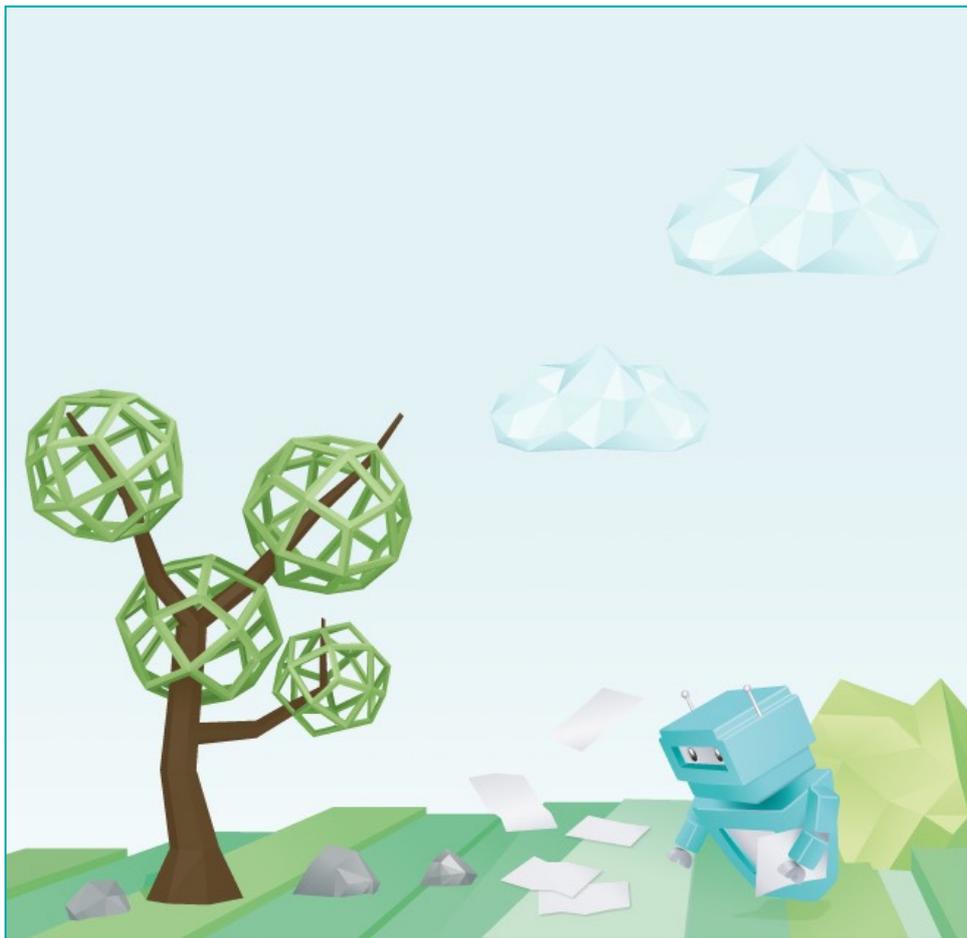


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A Guide to Success in Home Ec

How I got an H1 in the Leaving Cert Home Ec



I don't think that anyone really anticipates the amount of work that is involved in Home Economics when they first choose it in 5th Year. From writing all the Food Assignments to memorizing endless amounts of tables and information, it really is a lot to take on. I think, however, that with the right attitude and study tactics, it's a very doable subject that anyone can succeed in, and I'm here to help you with that!

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There's so much to study, do I really have to learn it all?

- No. Although the Home Ec. text books are big and heavy, a lot of the information is pretty irrelevant to the exam. Also, for most topics, the endless amount of information is given so that you can choose and select the specific information you would prefer or that you find easiest to learn, the examiners rarely ask for multiples.
- For example: On the course, many forms of Saving Schemes are taught, but in the exam, it has never asked for more than one to be discussed. So, you learn the one which is easiest for you, instead of memorizing all of them and becoming at risk of mixing them up or forgetting vital pieces of information
- This goes for many topics on the Home Ec. course, such as:
 - Mortgages
 - Food Poisoning Bacteria
 - Methods of Extensive Processing
 - Local Authority Schemes
 - etc., etc.
- My advice is to familiarize yourself with the test papers and get an idea of what, and how much the examiners generally look for!



