

The Examiner's View

You can largely determine the end result by simply heeding the voice of experience. The job of examiners is to give you marks, not to take them away, but they are powerless to help you if you fall into the most common traps. These are the biggest pitfalls they have identified.

- **Not reading the paper correctly:** examiners say that this is one of the most regular and fatal errors. They call it the 'triggered answer'. You have your pre-prepared answer ready but you don't look at the exact terms of the question and therefore supply the wrong information in your answer.
- **Not finishing the paper:** mismanaging your time within the exam can easily cost you a full grade. The biggest exam 'crime' is to leave suitable questions not being attempted. Remember: it is much easier to get the first 20% of the marks for any question than the last 5%. Therefore, if you find yourself stuck for time as you struggle through your third answer out of five, do not spend your remaining time extending and perfecting that answer. Instead, move on to questions four and five, even if your attempt is sketched or in point form. If you have answered only three questions instead of five, the highest mark you can get is 60%.
- **Ignoring the marking scheme:** you must take the marking scheme into account when you allocate time to each question or part of a question. If the marks allotted to a question clearly indicate that a few paragraphs are sufficient, do not write an essay on the subject. Avoid the temptation of writing everything you know about a topic – just give the appropriate amount of information.
- **Repetition:** make the point once there are no extra marks for restating facts, even if you phrase them differently. Examiners say repetition is a very common mistake. It is also a time-waster and an irritant.
- **Missing part of a question:** sometimes, part of a question can be carried onto the next page and, in the pressure of the moment, you don't see it. As a consequence you might fail to do a compulsory part of a question or miss out on the chance to take an option that would have suited you better. Always take time to familiarise yourself with the whole paper before you start answering it.
- **Irrelevant quotations:** in literary subjects don't use irrelevant quotations you may have learned off, as it only irritates the examiner.
- **Rough work:** include your rough work with your exam script – you might get some credit for formulae or calculations contained therein

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