

Leaving Cert Spanish for Study Hub 2026 - RTÉ Radio 1

The Popularity of Spanish

Spanish is increasing in popularity every year. In 2025 11,663 students sat the LC Spanish exam (9,348 of those sat it at HL) compared to 10,308 sitting the exam in 2024 (7,977 at HL) and 10,094 in 2023 (7,574 at HL) In percentages there was an increase of over 13% doing the exam in 2025 in comparison to 2024.

In 2025 19,369 students sat the Junior Cycle exam so if that trend continues it will hopefully have a knock-on effect to the numbers choosing Spanish at Leaving Cert Level and maybe even beyond.

The Exam

Spanish is the last or one of the last exams for the majority of students so after they officially finish school they will forget about it for a few weeks which is to be expected but it is important before that happens that they have everything ready for when they go back to it- all their notes, opinion pieces, flash cards etc. Keep them all in a secure place.

If you are afraid of neglecting the Spanish for so long you could listen to a Spanish song or find a series on Netflix to keep yourself ticking over.

You already have part of the exam behind them with the oral exam, so now they are down to **75%** at Higher and **80%** at Ordinary level. Students already have marks in the bag which can take a little bit of the pressure off. You can only improve from here on in.

The remaining **75%** at Higher Level is divided up to **20%** for the Aural exam (It's important to say here that the aural happens after the written exam and will last about 40 minutes so it's very important that students don't disappear). It starts at 12.10 so there is a 10-minute break after the end of the written exam so students can get a toilet break or a quick snack)

The written paper is worth **55%**

So, it's **100** marks for the Oral, **220** marks for the written paper which is **2.5 hours** long and the aural is **80** marks which is a total of **400** marks.

The Written Paper:

220 marks in total and it's divided into three sections

Section A is Reading Comprehension (70 marks)

Section B is Reading Comprehension and Opinion Piece (100 marks)

Section C is Written Production (50 marks)

The **Reading Comprehensions** in total make up **120** marks of the whole written paper which is **30%** of the entire exam and the written production which account for **100** marks (including the Opinion Piece) which is **25%** of the whole exam has the same weighting as the oral exam

Tips:

When you get your paper the first thing I would do would go to the back of the paper or even ask for rough work paper and jot down the necessary grammar like the verb tense endings for present, past and future tense verbs or common irregulars and any other grammar point that you might need to use such as por vs para or ser vs estar, the conditional tense or the present perfect or anything that you find difficult or things that you struggled with in class or some common phrases that you might need.

I would advise starting with the comprehensions and lead into the written as you might get ideas or vocab or structures that you might need for the written production.

It's important to note not to copy chunks from the comprehensions into the written production.

5mins to prep and read questions

The Comprehensions: test your understanding of Written Spanish

Section A Reading Comprehension has answer **A OR B**. It's important to stress here that you will not be able to answer **A** at all unless you have studied the novel (Prescribed literature) Not many students prepare this question so the majority of students will go straight to the Journalistic Text **Q1B** which is worth **70** marks.

Part 1 is general comprehension questions: Make sure you answer in the correct language- question in English answer in English in the comprehension. You are not expected to know every word in the comprehension but yes to have enough knowledge to answer the questions posed- use context, common sense, your knowledge of Spanish in general to look for similarities to words you already know. So basically, you are working with the text as it were. The content could range on anything really-last year it was about how Spain was different and the previous year it was about the success of Spanish music so it could be based on anything. It's very important to be very familiar with the types of questions asked and also with the marking schemes as they carry different weightings. The questions in the Journalistic text tell you what paragraph the answer is in which is a great help.

The reading comps in Spanish are quite long so this is a great help.

Tip: I am a firm advocate of highlighting and underlining and jotting ideas down on the exam paper. Look for the buzz words in the question and then go to the text and highlight/underline them and keep looking back at the question to make sure you are answering what you are asked.

Part 2 is the dreaded synonyms question- if you know the meaning, great as it's a lot easier but if you don't you need to analyse, in other words; Am I looking for a verb(which tense), a noun, an adjective etc , do I need the article or do I not need the article and go to the paragraph and find all possible answers and make sure not to include or leave out any essential words- eg Look to see if the article is needed or not

Part 3 is basically to translate phrases from the text- look at them in context and make sure the English reads well. I would write the English words above the Spanish first and play around with the English and fill in the gaps for the words I might not know.