How do I lay out my answers to optimise my answer and marks?

- We'll start with Section A, Short Questions. It's really important that you write as much as possible. Spew out all the information you know. If 2 lines are provided, they are provided for a reason, you **MUST** fill them in! That extra bit of information you give could award you an extra mark and be the difference between a whole grade.
- Section B Question 1 can be tricky, and everyone has different methods for answering it. I used to just write out headings with information underneath but it proved lengthy and time consuming. Then, I tried **drawing out a table**. It's truly a time-saver and for me, the best format to do this question. It's also important to take note of what the question is actually asking. Generally, it's 'comment' and 'elaborate'. I would recommend highlighting this so you know exactly what you must do. Below is Question 1 (a) from 2013 that I did as an example.



Worked Example

(a) In relation to the information provided in the chart, comment **and** elaborate on the percentage of respondents consuming the recommended number of daily servings from each shelf of the *Food Pyramid*. (24)

Shelf on Food Pyramid	Comment	Elaborate
Cereals, breads and potatoes	The percentage of people eating the RDA for this shelf has decreased from 40% in 1998 to 26% in 2007. This is quite a big drop.	Men, needing and consuming on average more carbohydrates than women, are more likely to be eating more than 6+ servings a day. Too much processed carbohydrate intake can lead to health problems and insufficient intake can lead to bowel diseases.
Fruit and Vegetables	The amount of people eating the RDA for this group has increased from 56% in 1998 to 65% in 2001. This is a large and very positive increase to see.	5 portions of fruit and vegetables are recommended for everyday consumption. Perhaps more people are eating the right amount as they are more aware of the health benefits of fruit and vegetables and they are also more available due to farmer's markets. Health benefits of fruit and veg include a healthy immune system (vit C) and healthy growth (vit A).

Shelf on Food Pyramid	Comment	Elaborate
Milk, cheese and yoghurt products	<p>Only 22% of people ate the RDA for this group in 1998 and it has declined to 20% in 2007. This is a poor level of consumption of a vital food group.</p> <p>Perhaps the consumption is low due to the stigma that dairy products are high in fat, therefore people on slimming diets avoid them. Dairy intolerance could also be an affecting factor. A lack of dairy products in the diet could cause a lack of calcium in the</p>	<p>Perhaps the consumption is low due to the stigma that dairy products are high in fat, therefore people on slimming diets avoid them. Dairy intolerance could also be an affecting factor. A lack of dairy products in the diet could cause a lack of calcium in the body, leading to health implications such as osteoporosis and tooth decay.</p>
Meat, fish, poultry and alternatives	<p>There's an increase of 3% of the correct intake of this shelf from 1998 (36%) to 2007 (39%). Too much or too little of this food group can have health implications.</p>	<p>Like in the previous group, it is likely that the consumption of meat products leads to an intake of too much fat, which puts people off, especially red meat. This food group is essential to provide iron and protein to the body to prevent anaemia and help growth respectively.</p>



Some Notes on this Answer

- You MUST refer to figures in the table
- Suggest reason for figures
- I used four rows, 24 marks = 4 points @ 6 marks each
- As you can see, my answer is clear and concise. The examiner will love to see something that's easy to read and not too long-winded. This method saves buckets of time so I really recommend it.
- With regards to other questions, it is important that you take note of how many marks are going for each question, you don't want to come up short and lose marks, or write too much and waste time! E.g. 16 marks = 4 points of info.

How do I avoid common mistakes?

