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SCHOLAR Study Guide

# **CfE Advanced Higher Spanish Advice**

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# Topic 1

## Exam Preparation

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## 1.1 Reading advice

The paper is in a certain order for a reason. **Do not** deviate from this order. You should do this part in 50 minutes - do it **first**.

This is the best way to do the reading:

1. Don't panic! It's a long passage, but you can do it. Read the **introduction** to the passage **first**, then the **questions**. The questions guide you through the passage, give an idea of what each paragraph is about and give you vital clues as to where the answers lie.
2. Now read the passage through once and try to get the gist of it. **At this point do not open the dictionary**. You need to use your knowledge to work it out. It's OK if at this point you have a little bit of some of the answers but not the full answer.
3. Now read the questions a second time and see if you have gleaned some information which fits any of them. It's still OK if you haven't got a lot at this stage.
4. Read the passage a second time, and this time mark off or highlight where you think the answer to each question begins and ends. It's important that you find exactly where 1a ends and 1b begins so that you don't overlap information and thereby lose points. By now you should be getting a better understanding of the passage. **You are still not permitted to open your dictionary!**
5. Read the questions a third time to check you fully understand what exactly you are being asked in each one. Look carefully at the question words, and see how many points are asked for.
6. Now read the passage a third time and double check you have marked off your text in the right places. You will soon know that you haven't marked it off properly if it's still not making any sense at this point. **Still no dictionary!**

This whole process should take about 20 minutes of your time. Remember it's called Reading - that's what you need to do! You now have about 20 minutes to answer the questions.

When answering the questions:

1. You have now marked off smaller chunks of text which are much easier to work with than trying to work with the whole passage at once. Do the questions one at a time, and do them in order as far as possible.
2. **b** As you read each chunk, underline any words which are really fazing you. **Only open the dictionary if:**
  1. You cannot work out the meaning of the word from your current knowledge or from it looking like its possible meaning in English (beware "false friends").
  2. You cannot work out the answer without knowing the word.
3. Remember that the main body of the dictionary will not give you individual verb parts - the dictionary expects you to know your verbs! All dictionaries have a verb list at the back, but you must know what you're looking for or you will get hopelessly lost.



4. If you're really stumped on a question, leave it and come back to it if there's any time left at the end. Keep your eye on the time, as you will fail if you don't do the other parts of this paper.
5. Make sure you give as many details in your answer as there are points required. When the questions says something like 'State any two things.', it means there could be more than two: choose the two you are most sure of.
6. You can cut down answering time by not writing out the question again. For example, "Why did John feel anxious at that time?" - don't write "John was feeling anxious because. . ." - just write the answer, e.g. "He had a maths test the following day". It makes sense!
7. An important tip - there are **never** any comprehension questions on the translation. However, read it as part of the passage as it will help you with the overall purpose question.
8. Make sure your English makes sense - if you don't understand what you've written, how is the marker supposed to? Also **never** use 'text language' - in Modern Languages this will be severely penalised.

You should be finished the first questions in 40 minutes approximately. You now have 20 minutes to do the translation and the overall purpose question. You can do these in any order, but remember the translation is worth ten marks and the overall purpose question two.

When answering the overall purpose question, remember to give the overall answer first, then write your evidence, referring to the text but giving the evidence in English! Two or three bits of evidence are enough!

## 1.2 Translation

This should take 10 minutes approximately.

## 1.3 Directed Writing

This is to test whether you can think on your feet and manipulate the language to your advantage.

Read the questions carefully to see which of the two choices you are best prepared for. The scenarios always involve you describing a trip to, or an experience in, a Spanish-speaking country, which took place some time in the past. This is to make sure you write in the past, and demonstrate your mastery past tenses! The scenarios are always given with four bullet-points that you have to cover.

The first bullet point is a double bullet point! Ensure you address both parts or you will lose marks.

Try to answer each of the bullet points in 30 or so words. Your writing should be balanced

across the bullet points - writing a lot about the easy points and only a sentence or two about the harder ones will get you 6/10 at most.

You will almost certainly be asked for your opinions on where you were and/or the people you met there, so try to have positive and negative opinion phrases ready to adapt to the scenario, and use both, linking with a conjunction such as 'pero', or a phrase like, 'por otro lado'.

Don't try to make up sentences from English into Spanish word for word - you will write rubbish and fail! Think, "What do I know in Spanish that I can use here?" and use that.

Try to get your genders and adjective endings right! If you can't remember the gender of a word, check it in the dictionary.