Part4: A choice of 2 (do both if you can) You have to use Spanish to paraphrase the sentence, or word from the text- again look for clues- verb tenses, synonyms- Can I change the verb into a noun for example or vice versa?

That Journalistic text question is quite long and detailed, It requires time and thinking.

Spend about **30 minutes** on this Comp

Question 2 contains two small reading comps- **20 marks in total**- so 10 marks each.

Again, look for the key or buzz words. Read the questions carefully.

Sometimes the answers can be more straightforward than you think. There are normally three questions per comprehension.

Spend about **10 mins** on this question it total

Always read the questions carefully.

Section B is worth 100 marks

This is the loose insert question so you can have it side by side with the questions

There are four questions here on the Comprehension and then comes the Opinion Piece.

The Comprehension is similar to the Reading Comp in **Section A** but it is a bit more detailed and it leads into the dreaded Opinion Piece.

This comprehension question has as its first question another synonym question followed by another question on sentence translation in context from the text.

Then there is another short synonym question and finally there is the general comprehension question but this time the paragraphs containing the answers are not given so you need to really focus on the key and buzz words.

Spend about **30 minutes** on the Comp

The Opinion Piece is loosely based on the previous Comp. You have a choice of 3 so read them carefully. Spend about **35 mins** on this. It's worth **50 marks** (**25** for content and communication and **25** for language). It has to be relevant to the title and if not, you won't get any marks at all. It's marked in bands- top (18-25 marks) middle (9-17 marks) bottom (0-8 marks)

Have a bank of phrases or expressions that you will use in any Opinion Piece. Have your intro and your conclusion all ready to go.

Keep on the topic- don't wander.

Grammatical accuracy and a good range of relevant vocab are very important.

It's between **80 and 150** words but remember it is quality over quantity. The more you write the more mistakes you will make. Have your idea and develop it.

It doesn't have to be complicated grammar or flowery language.

Last year AI and social networks and traditional jobs came up so again the topic could be anything.

Have as many different topics practised as you can to give yourself the best chance.

Do not copy material from the loose insert comprehension.

Section C is Written Production – 50 marks

There are two questions. There is a choice in both questions.

Question 1 is a dialogue construction like the Role Plays for the oral exam. There are 6 "turnos" and you will be marked on your best 5- Do them all if you can to give yourself the best possible chance. The easiest one could be the last one.

Option B is the formal letter which I personally avoid. With the dialogue you are told what to write-make yourself familiar with common grammar and phrases e.g. Ser vs estar and Yo tengo muchas ganas de or acabo de plus infinitive. If you don't know the exact word for something, think of an alternative as it's not a direct translation exercise. Also, some of the sentences can be quite long and appear very difficult so I recommend doing each sentence in sections- this will help avoid mistakes with grammar and help you come up with an alternative word if needed.

Always read the other part of the dialogue as clues may be given- a word you need might be mentioned on the paper. Students tend to go straight into their part without reading the other side of the dialogue.

Spend around **20** minutes on this

The note vs diary entry- 20 marks

Again, if you have time do all 5 points

It's a personal choice whether to do the diary or the email.

The note deals with instructions, future plans, meeting up or a reminder. Last year's one you were at a student residence in a Spanish university in Málaga and you had to leave a note for the receptionist

The diary is a lot more personal dealing a lot with your personal experiences like last year it was a music festival in Spain.

Grammar and vocab accuracy are very important here. Again, they are not a direct translation so use alternative vocab if necessary.

Spend around **15** minutes on this.

5 mins at end to check

The Aural (Listening) 80 Marks 40 mins long

It's made up of 7 sections which you hear three times. There is a pause in the second hearing.

Question 1 is an announcement

Question 2 and 3 are dialogues with questions usually in an interview type scenario

Question 4 and 5 are descriptive

Question 6 is a weather forecast

Question 7 is a news item

Timing

Section	Title	Marks	Time
	Prep and looking over		5 5
A	Journalistic Text 2 small Comprehensions	50 (12.5%) 20 (5%)	30 10
B	Loose insert Comprehension Opinion Piece	50 (12.5%) 50 (12.5%)	30 35
C	Dialogue/Formal Letter Note/Diary	30 (7.5%) 20 (5%)	20 15
		220 marks (55%)	150 MINS