

EXAMINER TIPS FOR IGCSE GEOGRAPHY(0460)

Good revision is not just learning your geography but also learning how you use it to get the best grade you can.

General advice

Preparing to get a good grade begins as soon as you start your IGCSE course. You can prepare by:

- finding out what you need to know.
- organizing your notes. Make a list of the topics and case studies.
- knowing how your IGCSE papers are structured and practising past questions.

Your notes

- Download a copy of the Revision Checklist from Cambridge Students and read through it. Be really clear what topics you need to know then check that your notes are complete and make sense. If you need further advice, speak to your teacher who will have a full copy of the Syllabus.
- Ask your teacher if you can have a copy of the syllabus, be really clear what topics you need to know then check that your notes are complete and make sense.
- Whilst there is a choice of questions on Paper 1, Papers 2 and 4 have compulsory questions so you can't afford to have gaps in your notes just in case those topics come up.
- Try to produce an accurate set of notes when you do the work in the first place, but if you need to improve your notes you could:
 - ask a friend if you can copy up work which you have missed from them – but make sure you understand it,
 - find more information on topics you have studied, using your textbook, the library or the Internet. For it to be useful make sure that you fully understand it – if not ask your teacher,
 - buy a good revision guide - there should be lots available in the bookshops.

Learning the work

There are lots of different ways to revise. Some people make lists, other people use diagrams and pictures. Once you know what topics to cover, you have to work out the best way to learn them.

- Make a revision timetable and plan your revision carefully so that you have time to fit in everything you need to cover.
- Work in short concentrated spells and then have a break rather than trying to work continuously. Avoid being interrupted – don't answer the phone/read the text message/have a look at the TV – save it for your planned break.

Do not sit looking at your notes, or just copy them out. Try to do something active, for example you could:

- draw diagrams and sketch maps, including detailed labels, highlighting the most important ones using colours,
- draw tables and charts to learn key ideas about the topic such as the causes and effects, and problems and benefits which you need to learn,
- draw time lines and living graphs which help you pick out how things change and explain the reasons for the changes,
- use small cards to list the main points which you need to learn, especially case studies,
- use colours or highlighter pens to classify items in your notes e.g. causes/effects, long/short term effects, effects on natural environment/people, etc,

- practice map skills using a variety of different maps – ask your teacher if you can borrow maps which have been used in previous examinations,
- ask your teacher for past papers and test yourself. Look at as many past papers as possible. This is not for you to predict questions but to find out what sort of thing is asked. Sometimes it is useful to practise writing out the answers in test conditions,
- if your teacher hasn't explained to you how the exams are marked, ask about it. Ask if you can see questions and their mark schemes from previous examinations. Look particularly at those answers which are worth a lot of marks to discover how you can earn more marks by giving details and examples.

Answering the questions in the examination

- Make sure you use your time carefully. For example in Paper 1 there are 75 marks to get in 105 minutes, that is just under 1½ minutes per mark, but remember that includes time reading, thinking, choosing and planning as well as writing. It is no good writing a page if the question is only worth 2 marks; an answer worth 2 marks should take no more than 3 minutes to write. If you spend too long on questions which are not worth many marks it could mean you don't have enough time to answer the questions which are worth 7 marks properly. If you do finish with time to spare re-read and check your answers adding more facts and ideas if you can remember them.
- Read the questions carefully. When you answer questions on the paper think very carefully. Try to learn how to respond to command words like IDENTIFY, DESCRIBE, EXPLAIN and COMPARE. It is important that you answer the question and do not fall into the trap of just writing down everything you know.
- Answer the questions in order of how confident you are – leave the one you are not confident about until last.
- Do not repeat the same answer in different sections. Examiners do not set questions which require identical answers, if you find you are repeating an answer check that you have read the question properly.

Paper 1 tips

- Look at the instructions on the front of the paper. You have to choose 3 out of the 6 questions. Don't try to answer all the questions, you will not have time to answer them properly.
- Write the number of the questions which you choose on your first answer sheet, if your school uses an answer booklet there may be a grid for you to fill in. Then make sure that you number all the sections of the questions carefully in the left hand margin as you answer them.
- Look at the number of marks available for each part of a question. Don't spend too much time on one part if it is only worth one or two marks, or alternatively write only a short answer when a question is worth more marks. Timing is important, don't spend too much time on your first chosen question, otherwise you will have to rush the last question. Just in case you run out of time, if there is a question which you are not confident on, answer it last.
- Read the information given in the stem of the question carefully as well as the questions themselves.
- Wherever possible in your answers try to include relevant examples and case studies. There may be local examples which you could use in your answers.
- Where you are asked to complete an answer by labelling or drawing on a resource on the insert sheet, you must do this rather than writing an answer. If you use an insert sheet make sure that you put your name on it and hand it in with your other answers.
- When you are asked to use a written resource you will not be given marks for copying out

sections from it. Look at the question which is set and try to show your understanding by answering in your own words.

