



GCSE Bitesize revision audio scripts

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English exam tips: Preparing for your English exams

This audio bite is about preparing for your English exams.

ALIX: It's normal to feel a little worried before an exam. Some people go into a cold sweat, some say it's all right, and some even say they're not bothered. But we all seem to feel a little different when we're actually in the exam room.

ELIOT: So the first thing to remember is that it's normal to feel a little weird, and if you prepare for the experience, the easier it is. You could think of it as some sort of test, like a football match, and so prepare like professional footballers:

ALIX: They don't just start the game cold. They sort out everything they need days beforehand. It's all laid out, and they have spares of everything.

ELIOT: So you could make a list of everything you need, such as blue and black pens, a ruler, a pencil and rubber – even bus money.

ALIX: And they'll study the other team for hours on end, watching videos and even going to other matches.

ELIOT: So listen to all the audio clips, go through old English exams and questions, and look in revision books or on internet sites, like GCSE Bitesize. These will show you exactly what you're up against.

ALIX: Then professional footballers get to the ground early, so make sure you plan your route and you've got lots of time – this is one of the days when you cannot be late.

ELIOT: And they'll walk round the pitch. Some will go round several times. But why?

ALIX: Many players want to get a feel of the place – they will be imagining themselves playing, and imagining themselves doing really well.

ELIOT: And you should do the same before the day of the exam. The exam will probably be somewhere you know well, like the school hall or a gym. But when it's set up for an exam it will look very different – there will be rows and rows of desks – and it'll feel very different to normal.

ALIX: So try to go in the room beforehand, when it's been set up for the exam. It might be locked, or out of bounds, so ask your

teacher to take you round – they can hardly say no if you tell them why.

ELIOT: And once you're in, sit down quietly and go through the exam in your head. For example, you know you'll have a question on writing to inform, explain or describe. So imagine a question in front of you, a question that you can do really well. So when you leave the room, you know exactly how it feels, you can do this, and you can do it well.

ALIX: It might feel a bit silly, but it seems to work for lots of people and many professional footballers spend time imagining taking penalties, or corners, or scoring goals. There's even a simple trick that might work with you too:

ELIOT: You have to think of a time when you felt great – you did something really good, and everyone knew how good you were. Think of this time, and touch your index finger and thumb together lightly. Try to do this a few times each day, thinking about successful things each time. And when you get in the exam, touch your finger and thumb together again – it can remind you about how good you are.

ALIX: So try to prepare for the exam. Don't worry about it – do something about it instead. Look through old questions. Visit the room a few days beforehand. Imagine being successful. Sort out exactly what you need for the exam day. Go early. And keep positive - think about good things.

English exam tips: Top tips in English

This audio bite is about top tips in English.

ELIOT: It sounds really silly – but one of the most important tips is to read the question. Every year, thousands of people don't. They seem to write about anything but the question they've chosen. It's a waste of time – even the kindest examiner in the world can't help them. So make sure you're not one of them.

ALIX: A good way to make sure you understand the question is to highlight words on the question paper. You can scribble all over it if you like, because no-one else will see it. But it will help you to focus on the question and write your plan. You should, of course, write a plan for all of the longer questions, like the writing and the poetry.

ELIOT: And loads of people still don't bother to help the examiner. You should always write in the margin which question you are

doing. And you should always leave a space between questions. If you don't, the examiner has to spend extra time working out what answer they are reading. If they've wasted all this time, they'll hardly be in the mood to give you the benefit of the doubt when they come to deciding on your marks.

ALIX: Another thing is that lots of people don't bother to write in paragraphs. It's really easy, but it's one of the things examiners are looking for, so it can make a difference to your grade.

ELIOT: And writing in sentences is important too. It is an English exam, after all, and if you don't use full stops or commas, then you really can't expect to do well.

ALIX: Examiners also like to see something different. They are going to read the same answers to the same questions day after day. So make your sentences interesting – put in a few short statements or use some interesting joining words, like 'consequently'. The examiners will have read loads of tedious essays full of 'and this, and then that, and then the other', so they'll like your answer.

ELIOT: And you can also tell them what you think. This is your chance to make your ideas count. It also is a chance to write what you think about other things, like the poems.

ALIX: But be sensible and defend your ideas. Writing that *Vultures* is 'gross' or *Half-Caste* is 'cool' doesn't really tell us anything. And don't be too negative – it might just be the examiner's favourite poem.

ELIOT: Use your time properly – the exam paper will usually tell you how long you should spend, so when this is up, switch to the next question. And try to save a few minutes at the end to read through and make any last minute changes.

ALIX: And when you've finished, try to forget about it. There's nothing you can do anyway, so move on to getting ready for your next exam. When you've finished them all, you'll probably feel a bit lost, so make sure you go out or arrange to do something special with your friends after the exams.

ELIOT: So here's a run down of the top tips. Read the question, highlight key words, plan your answers, write down the question numbers with your answers, use paragraphs and interesting sentences, try to be original. Time yourself and work till the end of the exam. Check your work. When you've left the room, forget about it. And plan something nice for after the exams.