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Home Economics

How to get an A in the Junior Cert
Home Economics Exam



by Eimear

Eimear got an A in her higher Junior Cert Home Economics paper. Here she shares what she learned.

Home Economics is a great subject for anyone to take on for the Junior Cert, it teaches loads of practical skills and useful information that can actually be applied later on in life. However, there is a lot of information to take in so you do need to put effort into it. A lot of people choose it as a subject because they think it's all cooking and baking and then get a pretty big shock when they see all they have to learn. This subject can be really fun so long as you study it right, follow this guide to get the best mark that you possibly can!

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How it's Assessed

- ▶ Overall, you're being marked out of 600. 50% of this mark is the written exam that you do in June, 35% is going for the practical exam you do around April and 15% is going for the optional study project work that you complete by March.
- ▶ Each of these percentages are pretty high, so there's no room for slacking in any of them, or it could be the difference between grades for you.

The Project

- ▶ You have a choice between doing your project on either Childcare, Design and Craftwork or Textile Skills. In most cases, the teacher will choose one option for the whole class.
- ▶ You are given a brief and can start working on it as early as 2nd year. You have to create your project and also write up a folder/presentation of it after, but because you have so much time, you can really make sure that it's perfect so you can get the full 15%.
- ▶ It's easy to get the full marks here if you just make the effort. When you're writing up the folder, don't cut corners! Make it really visually appealing so the examiner will remember it.
- ▶ You can type or write it up. There's no extra marks going for either. I did a bit of both because I thought the typed words looked more precise but a written piece looked more authentic so I think a mix is good.



The Practical Culinary Exam

- ▶ Surprisingly, for an exam, this bit can be really fun. You get to cook or bake a lot and it's great. However, it can be really stressful too. Things can always go wrong, that's life. Practice and preparation are key here.
- ▶ You're given an hour and a half for the examination along with 30 minutes beforehand to prepare yourself.
- ▶ Once you're given your brief (there are 7 altogether), you can start planning what you're going to make. Sticking to the brief is essential. There's no point cooking a perfect beef lasagne if the brief asks you for a vegetarian meal.
- ▶ There are important words in each brief that hint at what you should focus on. Pinpoint and underline these words and refer back to them when you're writing your evaluation at the end as well as in your folder that you write up explaining all the aspects of your dish.
- ▶ Practise the dish(es) as often as possible at home, it'll help you get your timing right, because you will probably be under a bit of time pressure in the exam. You'll also then know that there's no reason for you to be nervous and that you can do it perfectly. Confidence is so important.
- ▶ If you're nervous or worried that you'll make a mistake on the day, forget about it. I completely burnt all my onions in my exam and I was full sure that I'd ruined my chances of an A. Turns out the examiner didn't care about the onions, I still got the A. They understand that these things happen when you're under pressure. What was important was that I realised I had made the mistake so I made sure to mention it in my evaluation.
- ▶ Be organised. Make a plan and a list of everything you need and in what order you're going to do everything.



The Written Exam

This is very straightforward, there's just two sections; Section A and Section B

Section A

- ▶ This is 24 short questions on all the topics you've covered in class. I would recommend doing this first because it'll jog your memory of all the basic Home Ec knowledge and it'll get your mind thinking in Home Ec mode for the long questions.
- ▶ The instructions say to answer 20 questions but if I were you I'd do all 24. That way you can get 4 wrong but still get 100%.
- ▶ Keep things short to save time and effort. Pick out key words, include the essentials and discard the lengthy, pointless, extra information.
- ▶ It's essential that you read the question thoroughly and ensure you know what you're being asked. I would advise you to know the definition of each term commonly used. If you're asked to 'List', then you don't need to go into detail, merely list out the information needed. If you are asked to 'discuss', however, then you must elaborate and give detail.

Section B

- ▶ Here you have to answer 4 long questions out of 6. If you have time, feel free to do an extra one but I would probably recommend using your time to perfect your other questions instead of being under time pressure. I would recommend spending about 25-30 minutes on each question.
- ▶ Make sure your answers are clear and concise. The examiner will love to see something that's easy to read and not too long-winded. Write your answers in bullet points where you can.
- ▶ Studying past papers on Studyclix will help a lot for predicting what will come up in these questions. For example, it's highly likely that if vegetables come up one year, they won't appear the year after, so you know what topics to learn more in depth.



General Tips

- ▶ Stay in 'Home Ec Mode' even when you're not studying. Remember, Home Ec is about daily life, things around the house, etc. Therefore, when you see things around you, make yourself recite all you know about it to stick the info in your mind. For example, you're in your kitchen, you see an orange, say out loud to yourself, "Oranges: a good source of Vitamin C, prevents scurvy", you'd be surprised at how things like that can help you remember all of the information.
- ▶ When it comes to studying, I think that writing things out really is the way to go. Doing out questions from exam papers ensures that you can fully answer that sort of question if it comes up in the future. The examiners often recycle questions, so the more of the test papers you can answer, the better chance you have of answering the questions in your exam.
- ▶ Also, writing information out on a sheet of paper can be just as helpful. It helps engrain the information in your mind. This could be useful for things like in the long question if you're asked to state the nutritional composition of a food group. If you've written it out several times at home, you'll have a better chance at remembering it in the exam.





Best of luck with you studies!

I'm sure you'll do great in the exams.

