

Home Economics

How to get a Distinction in the Junior Cycle Home Economics Exam



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Introduction

Home Economics is a fantastic, all-round subject for anyone to take on for the Junior Cycle. If you are creative and prefer a more hands-on approach, Home Economics is the perfect subject for you. It teaches lots of practical skills and useful information that you can make use of now and later on in life.

However, there is a lot of information to remember so you need to put effort into it. The course is broad including practicals, CBAs but the written exam is worth 50% of the mark. It's not all cooking and baking and there is a lot to learn, but in this guide I will share with you what you need to focus on to do well!

Here are some of the **key areas** to study in the Junior Cycle Home Economics course:

- **Your body** - how to keep your skin and hair healthy, how to have enough energy for school, sports etc
- **Food** - how it nourishes your body, how to choose it, store it, and how to prepare and cook it etc
- **Money** - how to spend it wisely, how to save it, and how you are protected as a consumer etc
- **Your home** - designing rooms in the house, keeping everyone safe at home etc

Follow this guide to get the best mark that you possibly can :)

How it's assessed

Home Economics is assessed through two classroom based assessments (CBAs), a practical cookery exam and a final written exam. The CBAs do not go towards your final grade but you will be given a descriptor based on your level of achievement. This is explained below. The cookery exam is worth 50% and the written exam is also worth 50%.

CBA 1- “Creative Textiles”

What it involves

This is a short project that you do in 2nd year based on Textiles or “sewing” as we would be more familiar with.

You have two options:

- Make a textiles item from scratch e.g. a framed felt picture
- Upcycle/ repurpose an item- jeans, cushion cover etc.

This project helps to bring out your creative side and students really enjoy the upcycling option as they feel that they are being more sustainable and helping the environment.

Alongside this you have to write up or type a short booklet based on how you carried out the project from start to finish. This is called the Design Brief Process and can also be presented in other formats such as a moodboard, scrapbook etc.

How is it graded?

Your teacher will grade your project and you will be awarded a 'descriptor'. These appear on your Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) which you will receive with your Junior Cycle results. They are basically a short description of how well you did and they are as follows:

1. Exceptional
2. Above Expectations
3. In Line With Expectations
4. Below Expectations

Things to remember

Always remember to follow your teacher's instructions throughout the project and don't be afraid to ask for feedback from your teacher or your classmates.

Be familiar with the Features of Quality- your teacher will give you these. They describe the standard of work you must provide in order to do well in your project.

If you put effort into this project, you will be proud of your hard work. You could even give the item away to a cousin or grand-parent as a present.

Tip

Jot down what you did week-to-week and take plenty of photos

CBA 2- “Food Literacy Skills”

This project is done in 3rd year and is based on briefs/ tasks that are sent out by the State Exams Commission around November time. There are 3 briefs but you will only pick one out of a hat and do research based on that topic- sustainability, food intolerances, for example.

You will gather information under various headings and present it in whatever format you fancy- PowerPoint, mood board etc. Like CBA1, your teacher will give you a descriptor (from the list above) to grade your project.

Things to remember

Take notes of any books, websites etc. that you used for researching and state these in your project as evidence.

Like CBA 1- ask your teachers and peers for advice and feedback and don't forget to follow the Features of Quality.

The reflection at the end is very important. Don't rush this part as this is where you can show your teacher what you have learned and how you have benefitted from the project.

Tip

Put the time and effort into this project as it will be very helpful when it comes to your cooking exam.

The Practical Culinary Exam

The Cookery exam is your time to shine!! This is when you need to show off all the knowledge and skills that you have picked up over the last 3 years of Home Economics.

The exam is 1 hour and 30 minutes long and you also have 30 minutes before that as preparation time.

It can definitely be a little daunting at the beginning but once you get started preparing the food you will forget the examiner is even there!

The Brief

The brief/task you researched and wrote about in CBA 2 is used again here. Whatever dish/dishes you choose for the task, you can make in the cookery exam. Alternatively, you can change your mind and pick different dishes once they fit the brief- that is the most important thing!!

Sticking to the brief is essential. There's no point cooking a perfect beef lasagne if the brief asks you for a vegetarian meal.

What else is involved?

