

## EXAMINER TIPS for AS and A Level Geography 9696

### How to Use These Tips

These tips are to help you revise and prepare for the examinations. They are divided into General Advice where the tips are for all papers and Paper 1, 2 and 3 tips where the ideas are more specific.

### General Advice

#### Before the examination

- Find out when the examinations are and plan your revision so you have time to revise everything properly.
- Find out how long each paper is and how many questions you have to answer. Find out how many marks there are for each question and so work out how long you have for each question. For example, if you have to answer 5 questions in section A (each worth 10 marks) and 2 questions from the other sections (each worth 25 marks) then section A needs to take half the total time as it is worth half the total marks.
- Find out what choice you have on each paper. Make sure you know how many sections there are and which sections you should answer from.
- Where there are compulsory topics and questions make sure you really do revise all the topics equally.
- Even when there is a choice of questions in a section, make sure you revise fully enough to actually have a choice in the examination.
- Revise small sections of the syllabus at a time. Work for short periods then have a break.
- Make revision notes. You could try bullet point notes, annotated maps, diagrams, mind maps etc. Experiment and find out what works best for you. You can look through these notes more easily just before the exam.
- Test yourself by writing out key points, redrawing diagrams etc. Perhaps you can work with a fellow student and talk about ideas to make sure you really understand them.
- Know the meaning of the major command words used in questions and also how to apply them to the information given. These are some of the most common:
  - *'Describe'* means you should say what something is like – what it looks like, what dimensions it has etc. Give a detailed picture. If there are photographs and diagrams for the question, use them.
  - *'Explain'* means that you need to give the reasons for something, to say why something is as it is.
  - *'Define'* means that you need to give a clear and precise account of a term.
  - *'Annotate'* means you have to label fully with notes that describe and/or explain, depending on what the question asks.
  - *'Evaluate'* means that you need to make an appraisal of an argument or concept by weighing up the nature of the evidence available and identifying and discussing the convincing aspects of the argument as well as the limitations and implications.
  - Instead of *'evaluate'* you might be asked *'to what extent?'* or something similar
- Make a list of all the command words you can find and find out what they mean.
- Know the meaning of, and be able to define, geographical terms accurately and fully. E.g. *deforestation* is not simply 'cutting down trees', it is 'the total deliberate removal or clearance of forest/trees by cutting and /or burning at rates faster than natural regeneration or without replanting'.
- Definitions must not reuse the words to be defined. For example, *land pollution* means the contamination (*pollution*) of the earth's surface (*land*) by the unplanned or illegal disposal of waste substances or materials.

- Make your own dictionary. Ask your teacher for help to make a list of all the terms you should know.
- Practise looking at as many different maps, diagrams, tables etc. as you can and 'read' them to find out what they show.
- Practise drawing clear, simple, neat, fully-labelled diagrams and maps.
- Practise describing patterns. Make sure you have the correct vocabulary such as north/south rather than top/bottom. Use words such as dispersed, concentrated, groupings.
- Look at photographs of whatever you are studying. Practice describing what you see.
- Practise recognising landforms, settlement patterns etc on topographical maps.
- Know models and theories e.g. urban land use models.
- Learn your case studies thoroughly. They can be from textbooks, fieldwork or other sources. Think about what they show and how you might use them. Know where in the world they are and whether they are local, regional, international or global scale.
- Know your own home area and local case studies whenever possible.
- Learn to spell geographical terms correctly.

### **In the Examination**

- Read the instructions carefully and answer the right number of questions from the right sections.
- If you are only allowed to answer one question from a section with two questions, do not answer both! It sounds obvious but some people still make this sort of mistake and lose all the marks for one of the questions.
- Plan your time. If you are running out of time and have to rush you might mis-read a question. Notes and bullet points, although better than nothing, will not get many marks.
- Plan according to the marks for each question. For example, a question worth three marks requires less time and a shorter answer than one worth ten marks. If a question has several parts, then the parts with more marks will need more time and more developed answers.
- Do not leave out questions or parts of questions. Remember, no answer - no chance of any mark.
- Read each question very carefully.
  - Identify the command words – you could underline or highlight them.
  - Identify the other key words and perhaps underline them too.
  - Try to put the question into your own words to understand what it is really asking.
- Read all parts of a question before starting to write your answer. You must think carefully about what is needed for each part as you will not need to repeat material. Even if information is accurate and true, it will not get marks if it is in the wrong part of an answer.
- Look very carefully at the resource material you are given
  - Read the title, key, axes of graphs etc. to find out exactly what it is showing you.
  - Look for dates, scale, and location.
  - Try using coloured pencils or pens to pick out or shade in anything that the question asks you about – this might help you see patterns, see trends, appreciate locations etc.
- **Answer the question.** This is so very, very important!
  - Use your knowledge and understanding.
  - Do not just write out all you know, only write what is needed to answer.
  - Do not try to repeat answers you might have practised from previous papers, they are unlikely to fit your question.

