

Securing that Grade C or Higher in English

The Final Countdown

8 Things to Know and Do

1: Reading:

- a) Read the questions first so that you know what the examiners are looking for
- b) Read actively, highlighting interesting words and ideas in the text as you notice them

2: Answering reading questions:

Get your timing right – spend most time on the questions with most marks

3: **Layout** question:

Describe what you see in ...

- Use of pictures
- Colour-scheme
- Use of headings and sub-headings

Mention other ways that the writer tries to attract our attention and make the text look interesting

4: **Language** question:

Mention ...

- How the text is structured: chronological (telling a story) or not?
- The words the writer uses: formal, informal, chatty, technical, scientific, unusual, unfamiliar, complex?
- What effect this has on the reader (easy to read, mysterious, interesting?)

5: Writing – Planning:

- Get your timing right – 25 minutes on the first task (writing to describe/explain) and 35 on the second task (writing to persuade)
- Use finger-planning so that you have 5 paragraphs for each answer:
- **Describe:** 1 past, 2 present, 3 story, 4 detail, 5 future
- **Persuade:** 1 benefit 1, 2 benefit 2, 3 benefit 3, 4 arguments against, 5 your view

6: Writing – Making it interesting:

- Use more short sentences
- Reject the first word you think of (instead of 'bad' say: unpleasant, alarming, horrific, appalling, inappropriate, menacing)
- Try to use phrases instead of single words: instead of saying 'her face' say 'her memorable face', 'her wrinkled face', 'her unforgettable', 'her heavily creased face')
- Use the senses – sight, sound, smell, texture, taste
- Use questions ('Where was the noise coming from?')
- Use dialogue ('You know there's another room next door?' she said)

7: Self-monitor:

As you read, keep asking yourself whether you are explaining 'why' and 'how'

As you write, keep asking yourself whether you are (a) being accurate and (b) being interesting

8: Sort the basics:

- Use paragraphs (leave a space between each one)
- Use sentences (short and long)
- Be accurate
- Be interesting
- Be confident