- **The Booklet-** You must have a short written or typed booklet at your unit during the cookery exam. This is completed in advance of the exam and contains really helpful information such as the list of ingredients and equipment you will need and the method.
- **The Evaluation-** Remember to dedicate the last 10 minutes of the exam to the evaluation. Make sure that this is blank in your booklet and not already filled in. Be honest when evaluating your dishes- if you burned the cupcakes, say

you burned the cupcakes. It is not the end of the world! It is the journey that is most important, not the destination 😊

Tip

Practice the dish/ dishes as often as possible at home. It will help you get your timing right, because you will probably be under a bit of time pressure in the exam. You'll also then know that there's no reason for you to be nervous and that you can do it perfectly. Confidence is so important!

The Written Exam

This is a very straightforward exam worth 50% and you will this in June with all your other Junior Cycle subjects. It is 1 hour and 30 minutes long and it is Common Level. It has two sections. Always highlight the keywords in each question and be very clear on what you are being asked.

Section A

This section is worth **80 marks** and **contains 10 short questions (8 marks each)** and you must answer every question.

The questions are based on all areas of the Home Economics course- from nutrition to room design. It is important to be familiar with definitions for this section- cross contamination for example.

Here is an example of a question from Section A from the 2022 paper:

“Identify two ways in which a person’s diet can affect their teeth”

Tip

Questions in this section usually contain verbs like *“State”* or *“Identify”* and require short, precise answers.

Section B

This section is worth 240 marks and contains 3 longer style questions (80 marks each) with a number of sub-parts - a,b,c etc. in each. You must answer every question.

Like Section A, the questions are based on various different topics and therefore you must not leave any topic out when you are studying.

Both sections give a certain number of lines under each question so you will know how much to write as the answer.

Menus are very common in Section B so make sure you are up to scratch on menu writing!

Tip

This section demands more descriptive answers, asking *“Describe”* and *“Explain”* type questions. Always give an example to support your answer even if you are not asked.

Topics You Need To Know

The first State Exam for this subject was in 2022 so it can be hard to predict what the most common topics are but here are the ones I think are important to include in your study.

Section/Chapter	Topic
Section A	
Safety in the Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning agents.. Safety rules to follow • Hazard symbols
Cooking Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduction, convection, radiation
Food Hygiene & Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-contamination - definition and how to prevent it
Health & Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Tooth - how a person's diet affects their teeth • Caring for the teeth
Digestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enzymes involved in digestion
Diet Related Diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High cholesterol - meal planning guidelines
Textiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors influencing a person's choice of clothes • Benefits of knitting
Room Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanation of the principle "emphasis"
Sustainable & Responsible Living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing water consumption • Reducing food waste
Food & Nutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why it is important to reduce sugar in the diets of children
Section B	
Sustainable & Responsible Living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-using leftover foods

Cooking Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appliances used when preparing food
Health & Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe internet use & screen-time • Sun protection
Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online shopping • Saving for a family holiday
Food & Nutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meal Planning Guidelines • Menus • Comparing food labels • Benefits of including water in the diet • Vitamin D - sources, function, deficiency
Special Diets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetarian symbol
Textiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines for washing clothes • Being environmentally friendly when doing so • Sketch a t-shirt for a family holiday • Sewing equipment • Care label symbols

Types of Questions

Most questions in Section A & B are short style written questions where you have an allocated space to fill in.

In Section B, you might be asked to do a menu. You are usually given a template (scroll outline) and you then have to fill in the dishes. Be aware of the type of menu you are requested to do before you start planning - breakfast, lunch etc.

In Section B, another common style question is where you are asked to stretch a piece of clothing eg. a t-shirt and describe it. Make sure you use a pencil and even some colouring pencils would be handy for this.

Exam Timing

Timing is very important in every exam as if you allocate a certain number of minutes to each section you are less likely to be under time pressure.

If you go overtime - don't panic!! Try to move faster on the other questions and remember you will have 10 minutes at the end to help you catch up.