If you want to score 8 or more you **must** use more complex language. Good linking phrases between sentences and complex sentences with subordinate clauses and the "verb - comma - verb" pattern are needed here. If you want 10, you need to show flair and originality. You will therefore need to know some idiomatic expressions and display complete control of verb tenses.

Make sure you don't just use the 'yo' form of the verb, eg 'fui'. If you are part of a group, use plurals - markers want to see 'nosotros' parts of the verbs, eg 'fuimos'. Think too about what another member or members of the group have done, so that you can use the 3rd person parts of the verb.

Make sure you use language which addresses specific bullet points, especially in essays about jobs. If you're asked how you got on with your boss, markers are looking for 'me llevaba bien con mi jefe'. If you write something vague, you may lose points. The last bullet point usually has a Conditional or Future tense in it. Make sure you can do this - if it's a recommendation, recommend (or not), but make it clear what you're doing and say **why** you are (not) recommending! 'me gustaría volver a España' is not a recommendation! Try to get both a conditional and a future tense in if you can! Try something like 'recomendaría esta experiencia porque . . .'

Give yourself a couple of minutes at the end to check you've covered all the bullet points and that your verbs are correct. If you have missed out a bullet point, just slot it in at the end - it will still be counted! You can put an asterisk (\*) to show where the bullet point should have gone.

## 1.4 Listening

You have 2 minutes to study the questions before each recording is started. **Use this time wisely!** Look at the introduction to the questions first - this will give you a good idea of what the passage is about and what you can expect to hear. Then look at the question words - How long? What? Why? Where? Who? What sort of? How much? How many? These are there to get you thinking about vocabulary.

E.g. **How long** did Carmen stay in Madrid? You should be listening for a period of time, so your answer could be days, weeks, months or years. Use your common sense - if Carmen is a student you are probably looking for a period of years, but if she is an assistant at a school, then it will probably be a period of months.

**What sort of** accommodation did Carmen have? You should be thinking about whether it was a house or a flat or perhaps even a room. Think too about where it was situated, how many rooms it had and who she stayed with, depending on the number of points for each question. **Look carefully at the number of points for each question**, as this will determine how much information you should give. Most questions are 1 or 2 points. **Sometimes you are asked to give details, so give as many as you can!**

Remember the first listening has an overall purpose question as the last question: it is a multiple choice, and it should be the last thing you do before studying the questions for the dialogue.

Finally have a quick look at the personal response questions before the recordings begin, as this will also give you a clue as to what you will hear. You should be able to understand the essay title on the first reading.

Try to block out any distractions while the recording is being played. Aim to focus your full attention on the dialogue. Closing your eyes may help you to focus.

Take notes while the recording is being played. There are no set guidelines as to how you should do this, but you could take notes in Spanish and/or English. Don't panic about having missed a bit - you can home in on that when you hear the passage for a second time. Accept that you will not get it all on the first hearing. You should use the first hearing to make sense of the passage and also to listen for where each answer appears. It is usually clearly laid out in the recording when the speaker is moving on to the next question. It might be useful for you to write your notes in the left hand space beside each question as you go along, though some candidates prefer to make notes on the answer booklet provided for the essay. Whatever you do - **remember to cross out your notes before handing in your paper to the invigilator!** You should have enough information after the first hearing to be able to answer a couple of the questions fully. Use the minute between the hearings to check the information you got and to look again at the questions for which you still need information. If you jotted down a word you didn't know, you can check it after the second hearing. If you suddenly remember something, jot it down now beside the notes you already have as you will still be going through the first hearing in your head. Don't write out your answer yet - you have plenty of time at the end.

When the second hearing begins, use this to focus on what you didn't catch during the first hearing. Take your notes in the same way as you did first time round, slotting in the extra information beside what you already have. This will enable you to put the full answers together after the second hearing.



## Topic 2

# Discursive writing advice

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## 2.1 Discursive writing

The difference in demand between the essays you had to do at Higher and the discursive essay at Advanced Higher is without doubt one of the most challenging aspects of AH

In the external examination paper Listening and Discursive Writing you are required to write an essay of about 250-300 words on one of four topics, one from each of the four contexts. The topics relate to the themes studied at AH but of course each theme is fairly wide-ranging, so it would **not** be a good idea to concentrate on one theme only in preparing for this paper.

The advice on the Advanced Higher Listening and Discursive writing paper is that you should spend 30 minutes on the Listening and 50 minutes on the Discursive Writing. Bear this in mind when you are practising Discursive Writing.

There are 40 marks for Discursive Writing. The marks awarded are "pegged" which in this case means you can be awarded the marks as shown in the table below.

