

Geography Exam Techniques – General Hints and Tips

Exam board and specification = AQA GCSE Geography (A)

In total you will take **two** exams in Geography. Each of them is worth **37.5%** of your final mark. The final **25%** is your controlled assessment.

Unit 1: Physical Geography exam will last 1 hour and 30 minutes and will contain 6 questions. **YOU WILL ONLY ANSWER THREE OF THESE QUESTIONS.**

- In Section A, question **1** on Restless Earth
- In Section A, question **3** on Weather & Climate
- In Section B, question **7** on Coasts

Unit 2: Human Geography exam will last 1 hour and 30 minutes and will contain 6 questions. **YOU WILL ONLY ANSWER THREE OF THESE QUESTIONS.**

- In Section A, question **1** on Population Change
- In Section A, question **2** on Urban Environments
- In Section B, question **6** on Tourism

*****This exam has 9 marks for SPaG. The questions assessed will have a pencil symbol next to the mark, so try your hardest with your spellings. These are FREE marks*****

Read the questions carefully

Every year, lots of candidates lose lots of marks because they misread the question, or answered the question they hoped the examiner would ask rather than the one that has been set. Don't let this be you! Try underlining the exam command words to remind yourself of exactly what the examiner wants you to do.

Use the available resources

It costs the exam board a lot of money to produce maps, photographs and diagrams for the exams. They do it for a reason! Make sure that you use them to help you show what a good geographer you are. Look at the resources carefully and use the information from them in your answers - for example, *Photograph A shows that a series of groynes have been built along the seafront at Swanage where the building density is high.*

Use your own background knowledge

The examiner will often ask you to write about places you have studied. You must write about real places - make sure you name and locate them (say where they are). If you can't remember the examples we have studied in lessons, then use your common sense... somewhere you've seen on TV, read about or visited on holidays. ***Still no ideas? Then make it up!*** It's far better to write something than to leave a question blank. No answer definitely means no marks. A well-made-up answer could get some marks (if it is believable!) and mean the difference between a lower and a higher grade.

If you are completely stuck...

Leave the question blank and come back to it later. But ***make sure that you do come back to it!*** Still unsure? Check the keywords in the question and write everything you can remember about them - you might get some marks for it. No answer definitely means no marks, so ***never leave a question blank!***



How are the different types of question marked?

There are two different types of questions in terms of the way your exam is marked:

- Questions worth 1-3 marks are marked per correct point, so the more correct points you make the higher your mark will be.
- Questions worth 4-8 marks will require longer answers! These answers are marked according to the 'level of response' that you give to the question. The examiner must first decide which level your answer falls into and then award you a mark within this level. If you do not meet the requirements of the higher level, the examiner cannot award you those marks. The higher your level, the higher your mark will be.

Level 1:

- Basic Knowledge of basic information
- Simple understanding
- Few links; limited detail; uses a limited range of specialist terms
- Limited evidence of sentence structure
- Frequent spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors

Level 2:

- Clear Knowledge of accurate information
- Clear understanding
- Answers have some linkages; occasional detail/exemplar; uses some specialist terms where appropriate
- Clear evidence of sentence structure
- Some spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors

Level 3:

- Detailed Knowledge of accurate information appropriately contextualised and/or at correct scale
- Detailed understanding, supported by relevant evidence and exemplars
- Well organised, demonstrating detailed linkages and the interrelationships between factors
- Range of ideas in logical form; uses a range of specialist terms where appropriate
- Well-structured response with effective use of sentences
- Few spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors

Note: Your answer does not have to be perfect to score full marks. In fact, the mark scheme says that '*a perfect answer is not usually expected, even for full marks*'.

If you look at how many marks are available for the question this gives you some idea of how much you have to write and what to include. For example, you will have to include more detail for a 4 mark question than for a 2 mark question.

For **4 mark** questions, you will always have to **develop/explain** each point you make (usually 2)

For **6 mark** questions, it would be sensible to make **3 relevant points** and give **3 good explanations** to achieve full marks. **Don't** include too many points as you will not explain them in enough detail. Use **case studies** or examples to back up the theory behind your answer. Mention **facts, statistics, names** and **places** as this will only show that you have detailed knowledge (level 3). Use words like **because, as well as** and **therefore** to highlight you are developing your points fully.

GOOD LUCK!