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Premium video tutorials, exam-style questions and revision resources for the 9-1 Science GCSEs

My Exam Plan 3 - Exam Technique

Welcome to **My Exam Plan 3**.

Before reading on, please review:

- [My Exam Plan 1 – Revision Technique](#)
- [My Exam Plan 2 – Practice Questions](#)

They cover exam dates and revision checklists and also provide advice on the ***best ways to revise*** and how to ***use practice questions effectively***.

In this third and final **My Exam Plan** blog, we've put together our top 5 tips on ***exam technique*** – how you actually ***do*** your science exams.

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Counting down:

5. Flick through the paper first

At the start of the exam, it's worth having a very quick flick through the paper. This will give you a sense of what the exam looks like and help make sure you don't miss out any questions! You'll see questions that you feel more confident about and others that look tricky. Remember, the easier questions are near the beginning of the exam paper.

The length of the paper depends on the exam board and whether you're doing Double Award or Triple. Have a look at the top of your My GCSE Science video dashboard to see the dates and lengths of your papers. But for all of them, you're aiming for roughly one mark per minute. Keep that in mind and take care to manage your time well in the exam. Ideally, if you can answer the questions a little faster than a mark per minute that will give you time to review the paper before time's up.

4. Look carefully at the stem of the question

Here's a typical comment from an examiner's report: "Students often didn't pay attention to information provided in the stem of a question in order to guide a reasoned response and avoid the inclusion of irrelevant information".

The **stem** of the question is the information given right at the beginning in the form of a paragraph, a table, a graph, a diagram. It's vital to read the stem of the question carefully because it contains clues to the answer. Feel free to underline, highlight, etc. But **don't** skip straight to the answer, write something... and then realise that the question was asking something different! That leads to crossing out and trying to squeeze answers into limited space.

3. Look out for command words and the number of marks

The command word, such as describe, explain, evaluate, calculate, compare is the key word in the question that tells you **what** to do. Each command word means something very specific, and to get top marks it really is very important to pay attention to the command word and follow the instructions correctly.

As part of your revision, check out these three blogs, one for each science subject, which provide examples of how to respond to each command word:

- [Command words in GCSE Biology](#)
- [Command words in GCSE Chemistry](#)
- [Command words in GCSE Physics](#)

For really effective exam practice, try the example questions for each type of command word before reviewing the mark schemes.

As you'll see when you work through the examples in each blog, the number of marks after each question tells you **how much** to write. Remember, it's about one mark per minute. Take care to pay attention to how many marks an answer is worth and spend more time on questions worth more marks!

2. Write clearly and concisely

Try your best to avoid including irrelevant information. It's tempting to write as much as possible to increase your chances of getting the marks, but this can sometimes work against you.

For example, think about the question, "Describe the effect of increasing light intensity on the rate of photosynthesis."

The following answer is longer than it needs to be:

- "The effect of increasing light intensity on the rate of photosynthesis is that the higher the light intensity, the higher the rate of photosynthesis, because enzymes convert carbon dioxide and water into glucose quicker. Light provides energy for photosynthesis to occur."

The answer above could be condensed to:

- "The higher the light intensity, the higher the rate of photosynthesis. Light provides energy for photosynthesis."

In exams, there's no need to write out parts of the question. In the above example, this part: "The effect of increasing light intensity on the rate of photosynthesis is that..." is already in the question, so it's not needed in the answer, and so you would waste time if you wrote it out.

The final and **absolutely essential** tip is in two parts:

1 a) Read the question carefully

1 b) Read the question carefully

Well, that's technically one point, but it's **so important** it's worth saying twice!

Questions often include words in bold, or specific instructions such as 'give the correct unit' or 'use the equation from the equation sheet' or 'do not include movement in your answer'. Take care to follow these instructions.

Sometimes a question will say, 'use a diagram if you wish'. If it suggests using a diagram, go for it! One examiner wrote the following about a question which suggested sketching graphs: "Those that did include simple, correct graphs often scored 4 out of the 5 marks available just from their graphs. Students found written explanations of their described effects to be more challenging."

Drawing a diagram can show your knowledge, save you time and get you top marks as well. Don't pass up the chance!

My GCSE Science

Remember, My GCSE Science covers the **entire specification precisely and in the right level of detail** to get the top grades at GCSE.

Our resources help you **develop your exam technique**. In addition to our video tutorials, every topic is covered by **unique exam-style questions**. Each question has a detailed **mark scheme** with helpful **tips** to help you prepare for the exams.

You can print out our [30 Minute Revision Strategy](#) which summarises our revision advice in one handy A4 sheet.