The criteria shown in the table give some clue as to exactly what the examiners are looking for:

### 1. Grammatical accuracy

- In the first instance think **verbs verbs verbs**. Even at Higher, that was necessary in order to achieve an award of Satisfactory, but if your verbs are still letting you down, you **must** work on them!
- Within the context of verbs, **endings** are important, otherwise the essay will not gain a good mark.
- Use your dictionary to check **genders of nouns** and try to get your **adjective endings** correct.
- Get used to working with your dictionary open at the verb pages, so you are constantly checking the accuracy of your verbs

### 2. Idiomatic command and sense of style This is looking for:

- a **good range** of vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to AH.
- an essay which shows **control** of language, and which 'flows'.
- a mastery of complex sentences - not just the odd 'porque' clause!
- **good** use of pre-learned material. It will increase your self-confidence if you have pre-learned some expressions for each topic area, but they **must** be relevant to the title of the essay!
- As far as possible, try to **think in Spanish** as you write your essay; this will improve the flow of your writing.

### 3. A planned and orderly expression of ideas

- As in all subjects, your essay should have an introduction, stating the points you intend to develop, a middle section expanding your arguments, and a conclusion summing up your opinion.
- You are allowed to say you don't have a definite opinion so long as you have set out the arguments on both sides.

### 4. Relevance to the subject set

- You must study the title of your essay carefully and keep making sure that you are addressing this question, and not one which was relevant to an essay you prepared earlier.
- With this in mind, take the time to study all the essay topics before choosing the most suitable one.

A good system to use is a formal argumentative essay. That means an introduction, in which you rephrase the title and say what you are going to look at: this should be about 40 to 50 words long. Follow this up with three paragraphs of 60 words or so each with an argument and counterargument on the topic. Finally, a conclusion of another 40 to 50 words, which follows on from the argument you have given and restates the topic. Write the plan out in note form (preferably in Spanish) before you start your essay, so you always know where you are going! If you are running out of time, miss out one of the arguments but make sure you get the conclusion written!

## 2.2 Discursive Essay Phrases

*Here are some phrases to help you with your essay writing.*

### Introducing your essay

para comenzar	<i>to start ...</i>
en primer lugar	<i>in the first place</i>
el problema que se plantea es ...	<i>the problem to be addressed is ...</i>
... tiene más ventajas que inconvenientes	<i>... has more advantages than disadvantages</i>
uno de los temas que más preocupa a la opinión pública es el de ...	<i>one of the issues which the public is particularly concerned about is ...</i>
existe una gran divergencia de opiniones sobre ...	<i>there are many different opinions about ...</i>
se debate con frecuencia en nuestros días el problema de ...	<i>a problem which is often discussed these days is ...</i>

### Introducing a new topic within your essay / Changing topic

en cuanto a ...	<i>as regards ...</i>
con respecto a ...	<i>with regard to ...</i>

### Giving your opinion

(at AH, repeating 'pienso que' and 'en mi opinión' is not good enough!)

en mi opinión	<i>in my opinion</i>
a mi parecer	<i>in my opinion</i>
desde mi punto de vista	<i>from my point of view</i>
a mi modo de ver	<i>in my view</i>
pienso que ...	<i>I think that ...</i>
creo que ...	<i>I believe that ...</i>
opino que ...	<i>I think that ...</i>
encuentro que ...	<i>I find that ...</i>
(a mí) me parece que ...	<i>it seems to me that ...</i>
tengo que decir que ...	<i>I have to say that ...</i>
lo que me irrita / molesta es que ...	<i>what annoys me is that ...</i>
lo bueno / malo de ... es que ...	<i>the good / bad thing about ... is that ...</i>
lo mejor / peor de ... es que ...	<i>the best / worst thing about ... is that ...</i>
me da igual	<i>it's all the same to me</i>
no me importa	<i>it doesn't matter to me</i>

**\*\*Remember that if you use a negative opinion phrase then it must be followed by the subjunctive, eg no creo que, no pienso que etc.\*\***

### **Presenting other people's opinions**

según mis padres	<i>according to my parents</i>
se dice que ...	<i>people say that ...</i>
mucha gente opina que ...	<i>lots of people think that ...</i>
me han dicho que ...	<i>I have been told that ...</i>

### **Expressing doubt, uncertainty, possibility**

Note: All of these phrases should be followed by the subjunctive

hoy es un hecho bien sabido que	<i>nowadays it's a well-known fact that</i>
hoy en día todo el mundo está de acuerdo en que ...	<i>nowadays everyone agrees that ...</i>
no cabe duda de que	<i>there is no doubt that</i>
no se puede negar que	<i>one can't deny that</i>
está claro que	<i>it is clear that ...</i>
lo cierto es que ...	<i>one thing is certain ...</i>

