



Exam Technique
Biology – Leaving Cert
Quick Notes

Exam Technique

Studying Biology for the Leaving Certificate

Read this - it will make your life much easier

Total marks available = 400

The way the exam is structured it is possible to obtain more than **80% of the marks from Sections 1 and 2 of the syllabus plus the Mandatory Practical Activities. (MPA)**

This only amounts to about **40% of the material of the syllabus.**

When revising it is therefore essential to learn these parts (Sections 1 and 2 plus MPA) really well before going on to Section 3 of the syllabus. You should learn the popular topics from section 3 of the syllabus (listed in Section C of the exam below) before going on to the other topics.

To be safe you should **cover all topics.**

Incorrect spelling, punctuation and grammar are not normally penalised but there are a few words you must spell correctly e.g. **ureter / urethra and adenine / adenosine**

As a General Guide

- **Each correct relevant point of information is worth 3 marks.** A question worth 15 marks will probably need 5 correct points of information to get full marks.
- **Diagrams are usually worth 6, 3 or 0 marks** [3 if one major part is absent and 0 if 2 parts are missing]
- Labels are worth 1 or 2 marks up to a maximum of 6 marks

Exam has 3 sections

Section A – Short Questions – Answer on the Paper

- Worth 100 marks – each question is worth 20 marks
- Spend a **maximum of 30 minutes on this section**
- It says answer 5 questions but you should **answer all six** as the marks for the best 5 questions will be awarded
- There will be
 - 2 questions from Section 1 of the syllabus
 - 2 questions from Section 2 of the syllabus
 - 2 questions from Section 3 of the syllabus

- Give **only one answer** to each part of each question **as a wrong answer will cancel a correct one in this section of the paper.**
- If you put any answers to this section in your answer booklet write “*See Answer Booklet*” on the paper in the space for the answer to that section **or it will not be marked.**

Section B – Mandatory Practical Activities – Answer on the paper

- Worth 60 marks – each question is worth 30 marks
- Spend a **maximum of 30 minutes on this section**
- It says answer 2 questions but you should **answer all three**, if you have time, as the marks for the best 2 questions will be awarded
- If you put any answers to this section in your answer booklet write “*See Answer Booklet*” on the paper in the space for the answer to that section **or it will not be marked**

Section C – Long Questions – Answer in the Answer Booklet provided

- Worth 240 marks – each question is worth 60 marks
- Spend **2 hours** on this section i.e. **a maximum of 30 minutes per question**
- There will be
 - 1 question from Section 1 of the syllabus
 - 2 questions from Section 2 of the syllabus
 - 3 questions from Section 3 of the syllabus

Cancelling of correct information by wrong information does not normally apply.

However ----

If the answer is one word only give one answer as an excess wrong answer may cancel a correct one

Questions in this section **often contain parts dealing with the mandatory practical activities**

Popular topics for questions are

- **Section 1**
 - Ecology often involving extracting information from a section of text
- **Section 2**
 - Genetics usually including a cross
 - Respiration or Photosynthesis
- **Section 3**
 - Human Reproduction
 - Sexual Reproduction in Flowering plants
 - Microbiology

- Excretion and Homeostasis

Rough Work

- Do this at the back of the Answer Booklet
- Number the work
- Do not cross it out
- If it happens to contain correct information you forgot to put into your answer you will be awarded marks for it.

Extra Questions

- **Answer all required questions**
- **Read over your answers and check that they make sense** [you would be amazed at the nonsense that can be written under exam pressure]
- **Make sure you have not left out any parts** of the question
- **If, after doing all this, you still have time left over** then answer another question [in my experience about 40% of candidates do an extra answer in section C and of these more than 70% improve their mark by doing so]

Other Points

- Write neatly and legibly
- Number your answers carefully
- If you leave a blank page write PTO in the bottom right hand corner
- All of these things make life easier for the examiners and put them in a better mood.
- You have spent two years preparing for this exam. Do not leave early keep writing until you are told to stop any correct answers you give will be awarded marks.