- Do not 'explain' if the question says 'describe' etc.
- Plan your answers. Clear, concise, well ordered, well argued, well supported answers get more marks than long, rambling, muddled, repetitious answers. Quality is better than quantity.
- Use geographical terms in your answers as much as possible.
- Use the appropriate technical vocabulary to describe patterns.
- Use the resource material given in the question to support your answer.
- Annotated maps, diagrams and graphs can aid you and be used instead of lines of writing. Use them whenever possible but do not then repeat the information in words.
- Use case study material even when it is not required specifically by the question.
- Use case studies that are familiar to you, e.g. from your home area, where possible.
- 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.
- Make sure your writing is legible. It is no good writing a brilliant answer if the examiner cannot read it!

### **Paper 1 Tips**

- Make sure you are familiar with all the core topics.
- Work out how much time you have for each section and keep to it.
- Be prepared to use map reading, graph reading, diagram reading skills.
- 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.
- Have knowledge of fieldwork techniques in both Physical and Human Geography.
- Make sure you understand terms such as *sector*, *zone*, *decade*, *trends*, *items of information*, *layout*, and *positive and negative effects* when used in questions.
- Make sure you understand
  - *geology* (*rock hardness, strength, chemical composition, texture, jointing, bedding, dip, faulting*).
  - *form* (*shape, steepness, uniformity*) of slope.
  - *energy exchanges*.
  - *lapse rates and what happens to rising air*.
  - *functional zones*.
  - *infrastructure* (*transport, utilities, water, sewage systems*).
- these are only some of the terms that are poorly understood.
- Know the difference between
  - *rate* and *amount*.
  - *river channel* and *catchment* (*drainage basin*).
- and many others such as *carbonation* and *solution*, *hydrolysis* and *hydration*, *solution* and *suspension* etc.
- Know the difference between a *cross-section*, a *plan* and a *profile*.
- Know urban processes such as *gentrification*, *filtering*.
- Know examples, especially from your home area; you will write more convincingly if you are familiar with an area.

- Use general concepts and key ideas to help you to consider all factors. For example, if a question asks about population change, think about natural increase (birth rate and death rate) and migration. For landforms consider rocks (type and structure), processes and time. Think about environmental, social, economic, and political factors.

- **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.
- Use and integrate case studies and examples, particularly from your home country, wherever possible, even if the question does not specifically ask for them.
- If you are given resource material in questions – use it! You probably need to explain and develop what it shows in 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.
- Know about soils - what their profiles look like, what characteristics they have and how the soil forming processes work to produce these characteristics.
- Know how soils relate to vegetation, climate, parent materials and human activities.
- Understand how geology relates to landforms.
- Understand the difference between *plan* and *profile*, especially in relation to coasts.
- Sketch maps of coastlines are very useful to show relative locations, transport processes, geology etc.
- Understand and be able to explain how physical processes work.
- Be able to relate physical processes to their outcome in the landscape as landforms.
- Be able to explain human impacts in terms of how they affect physical processes.
- Link your knowledge of sustainable management to how it is put into practise.
- The scale of a landform is a useful characteristic, especially for desert landforms.
- Be aware that the scale of landforms affects their importance in a characteristic landscape. For instance, tower karst and dolines are more significant than stalagmites in limestone scenery.
- 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.
- Look at the wording of past questions and check for terms that may be unfamiliar, such as *to monitor* (observe and check impacts), *to exploit* (use), *conflicts of interest*, *agricultural system*, *agricultural productivity*.
- 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. You can assess in terms of *degree* of success or failure, the past versus the present, unforeseen results, different spatial outcomes, and different effects on different groups of people.
- If a question is about a specific place, do not assume you need to have studied that place. You probably just need to use your skills and geographical understanding.
- Expect unusual and unfamiliar data sets and resources.
- 'Scale' is important. Make sure you know the difference between global, national, regional and local, and answer accordingly if these terms are used in a question.
- Effects can be long term or short term; physical, economic, social and political; positive and negative.
- 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.
- Know how fieldwork is carried out so you can use your understanding of how data is collected.
- 'Development' includes economic, social and political development.