### **Suggesting solutions to problems**

hay que + infinitive	<i>We need to ...</i>
hace falta + infinitive	<i>We need to ...</i>
OR use these phrases with 'que' and then the subjunctive	

### **Giving advice**



más vale + infinitive	<i>it is better to ...</i>
OR más vale que + subjunctive	<i>it is better that ...</i>
Lo que habría que hacer es + infinitive	<i>What we should / ought to do is ...</i>
Recomiendo que + subjunctive	<i>I recommend that ...</i>
No sería mala idea + infinitive	<i>It would not be a bad idea to ...</i>

### Comparing and contrasting

en cambio	<i>whereas</i>
por el contrario	<i>whereas</i>
en contraste con	<i>in contrast with</i>

### Expressing reasons for something

porque	<i>because</i>
por eso	<i>that's why</i>
en vista de que	<i>seeing that</i>
debido a	<i>due to</i>

### Agreeing and disagreeing

no estoy ni a favor ni en contra de eso	<i>I am neither for nor against it</i>
estoy a favor de / en contra de	<i>I am in favour of / against</i>
estoy totalmente de acuerdo con ...	<i>I completely agree with ...</i>

### Structuring your essay

por un lado / por otro lado	<i>on one hand / on the other hand</i>
por una parte / por otra parte	<i>on one hand / on the other hand</i>
luego	<i>next</i>
entonces	<i>then</i>
además	<i>besides / moreover</i>
así	<i>so</i>
por lo tanto / por eso	<i>therefore</i>
sin embargo	<i>however</i>
no obstante	<i>nevertheless</i>
o sea	<i>in other words, I mean</i>
dicho eso	<i>having said that</i>

### Adding something on

también	<i>also</i>
además	<i>moreover</i>
no sólo ... sino que	<i>not only ... but also</i>

### Concluding your essay

al fin y al cabo	<i>when all is said and done</i>
de todas maneras	<i>in any case, anyway</i>
por fin	<i>finally</i>
en conclusión / en resumen	<i>in conclusion</i>
para concluir diremos que	<i>let us conclude by saying that</i>



## **Topic 3**

# **Listening Advice**

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The external listening exam is worth 15% of the final award. It is marked out of 30 and is combined with the discursive writing (essay) exam. The paper lasts for 1 hour 20 minutes. It is suggested that you spend 30 minutes on the listening and 50 minutes on the writing. You will hear two passages (Part A - a monologue and Part B - a dialogue) twice and answer questions in English on them. The procedure is as follows:

You have two minutes to study the questions before you hear Passage A. You should look at the questions for both passages at this time. You will then hear Part A twice with an interval of 1 minute between the playings. After another 3 minutes you will hear Part B twice, again with an interval of 1 minute between the recordings. Before Part B, look at the questions again.

You are allowed the use of a dictionary and you may make notes at any time during the recordings.

The listening tips are essentially the same as for your previous studies. You might find it helpful to read the following notes.

1. You have 2 minutes to study the questions before the recording is started. Use this time wisely! Look at the introduction to the questions first - this will give you a good idea of what the passages are about and what you can expect to hear. Then look at the question words - How long? What? Why? Where? Who? What sort of? How much? How many? These are there to get you to anticipate the kind of information you are going to hear and help you think about possible vocabulary.
2. Try to block out any distractions while the recording is being played. Aim to focus your full attention on the dialogue. Follow the questions closely as you listen, to give you something to concentrate on and guide you through the passage.
3. Take notes while the recording is being played. There are no set guidelines as to how you should do this, but you could take notes in Spanish and/or English. Draw a vertical line one third of the way across the page, and put your notes to the left of that, ready to transfer when you are writing your answers. Don't panic about having missed a bit - you can home in on that when you hear the passage for a second time. Accept that you will not grasp everything on the first hearing. You should use the first hearing to make sense of the passage and also to listen for where each answer appears. It is usually clearly laid out in the recording when the speaker is moving on to the next question.
4. Use the minute between the hearings to check the information you have and to look again at the questions for which you still need information. If you jotted down a word you did not know, you can check it after the second hearing. If you suddenly remember something, write it down now beside the notes you already have as you will still be going through the first hearing in your head. Do not write out your answer yet - you have plenty of time at the end.
5. When the second hearing begins, use this to focus on what you did not catch during the first hearing. Take notes in the same way as you did first time round, slotting in the extra information beside what you already have. This will enable you to put together full answers after the second hearing.
6. You now have 3 minutes before Part B. If you do not manage to write out full answers, make detailed notes so that you can do this later. Remember to draw a line through the notes when you have finished.

