



**Nuala:** Hi, I'm Nuala O'Sullivan and you're listening to 'Exam Skills'. In this programme we look at one of the best ways to prepare for an exam. These students have the right idea:

### **Students**

Well I think I try to build my confidence, long beforehand, and if I go to school and try these tests beforehand, then I can gain some confidence.

We have got some test papers and we do it and after that they can score for us.

**Nuala:** As part of your preparation for any exam it's a very good idea to do lots of test papers, or practice exams. Then you'll know what to expect in the exam. As soon as you can, you should start working on past exam papers to find out what you need to know and what you should be working towards. And then, as you get closer to the exam, here's what language expert Karen Adams thinks you should do.

### **Karen Adams**

First of all, try to set aside some time where you can actually do a mock examination. A mock exam is one where you try to complete an examination paper just as you would do in an exam room. Even if your course doesn't provide a mock exam, try to set some time aside at home, where you can practice on your own. This helps you develop your exam technique. And remember, a lot of success in exams depends on good technique.

**Nuala:** It certainly does. If you want to do well, you need a good exam technique. Timing is very important. And doing mock exams - and doing them in the

same amount of time that you'll have for the real exam - helps you get your timing right. It's not just about knowing the overall time you're allowed for the exam, but knowing exactly how much time to spend on each task. It's best to spend the most time on whatever has the most marks.

Now, you'd think exam papers would make it clear how many marks there are for each question. Well, sometimes they do - but not always. Here's a word of warning from examiner Mark Shea.

### **Mark Shea**

It's not always obvious, it's not always written on the exam paper, which is why you need to study the exam. It's not just a test of your English; it's a test of your exam skills. And you need to be fully aware of how many marks there are for each part before the exam. Now it's usually pretty easy to get copies of past exams. Study the exam before you take it.

**Nuala:** Talk to teachers and other students. Get examples of past papers – they're often available on the internet. Contact examination boards if you have to. Make sure you find out how many marks are allocated for each task in that exam. Then do mock exams to see if you can do each part in the time allowed.

But these are not the only things you need for a good exam technique. Make sure you know exactly what you have to do. Pay attention to the instructions. Karen Adams explains.

### **Karen Adams**

So it's very important to know about the instructions for each type of task. Look at some past papers and look particularly at the instructions and what they ask you to do. This way you'll get used to the kind of tasks that you're going to be asked to do in the real exam.

**Nuala:** To sum up the advice in this programme, here again are two important things to remember as you prepare for an exam:

### **Karen Adams**

Number one: try to do a mock exam, so you get to try out your exam technique. And number two: always pay attention to the instructions in the different types of questions. Get used to the instructions before you go into the exam.

**Nuala:** In other words, make sure you know exactly what you're expected to do, and the time you'll have to do it.

And just before we go, here's a bit of reassurance from one student who'll be sitting his exam very soon.

### **Student**

If you do lots of practice it won't be really hard for you, difficult. You can do it.

**Nuala:** Good luck and good revising!