- **Not Being Able to Distinguish Between Different Terms:** Lots of students, including myself, have fallen victim to interpreting the questions incorrectly. Unfortunately, Home Economics has several terms that seem similar, but are different. For example, a common question that comes up is to give details of a food which has undergone extensive processing, has had its shelf life prolonged, or has added value. I used to believe that these were all the same thing, and that I could use cheese for all of them. I was wrong. You MUST know the difference and have an answer prepared for each.
- **Reading the Question Incorrectly:** This is a very common mistake. 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.
- **Not Reading All of the Question:** I used to often rush into a question that I thought looked doable without reading it fully. Then, I realised that I couldn't answer the last part, thus losing time and marks. It's essential that you read and are sure that you can answer ALL of the question.



- **Being unaware of Timing:** I know this seems basic, but you will be caught for time in the Home Ec exam so it's crucial that you know your timing. What I did was write the time that I knew I had to be done Section A, Section B and Section C for on my hand before the exam. The exam started at 2 p.m. (and probably will for you too), so I knew I had to be finished Section A at 2:30 at the latest, finished Section B Q1 at 3:05 and finished Section B completely by 3:50 to give myself enough time for the Elective, Section C. This way, I didn't spend too much time on one question and lose out on another.

How am I supposed to remember all of the information?

- There's an incredible amount to be learned off for Home Ec, but life can be made easier by **using rhymes, associations and so on to remember the tricky bits**, such as Vitamins, RDAs, etc. For example, when trying to learn off the sources, properties and functions of Vitamin E, I used associations. I said that Vitamin E ('ee' sound) can be found in seeds ('ee' sound), and margarine ('ee' sound) and that its function is to prevent eye disease in premature babies (Eye=E=Vitamin E). It may seem complicated but just use whatever works for you. Try to make it fun!
- Another method would be, if you're learning steps, **come up with a little story** like this one that I used for remembering the process of making flour
 - Colm (Cleaning)
 - Bought (Break-rolling)
 - Seán (Sieving)
 - Ripe (Rolling)
 - Apples (Additives)
- Also, like I said before, remember that you don't need to know ALL of the information, you can pick and choose what suits you best. Even for the process of flour above, you needn't remember every step, the marking scheme only requires 5! (there are 8 steps). Familiarise yourself with things like this to discard useless information in your head and make room for more essential pieces of information!



What's the best way of studying?

- Everyone has a different way of studying that suits them best, whether it's drawing out a mind map, making flash cards or just plain reading.
- For me, and especially in Home Ec, I think that **writing things out** really is the way to go. It may seem daunting, but 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. For example, when learning the process of making cheese, I wrote it out, highlighted the important words, read over it, and then wrote it out again without looking at the book to see if I had remembered it. And I had, because I remembered writing it out. Try it for yourself!
- **Use Test Papers, Marking Schemes and Studyclix.** In the final days running up to the Home Ec exam, I focused almost solely on the test papers. I looked at each question and marked every one that I didn't think I could answer if it came up in the exam. Then, for each question, I found the answer and ensured that I could answer that question if something similar came up for my exam. It proved extremely helpful.
- **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 reinforce the information 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, helps the absorption of calcium and prevents scurvy", you'd be amazed at how things like that can help you remember all of the information.
- Finally, **keep things short.** You'll have a hard time remembering long sentences. Pick out key words and make bullet points of the essentials and discard the lengthy, pointless, extra information.



A Note on the Food Assignment Journal

- The journal is worth 20% of your overall mark and is very important, so it's worth the effort.
- Yes, it is quite long-winded and it seems like half of the stuff you're writing is pointless, but it will get you the vital marks in the end. The good thing about it is, it's not terribly difficult. It's mainly basic research and analysis. So the main bother really is the time consumption. My advice would be to put in the effort in 5th year so that you're not obsessing and stressing over it in 6th year when you have more important things to focus on.



Go n-éirí leat sa scrúdú!
I'm sure you'll do great.