

Examiner Tips for AS and A Level Geography (9696)

How to Use These Tips

These tips highlight some common mistakes made by students. They are collected under headings for each paper to help you when you revise.

General Advice

You will need to know the precise meaning of geographical terms and be able to use them in answers, and also be familiar with case study material and be able to quote examples, preferably those with which you are familiar.

Spelling

Ideally geographical terms should be spelt correctly.

General Tips

- Know the meaning of, and be able to define, geographical terms accurately.
- Know the meaning of the major command words used in questions and also how to apply them to the information given. For instance, if you are asked to “describe a feature”, that means you should say what it looks like, what dimensions it has etc, giving information from the question if possible (even if it is not explicitly asked for). “Explain” means that you need to give the reasons for something.
- Do not explain if the question asks for description. For instance, practise describing landforms, the characteristics of a migrant etc.
- Read the question carefully, pay close attention to what it asks and respond to the command words.
- Plan your answers carefully so you do not repeat or duplicate material.
- Use geographical terms in your answers as much as possible.
- Use the resource material given in the question to support your answer.
- Annotated maps, diagrams and graphs can aid your answer. Use them whenever possible but do not then repeat the information in words; diagrams, maps, graphs etc can be used instead of words.
- Use case studies that are familiar to you, e.g. from your home country, where possible. Use case study material even when it is not required specifically by the question.
- Remember that *change* is an important part of all geographical processes, both physical and human. Questions often ask about changes, so make sure that you understand this term.

Revision Tips

- Practise questions which require response to stimulus data.
- Be able to include well-labelled diagrams in your answers. Practise doing these when you are revising. They should be simple, clear and neatly drawn. You will need to be able to draw them quickly.
- Revise small sections of the syllabus at a time.
- Work for short periods then have a short break. Long periods of revision do not always produce the best results.
- Try to make shorter bullet-pointed notes of your longer notes just including the main points. This will ensure that you cover everything. Also it means that you can look through the short notes the day before the exam. Sometimes annotated maps and diagrams are a good way of summarising material when revising.

Paper 1 Tips

- Make sure you are familiar with *all* the core topics. This will maximise your choice.
- Practise drawing annotated maps and diagrams.
- Use diagrams to describe: a well-labelled diagram can show the characteristics of a landform such as a delta.
- Use data to support your answer in the data response questions. This adds substance and therefore achieves marks.
- *Description* of the characteristics of landforms can be as important as explanations of their formation, and the character of migrants as important as the nature of the migration.
- Keep a glossary of geographical terms and learn all the terms before the exam.
- Have knowledge of fieldwork techniques in both physical and human Geography.
- Make sure you understand terms such as *decade*, *trends*, *items of information*, *layout*, and *positive and negative effects* when used in questions.
- Know examples, especially from your home area; you will write more convincingly about areas with which you are familiar.

Paper 2 Tips

- Understand the relationship between the physical and human environment, especially the human impact on the physical environments of your particular areas of study, and be able to use case studies and examples, particularly from your home country.
- Do not ignore resource material given in questions; this should help to guide your answer.
- Tropical climates need knowledge of humid, seasonally humid (savanna) *and* monsoon climates.
- Knowledge of and ability to draw Gersmehl diagrams are very useful for explanation of nutrient cycling in ecosystems and for explaining the impact of human activities in ecosystems.
- Understand the difference between *plan* and *profile*, especially in relation to coasts.
- Be able to relate physical processes to their outcome in the landscape as landforms.
- The scale of a landform is a useful characteristic, especially for desert landforms.
- Be aware of the *physical nature* and *prediction* of natural hazards as well as their *impact* and the *management* of them.
- Evaluation is an essential skill; make sure you understand how to tackle questions such as those that ask *to what extent*.

Paper 3 Tips

- Use examples wherever possible, especially those from your home country.
- Write precisely and in detail focusing on the central requirements of the question. Do not write vague, generalised comments.
- Pay particular attention to data given in the question. Read it, think analytically about it and then use it to support your answer.
- Be able to produce detailed, annotated maps and diagrams to illustrate your answer. Practise these when revising.
- Use as much geographical terminology in your answer as you can.
- Hone your evaluative/assessment skills; they are needed throughout the paper.
- Scale is important. Make sure you know the difference between global, national, regional and local, and respond accordingly if these terms are used in a question.
- Physical, economic, social and political factors influence human activities. They can operate as positive and/or negative factors. Be able to discuss these in relation to each

option you have studied.

- Trade and tourism are closely linked topics and you should be aware of this relationship.

About the Examiner

Frances Twinn is 57 years old has a PhD from Durham a first degree from the University of Wales Aberystwyth and a Post Graduate Certificate in Education from Homerton College Cambridge. She teaches at a co-educational secondary school in South London. She has been a CIE examiner for 22 years a team leader and takes up a Principal Examiners role in November 2006.