7. Treat Part B the same way as Part A.

Now take a few minutes to answer the questions in English for both parts as fully as possible. You now have time to look up any words you jotted down that you do not know.



## Topic 4

# Talking advice

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## 4.1 Advice on talking in your Spanish talking exam

1. This will take the form of discussion with the visiting examiner, which will last for approximately 20 minutes and cover both Language and your Specialist Study/Portfolio.

The discussion will be recorded, but the recording is only used for control purposes by the SQA. The examiner will assess your performance from the discussion.

2. Try to build up a bank of material you can use for talking. Remember to learn good phrases and idioms from your reading and coursework throughout the year and also to use materials from essays. Learn phrases and structures to express opinions and use general discussion techniques. On-going preparation is the key to success.

Try to develop good pronunciation and intonation in Spanish by listening carefully to your teacher or tutor and any listening materials used in class. (Your teacher or tutor could probably provide materials for you to listen to at home and there is a host of materials available on the web. Films and TV programmes are also good for developing your listening and talking skills) Try to use complex sentences.

Practise speaking aloud in Spanish as much as possible, so that you become used to hearing your voice. You could practise with your teacher (or assistant) or tutor, fellow students, members of your family or on your own. It is also useful to record yourself speaking. These recordings can be helpful if you are trying to memorise material.

3. You will have to complete a form for the Visiting Examiner in which you give details of topics you have studied during the year. When listing the topics, it makes sense to write down the ones you are happiest talking about. This form is sent to the Visiting Examiner well before the test.

If you study a new topic after you have completed the form, you can still use it for the talking assessment, although it does not appear on the original form. Try to decide the order in which you would like to use the topics for the test. You can start with the Language Units and then move onto the Specialist Study and Portfolio or, if you prefer, take the topics in the other order. The examiner should take his/her cue from you.

It is useful to have some on-going discussions with your teacher in Spanish about your progress with and evaluation of the Specialist Study, as well as your work on the Portfolio piece. This will help you have material prepared for your discussion with the Visiting Examiner. Be prepared to use and adapt other learned material to fit in with the flow of the discussion. Your class teacher or another teacher or tutor should also give you a practice talking test.

4. The tests usually take place between mid-February and the end of March. You will be given a time for your test by the school, after the Visiting Examiner has arranged a suitable date.

The Visiting Examiner normally meets all the candidates and their teacher or tutor before the tests begin. During this short meeting, the examiner will briefly go over the conduct of the test and answer any questions you may have. The examiner may also speak a little in the foreign language with your teacher or tutor, so that you can hear his/her accent. Remember that the examiners are usually practising teachers or university lecturers, who are familiar with carrying out talking assessments.



When you come to take the test, the examiner will start the recording. Normally he/she will talk for about 30 seconds in Spanish and then ask you about some personal matters to allow you time to settle. It is helpful to have prepared some material about what you have been studying at school during the year, what you hope to do when you leave school and about your hobbies and interests. This is a warm-up, before you start discussing the topics you have studied.

Remember that you are expected to engage in a discussion with the Visiting Examiner, not make a presentation to him/her. If it looks like you are making a presentation, the examiner will interrupt your flow and ask questions.

The examiner will then ask you which topics you have been studying and which one(s) you have found most interesting. They will then start a discussion on these topics. It is a good idea to have prepared a short opening presentation where you indicate the aspects of the topic which have interested you and the discussion should flow from there.

The examiner is not testing your knowledge of the topic as such, but your ability to sustain a discussion in Spanish. Absolute excellence is not required. You should communicate readily and fairly correctly, with a reasonable amount of idiom and variety of structure, and be prepared to take the initiative. About halfway through the test, the examiner will change the discussion to the other area. The test will end after approximately 20 minutes. **REMEMBER...**

- Preparation for the talking assessment is on-going throughout the course. Be as well prepared as possible.
- You are encouraged to use learned material, but be prepared to adapt it.
- The examiner is there to take part in a discussion.
- They will try to put you at your ease and be as encouraging as possible.
- If you realise you have made a mistake, it is perfectly alright for you to correct yourself.
- If you forget a word, ask the examiner for help, provided you ask in Spanish.
- If you 'blank' completely, it will be obvious to the examiner, who will use his/her experience to try to continue the conversation, perhaps asking some easier questions, so that you regain your confidence, or by changing to another topic.
- It is perfectly all right for you to ask the examiner questions and about his/her opinions.

The following categories, criteria and pegged marks will be used by the Visiting Examiners to assess the candidates' performance in Talking. The discussion in the target language will sample across all three units and the portfolio.