Timing Breakdown

The written exam is **1hr 30 minutes** long and I would advise that you divide your time as follows:

<p>5 minutes</p>	<p>Clearly fill in your exam number on the front of the paper and don't forget your date of birth.</p> <p>Open the paper - have a read through the questions and settle yourself. Take a deep breath and say to yourself "I can do this!!!"</p> <p>Highlight the key word or phrase in each question.</p>
<p>30 mins</p>	<p><i>Section A: Short Questions (80 marks)</i></p> <p>3 mins x 10 Qs</p> <p>You might be thinking that 3 minutes is too much time but remember that some questions have an a) and b) section.</p>

	Complete all 10 Qs - you don't have a choice!
45 mins	<p><i>Section B: Long Questions (240 marks)</i></p> <p>15 mins x 3 Qs</p> <p>The long questions usually have 5 /6 smaller questions within each one.</p> <p>Again, you have no choice so make sure you complete every part of every question.</p>
10 mins	<p>Use the last 10 minutes to read over the paper from start to finish.</p> <p>Read the questions again and make sure you have interpreted them properly.</p> <p>If you want to add something extra, there is more space in the back of the exam booklet. Make sure to label it with the exam number and part - eg e).</p>
TOTAL	1 hr 30 mins

During the exam

- Use a **blue or black pen** and write as **clearly** as you can. You want to make it easy for the examiner to give you marks. Any sketches or diagrams should be done with a **pencil**.
- NEVER ever leave anything **blank** - examiners hate to see this. Instead of giving the message "I don't know the answer", it often comes across as "I couldn't be bothered!". This is definitely not how you want to portray yourself - you need to keep the examiner sweet!!

- If you are unsure of an answer, leave it but don't forget to come back to it at the end. Another question along the way may spark off a possible answer in your head. Give it your best guess - anything is better than nothing.
- Where relevant, make references to the Healthy Eating Food Pyramid and the Healthy Eating Guidelines in your answers. For example *"I have included three low-fat dairy products in this daily menu for a sedentary adult as the Food Pyramid recommends 3 servings from the dairy shelf for calcium purposes."*
- Include examples where you can, even if you are not asked. Examiners love examples!
- If you go blank-don't panic!! It used to happen to me all the time! Take a deep breath and read the question again. Write down whatever words or phrases come into your head on the side of the exam paper and go from there.

Study Tips

In Class

- Make sure your school attendance is excellent and listen in class. As simple as it sounds, tuning in to your teacher in every class and making the most of the wealth of experience and knowledge they have will help you retain the information.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions - there is no such thing as a stupid question. Your teacher is there to help.
- Complete the questions in your textbook at the end of each section. Try to do them without looking at the information and correct them when you are finished. This is known as "self-assessment" and is very effective when revising.
- Take class tests seriously - put in the time and effort when studying for them as they are an excellent way of revising.

- When you receive a test result or you get corrected classwork/ project work back, take note of the mistakes you made and ensure that you learn from them. You will never progress if you keep making the same mistake over and over again.

Using Studyclix

Use Studyclix to practice past exam papers as examiners often re-use questions from other years and this is the best way to prepare yourself.

The quizzes feature on Studyclix is also an excellent feature to help you to revise particular topics.

General Study Tips

- Make sure you know the Nutrition section inside out. This section is well worth investing your time in as you can tie this information into many of the food-related questions.
- Have a flick through the Irish Independent newspaper, download the app or follow it on social media for information on health and nutrition, recent surveys that have been carried out etc. You may be able to utilise some of the information or statistics to support your answers.
- Make out a study plan and stick to it!! Tick off each topic after you study it - this will give you a sense of achievement. Sometimes we get overwhelmed with how much we have to do that we forget how far we have come. Don't forget the hard work you have put in to date.

Helpful Hints

- Get into the kitchen as much as you can at home and try to bake and cook as often as possible. Help your parents/guardians/grandparents etc to prepare meals as this will help to develop skills and also an understanding of food.
- Watch cookery or home design programmes on TV/ social media platforms. TikTok can provide great inspiration for room design and Netflix has some brilliant shows that can give handy baking tips - Sugar Rush for example.
- Try out different recipes and don't be afraid if they don't work out. Practice makes perfect!
- Do the food shopping with an adult - this will open your eyes to the prices of food and the different types of food available from season to season.
- Read the food labels on the back of food packaging and get familiar with which foods are high in which nutrients - eg wheaten bread is high in fibre.
- Take note of different food options, accompaniments, sauces etc. on menus when eating out.
- Remember that what you learn in Home Economics has cross-curricular links with other subjects such as sustainability in Geography or digestion in Science.



Best of luck in the exam!
You will be great