- If you are asked to compare or describe the differences between two things it is no good just writing about one. You could use words like `bigger` or `more` to help you compare or a word like `whereas` in the middle of your sentence (e.g. `a constructive wave deposits material on the coast whereas a destructive wave erodes material from it`.)
- Try to be as precise as possible as vague statements are unlikely to get you many marks. e.g. `A Stevenson Screen is used to get accurate readings` is far too vague. You need to give details explaining why readings are accurate when a Stevenson Screen is used (e.g. the louvres allow a free flow of air, the white surface reflects the sun's rays, it allows you to take temperatures in the shade etc).
- Make sure you know the differences between global environmental problems which you may have studied. Many people mix up global warming, ozone depletion and acid rain. You must also make sure you don't mix up causes and effects/consequences – you may be asked for one or the other so read the question carefully.

Paper 2 tips

- This paper is testing different skills. Try to be as accurate as you can with measuring and plotting. Take your time, take care and always use a ruler to complete graphs and measure straight line distances.
- Many questions ask you to `use the evidence` in the resources provided such as the maps, photographs and graphs. You must make sure that you do so rather than using your background knowledge. (e.g. if you are asked to describe the features of an industry shown in a photograph there is no need to include general information about that industry and its location. If you are asked to describe features of a coastal area shown on a map there is no point explaining how they were formed. If you are asked to use evidence from the map to explain why there are no settlements in some areas there is no point in referring to the climate as the map extract is unlikely to include information about it.)
- Practise the basic map skills, for example 6 figure grid references. People sometimes get the third and sixth figures confused. Make sure you give the reference for the position of the symbol rather than the name of the place.
- If you are asked to measure a distance it is worth using the scale below the map and a straight edged piece of paper. By doing this you will be less likely to make the mistakes which are possible when using calculation to convert centimetres to kilometres and metres. Look carefully at what units you need to use, whether you should answer to the nearest kilometer or in metres. Make sure you always give the units rather than just writing down the number.
- You could be asked to give a direction or a compass bearing. Make sure you know the difference and check which of the features you are measuring from and to by looking carefully at the wording of the question.
- If you are asked to draw a graph be as accurate as you can, measuring carefully and using a ruler. Take care to draw the graph which the question asks for rather than different types of graph.
- Make sure you know how to draw and read a divided bar graph; it is used in a different way from a normal bar graph.

Paper 4 tips

- Don't forget that this paper is an alternative to coursework. To prepare for it you need to be able to answer questions about collecting, presenting and analysing data like you would do in a geographical investigation. There is nearly always a question that asks you to write a conclusion and an evaluation. You need to practise these skills.
- Many of these questions are based on a hypothesis. Make sure you are familiar with testing hypotheses.
- You will be given resources to use in the examination which you have not seen before, perhaps different types of graphs or diagrams. Look at the diagrams carefully and think carefully about what they are showing before you answer the questions. You may be asked to complete a diagram, in which case you need to complete it accurately and carefully.
- You will have to answer questions about data which has already been collected as part of an investigation. This could be a set of figures or graphs or maps. One of the things you will be asked to do is to recognize and describe patterns or trends (e.g. the distribution of rainfall over an area as shown on a map or over time as shown on a graph, the amount of erosion alongside a footpath as shown on a diagram). You should practise this skill, using data which you have collected yourself, or data from your teacher.
- If you are asked questions about the data in the resources you will be expected to use that data rather than simply listing or repeating the figures. (e.g. you may be asked to compare two sets of data about different places, look for a relationship between two or more sets of data or recognize similarities and differences). However it is always useful to support your answer by quoting data from the source you are using
- Learn about the different types of samples which can be used when collecting data – you may be asked to describe the advantages of using systematic or stratified sampling for example. Many candidates assume that the only sample which can be taken is a random sample.
- You may be asked to suggest practical ways by which something could be improved. This could be an actual investigation or something which has been investigated (e.g. the amount and distribution of pollution in a river). You will be expected to be realistic in your suggestions so always think about whether they are practical. For example to suggest that all the residents of a town should be interviewed rather than taking a sample is unrealistic. Similarly to suggest that all factories alongside the river are shut down is not a suggestion which is practical.
- When asked to write a conclusion you need to look at the evidence and then say whether you think the hypothesis is correct or not. In a few cases it may be only partly correct. You must then give evidence to support your conclusion. This evidence must be based on the data provided in the question.

About the Examiner



Steve Sibley, BA (Social Sciences)

I have been a teacher between 1974 and 1999, firstly in Hornsea on the Holderness coast, and then Head of Geography at Hucknall, a coal mining town in the East Midlands of England.

I have been involved in examining and coursework moderation since about 1980 in CSE, Joint 16+, GCSE, IGCSE, AS and A level.

Currently my exam work responsibilities include:

- Principal examiner for CIE IGCSE Development Studies Paper 4, Alternative to Coursework
- Principal examiner for OCR GCSE Geography Specification A Papers 1 and 3
- Principal examiner for OCR GNVQ Leisure and Tourism
- Chief examiner for OCR GCSE Geography Short Course
- Assistant examiner for CIE IGCSE Geography Paper 1