

## **No sooner have the school exams finished than our students have to sit yet another paper: the University Entrance Exam (Selectividad).**

**Montse Irún gives some invaluable advice to get your students practising for the exam.**

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WHEN THE school year is nearly over, there is one thing that awaits both teachers and students with the same feeling of uneasiness: the University Entrance Exam. The exam is designed to assess our students' proficiency in English. From a language point of view, the English that they study at school should provide them with more than sufficient preparation, but as teachers



we know what a difference that extra input on exam techniques can make.

One good approach is to work through practice tests so that students are able to discover a strategy that works for them. *University Entrance Exam Generator* (Macmillan, 2012) is a useful resource because teachers can author the texts themselves and select those activities that are used in their region.

It's certainly worth spending time talking to your students about the most effective techniques for fulfilling each task. Having a clear idea of what they are being asked to do and how they will be marked helps students to achieve better results. The following list contains strategies adapted from different textbooks that aim to get students to reflect on how best to carry out the different tasks in the exam.

## Reading:

- Skim the text to get a general idea of what it is about.
- Read both the text and the questions carefully and intensively, making sure you understand as much as possible.
- Do not expect to understand every single word. Concentrate on what you do understand.
- Isolate the parts of the text that each of the questions belongs to.
- In multiple-choice questions, some of the differences between the choices can be very small. Some alternatives may be correct but they are not stated in the text. Answers that appear obvious may be wrong.
- In gap-filling activities, always read the text on either side of the gap very carefully and make sure that it fits logically.

## Listening:

- Read the introduction and the questions before listening to the test. Find as many clues as possible about what you are going to be listening to.
- As with reading, do not expect to understand every single word. Concentrate on what you do understand.

## Writing:

- Prepare for a writing task by reading carefully what you have to do.
- Plan your composition for at least five minutes.
- Leave the last five minutes at the end of the composition to check for mistakes. Remember to look out for your 'favourite mistakes'!
- The University Entrance Exam is not a test of your ideas, but your language level. Do not try to express ideas that are too complicated for your level of English.

Good luck to all your students in the exam!

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