

11+ Top Tips

Young journalists offer their examination tips for Year 7 pupils preparing to sit the 11 plus school transfer exam.

As the new school term gets under way, P7 pupils across Northern Ireland will be preparing to sit the 11+. Young reporters from Children's Express who've sat the transfer exam offer their top tips for success.

Nine tenths of success in exams is preparation - a horrible fact that teachers often like to remind us of, but it's true. Don't obsess about doing badly. You'll find that it doesn't seem as big a thing once it's over.

You can sort of compare exams to going on a night out, you wouldn't go out without looking your best and the same notion applies to exams. If you've prepared you'll actually feel a little better about yourself.

Preparation means sticking the head down and doing revision papers, this builds up your confidence as the day approaches.

The good thing (yep, there is at least one of them) is that revising in a more prepared way allows you time to take lots of breaks.

By preparing in advance you also remove the possibility of having to stay up all night drinking coffee and cramming to make up for lost time.

Taking breaks increases your brain's ability to learn things, lengthens your concentration and allows you to mix fun with work, something adults have forgotten.

But don't give up on them just yet, parents and adult friends can be an invaluable source of support and guidance for you. If for whatever reason you don't feel you're getting help there then turn to your teachers, tell them your fears and where you need help.

As you get older learning becomes a more communal activity, but there is nothing stopping you now from taking the lead and talking to your classmates about the exam. You might be surprised.

That's all stuff you can do beforehand, but once you sit down in front of that exam paper there is a whole bunch of little tips which will make you get your best score.

It may sound really basic, but pay more attention to the things you know well on the paper. Make sure that you get every detail of these questions right - you'll pick up better marks this way.

Getting through things you know, quickly, said Christopher McCartney (16), gives you more time to concentrate on longer, more difficult questions.

"I concentrated on the areas I could do and eventually tackled the more difficult task. My strategy paid off because I could have spent valuable time at the beginning getting nowhere and also becoming very discouraged," he said.

Even more basic, suggested Cathal Hannan (11), is making sure you understand exactly what is being asked: "I know of one boy who was so nervous during one of his tests that he turned over two pages of the exam paper at once and missed 4 or 5 questions.

Read over the paper at least once before you start," he said.

Nothing wrecks your brain like stress and common worries exist which everybody on the planet suffers from when they are being examined.

Amanda McAteer (14) suffered from huge nerves coming up to her 11+: "Sleeping was difficult and I found that I really didn't want to go to school, I couldn't eat and even when I was having fun - the thought of the 11+ looming spoilt my fun," she said.

Don't obsess about doing badly, you'll find that it doesn't seem as big a thing once it's over.

Amanda ended up not taking the test and things have worked out alright for her: "My mum was very understanding and school didn't pressure me either. I'm happy at school now, but sometimes I wonder what I could have achieved if I had taken the test. The thought of it though still makes me cringe," she said.

Stephanie McCann (15) said keeping a clear mind in the exam and remembering how you planned to approach it is vital: "I remember getting into the exam and feeling so nervous that I just wanted to race through the questions in order. I took a deep breath and tried to remember how I had been taught to approach the paper. It worked," she said.

So that's it really. Prepare, have a plan, do the stuff you know first, get tons of support from whoever will give it to you and give yourself a break. No-one is saying it'll be easy.

Exams are mostly about technique. The more you do, the better you get. Some people bloom later on in their school life. That might be you, so don't worry. It may sound odd but failure actually happens when you chose not to learn something from an experience.

One of the most successful learning ideas in education at the moment is game theory. Basically see the exam as a game to be played. Like any game you should make it a mixture of fun, determination, dedication and thought. Stick to that and you'll do fine.

About the team

This story was produced by Michael Leatham, 16, Amanda McAteer, 14, Andrew Mullan, 12, Christopher McCartney, 16 and Cathal Hannan, 11. It was published in the [Belfast Telegraph](#).

0 comments

- [Add a comment to this page](#)

Built on [Cubik](#)

©2012 Headliners

Registered Charity Number 1043300. Supported by the [Department for Children, Schools and Families](#)