

How to revise for GCSE Languages

The GCSE is divided into four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Each will be examined in a separate exam.

Below are some details of the skills examiners are looking for evidence of in each exam (taken from the AQA specification) and suggestions of how best to prepare for each one:

Listening and Reading

Students are expected to be able to:

- understand overall messages, key points, details and opinions
- recognise which tense is being referred to
- deduce the meaning of texts – both short and longer texts, involving some complex language
- evaluate and draw conclusions

How to revise for listening and reading:

- Ensure that you have a confident grasp of the vocab from the end of each unit in the textbook: you could use Quizlet, your vocab books, the Linguascope website or even the vocab list on the AQA exam specification.
- Use the specimen exam questions or past papers (there are lots on the Edexcel website for example). For listening, you could listen with the transcript which you will find in the answer booklet on the Edexcel website. Try some of the following:
 - pick 10 words you do not recognise and look them up
 - write out cards and match the English with the French / German / Spanish as quickly as you can
 - if listening, jumble up the words and put them in the order you hear them
 - get someone to test you on what the words mean
 - teach the words to someone else
 - then actually do the past paper question
 - pick a category e.g. adjectives, verbs, verbs in different tenses, opinions, reasons for opinions, time phrases and highlight the words in that category
 - re-use the listening and reading activities from the textbook on Kerboodle and do some of the revision activities on there

Speaking

Students are expected to be able to:

- communicate effectively for a variety of purposes across a range of contexts
- use and adapt language for new purposes
- be able to ask and answer questions and to exchange opinions
- speak spontaneously and to respond to unexpected questions
- use “repair” strategies
- use a variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures with reference to the present, past and future
- express and justify their own points of view
- use accurate pronunciation and intonation

How to revise for the speaking exam:

- Keep learning your answers to the conversation questions (make sure that you are up to date with your answers and hand in any you have re-written for marking). Remember, little but often is the best way with these. You could practise with a friend for 5 minutes every day or get someone to test you at home (it does not matter if the “someone” does not speak the language you are learning – give them your script to follow and you can correct their pronunciation of the questions.)
- Remember to learn the questions along with the answers
- Revise the key phrases from the “photo card” sheet.
- Practise for the role play by using the specimen role plays on the AQA website
- Listening will also help with your speaking as it will help your pronunciation as well as your understanding of unexpected questions.
- Attend revision sessions to practise with your teacher.

Writing

Students are expected to be able to:

- communicate effectively for a variety of purposes across a range of contexts
- write short texts, using simple sentences and familiar language accurately
- write extended texts to present facts, express ideas and opinions
- use a variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures with reference to the present, past and future
- express and justify their own points of view
- translate sentences and short texts from English to French / German / Spanish to convey key messages accurately, applying grammatical knowledge of language

How to revise for the writing exam:

- Much of the writing exam will require the same language as the speaking exam so if you know your answers to the conversation questions well, these can be re-used to answer the questions in the writing exam.
- As for the listening and reading, ensure that you have a confident grasp of the vocab from the end of each unit in the textbook: you could use Quizlet, your vocab books, the Linguascope website or even the vocab list on the AQA exam specification.
- Make sure that you know a wide range of key verbs in different tenses.
- Revise the different tenses e.g. on Languages Online, by using the grammar sections in your textbook, by re-using your two workbooks (your teacher will be happy to mark work for you).
- Use your “impressing the examiner” phrases to help with expressing and justifying opinions.