMACK



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As you prepare for your final exams, teachers and parents totally understand that even though you are making great strides, you still have plenty of fears. From speaking with students over the years, I find it's not the full set of exams that cause concern; it is usually only one or two subjects. Naturally everyone has their own talents and subjects they prefer. Personally, I was better at the Sciences than the languages but I persevered and got the grades I wanted in the languages I chose.

Sometimes subjects you are not looking forward to are the ones that have you on guard and you end up doing better in; a paper on the day can go well in an exam you were dreading. I regularly hear welcome surprise coming from students on results day, with comments such as "I didn't expect that result in xxxxx". The moral of the story here is that too much concern about a subject could end in false worry and be draining you of energy; energy you need for revising and getting your head right.

Preparing for one of your less favoured subjects is a blatant case of having to 'get on with it'. Of course, it is easier to revise and work on subjects you enjoy and are good at, but you must not ignore the others. Studying and preparing the 'frog subjects' is probably the biggest challenge you

will face during your exam year. You must prioritise these subjects on your 'Lifestyle Timetable' as I have discussed in my previous column. Author and re-constructive surgeon, Jack Penn, once said:

"One of the secrets in life is making stepping stones out of stumbling blocks".

Maths is one of those subjects that many students find difficult. To me Maths is about grafting to understand the basics, building your confidence and not being prepared to give up easy. Start by attempting the easier exam questions (usually the part a's and b's) and subsequently graduating to the part c's and d's. You should check your work as you go against a good quality solutions book and thus be constantly 'learning by doing'. Here are some of my top tips to improve your performance in Maths (and its exam) at any level:

TWENTY TOP TIPS TO EXCEL IN MATHS.

1. Put formulas, explanation of words and keynotes into a little pocket notebook. Learn.
2. Practice as many past exam questions as you can and check your answers against a fully developed and explained solutions book.
3. Challenge yourself to try and come up with a second method of doing specific questions.
4. Try to approach each question from different angles. Always write down something. Do not be afraid of making a mistake.
5. Draw a diagram (if possible) and label it to simplify a question.
6. Be familiar with what is and what is not in your log tables.

7. When studying, exhaust all attempts to answer an exam question before referring to your solutions book. Do not give up easily.

8. Read each question in Maths carefully and underline or highlight the key words and phrases.

9. At all levels, if you feel overwhelmed by the length and difficulty of the course - start with basic Algebra.

10. Find yourself a study buddy to share questions and resources with. Discuss problems with each other and encourage.

11. Use various Internet sites as a companion to improve your Maths skills.

12. Consult your teacher about problems with topics or specific Maths questions during and after class.

13. Start by attempting basic questions for each topic, building up to a full exam question. Answer the exact question being asked.

14. When writing a solution to a Maths question, do not skip any steps.

15. Do not be afraid to explain a solution to a question with words if you cannot do so with numbers and symbols.

16. Spend five to ten minutes going over what your teacher has done with you in class each day.

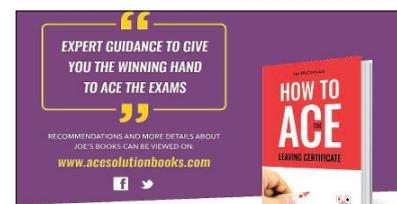
17. Every time you write down a formula, draw a box around it to help you remember it. Check if this formula is in your log tables. If not, you need to memorise it.

18. Anything that you type into your calculator (related to a question) must be written on your answer book also.

19. Have all resources present when doing Maths questions i.e. Full Maths set, pencil, calculator and log tables.

20. If you are in exam year, practice as many previous exam questions as you possibly can.

Joe McCormack has taught Maths, Geography, ICT, Technical Graphics, CPSE, Woodwork and Science in various secondary schools in Ireland for the last fifteen years. In addition to correcting exams for the Dept of Education and Skills and Dublin Examining Board he has worked in Ireland's top school for tuition, the Dublin School of Grinds. Through his experience and research, Joe has gained a unique understanding of the struggles and obstacles students face when it comes to Junior and Leaving Cert exams.
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ACADEMIC YEAR SEPT 2018 – MAY 2019
POST LEAVING CERT COURSES AT QQI Level 5 & 6

Healthcare and Community Care

- Applied Social Studies
- Applied Psychology *New
- Childcare/Special Needs Assistant
- Nursing Studies
- Health Service Skills
- Pharmacy Assistant *New

Pre-University General Courses

- Pre-University Arts (History)
- Pre University Liberal Arts (English) *New
- Language & European Studies
- Pre-University Law
- Pre-University Business
- Human Resource Management *New

Pre-University Science Courses

- Pre-University Science/ Agricultural Science
- Animal Care
- Equine Business & Horsemanship *New

General Business

- Tourism
- Airline Studies *New
- Legal and Medical Secretary/Office Administration
- Beauty Therapy
- Hairdressing

Food

- Professional Cookery
- Food Science

Sport

- Sports Management & Coaching
- Sports Injury Prevention & Massage Therapy *New

- Sports Coaching / Sports Science

Multimedia and Computers

- Computer Systems and Networks
- Multimedia and Computers
- Creative Media
- Sound Production

The Arts

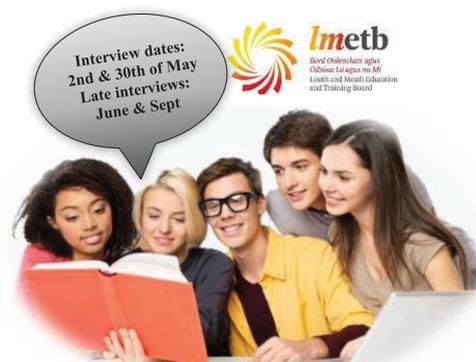
- Music Performance
- Art Portfolio

Advanced Certificates (QQI level 6)

- Beauty Therapy *New
- Hairdressing (Senior Trade) *New
- Healthcare Supervision (2 years program) *New
- Multimedia & Web Development
- Art
- Special Needs Awareness & Assisting *New
- Early Childhood Care & Education

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Interview dates:
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Late interviews:
June & Sept



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