

Five Key techniques for O Level Chinese Exams O水准华文攻克法门

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O Level Chinese has 3 main components: Oral and Listening, Email and Composition, and Cloze and Comprehension.



1 Oral: Language and Content

Oral examination has two components: passage reading and video discussion. For passage reading, candidates should always speak in a voice that fits the tone of the passage, ie. some passages are news-like, some are general knowledge-based, while others are narrative and packed with more personal emotions. **Recognition of words and fluency in narration** are key.

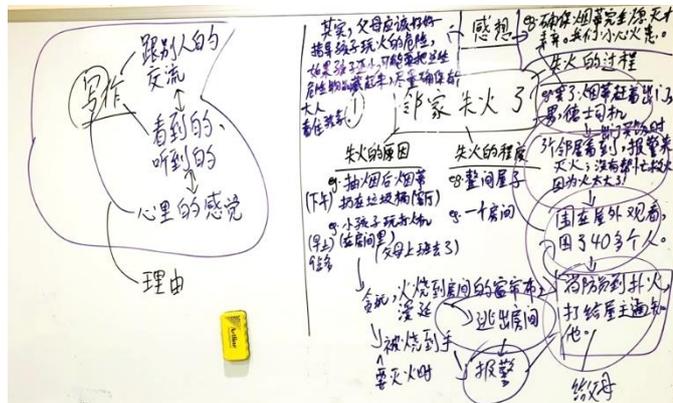
As for video/topic discussion, the natural advice is to listen and speak more, to hone your skills in verbal communication. However, there are actually specific ways to answer the oral questions effectively. After all, it is not just a free-talk session, but one where the examiner looks out specifically for key indicators of clarity and depth in expression of ideas and thoughts, and this is broken down mainly into **language** and **content**, which are equally important. Candidates need to show ability to **discuss issues intelligently** and in a **fluent manner**.

Popular topics include: **sports and health, family bonding and relationships, and the environment.**

2 Composition: Make the story come out!

Many a time, students focus **too much effort** in writing out the 'storyline' and, work hard to fulfil a list of content for completion, or give narration to a chronology of events in a **report-like manner**. However, they fail to focus as much attention on making the story *nice to read*. As the saying goes, 'it is not *what you say*, but *how you say it*.'

Of course, as a composition exam, *what you say* is also important so as not to go out-of-point. But *how you say it*, is often neglected by students in their writings and hence, they lose out to counterparts who do put attention on that.



Reading good works of literature helps, so does the love of writing and expressing oneself, and the practice of doing so on a regular basis. Certainly, good words and phrases help too, but only when they are used correctly and not in an *overly-robotic manner*.

O Level Composition questions come in 3 different categories: argumentative/discursive/descriptive 论说文 (general topic of debate/discussion, or list the pros and cons of technology, etc.), narrative 记叙文 (usually scenario-based 情境作文), and material/discursive 材料作文 (based on specific current affairs/social phenomenon).

3 Cloze: Understanding and differentiating between similar words

This is where one's **acumen of word usage and meaning**, and **grammar**, come into test. When given a choice of 4 words, students need to pick the 1 that fits best in the context of the sentence and passage.

Hence, a good understanding of what the passage is talking about (often neglected), and which word would fit best in that particular sentence, would decide if the child selects the correct word. Of course, prior knowledge of the words (vocabulary) in the options, and a **good grasp of grammar and sentence structure** is essential for good performance in this section.

星期日上午，邻居李叔叔来到我家。他说他们一家人要去澳洲旅行，三个星期后才回来，请我们帮助他们 Q1 (照例 照常 照料 照理) 门前的花草。我们高兴地答应了。

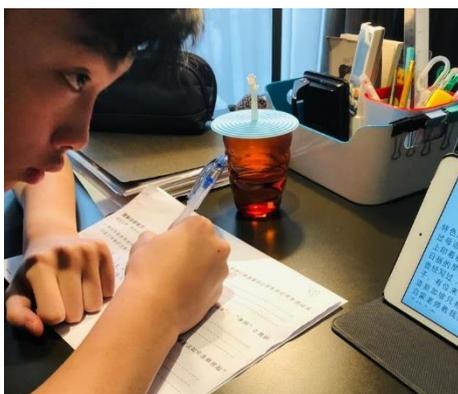
一天，我从李叔叔家门口经过，Q2 (往常 习惯 顺便 刚巧) 性地看着花草，心想：一会儿该浇水了。忽然，我发现李叔叔家大铁门上的 Q3 (锁匙 锁链 门槛 门塞) 不见了。我刚要喊：“李叔叔回来了！”，可是又一想，李叔叔一家刚走了一个星期，怎么可能这么快就回来了呢？

我突然想到：“难道李叔叔家进贼了？”于是，我 Q4 (仔细 细心

4 MCQ Comprehension: Eliminating the 'near-right' answers in the options

For the MCQ comprehension questions, students must always read the passages (usually 4 passages) carefully, two times if necessary, so as not to accidentally select the ‘trick options’ in the MCQs. A good way of doing so is to read the passage one time (to understand and grasp the general meaning), read and understand the questions, and then go back to the passage again to find the correct answer.

Crossing out answers determined to be wrong also helps in eliminating close answers and arriving at the right one eventually.



5 Open-ended Comprehension: Understanding the passage and comprehending the questions, then giving concise and intelligent answers

For the open-ended comprehension, not only do candidates need to understand the passages, they also need to be able to **know what each question is asking of them**, find the relevant parts in the passage, and copy/rephrase (depending on the question) **in a manner that answers the question**.

Among the five questions from each comprehension passage (there are two passages), there would also be at least one that **asks of their opinion** on the stance of the writer in the passage/ their own take on a particular practice/notion presented in the passage. While candidates are free to agree or disagree, they must always keep in mind that the argument that follows their opinion is very important, meaning they must be able to back up their opinion with strong and sensible points.



