



IX | Specific techniques for the big exam

5 basic tips to ace O Level Chinese

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

By MOE Teacher Jaye (for Inspiren)



1 Oral: Language and Content

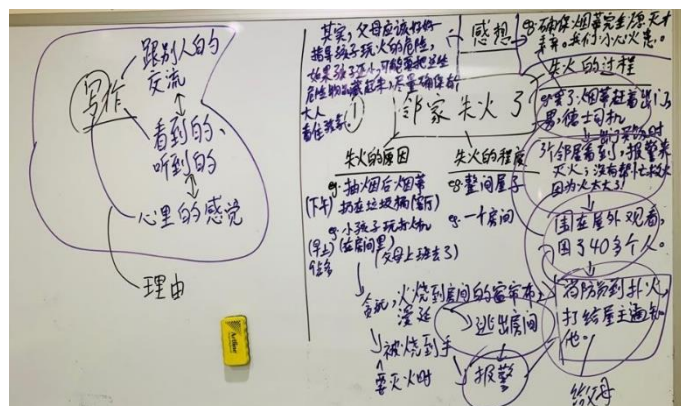
Oral examination has two components: passage reading and video discussion. For passage reading, candidates should always speak in a voice that fits the tone of the passage, ie. some passages are news-like, some are general knowledge-based, while others are narrative and packed with more personal emotions. 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 much effort in writing out the 'storyline' and works hard to fulfil a list of content to complete, or give narration to a chronology of events in a compo story. 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.

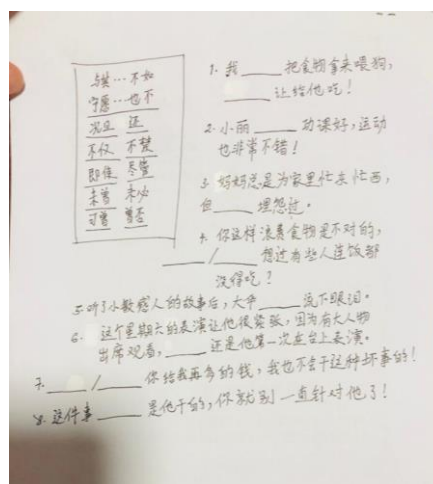
Reading good works of literature helps, so does the love of writing and expressing oneself, and the practice of doing so on a regular basis. Certainly, good words and phrases help too, but only when they are used correctly and not in an overly-robotic manner.

Composition questions come in different categories: argumentative/discursive (general topic), narrative (scenario-based), descriptive (eg. talk about your school environment) and news-or-info-based (specific social events).

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.

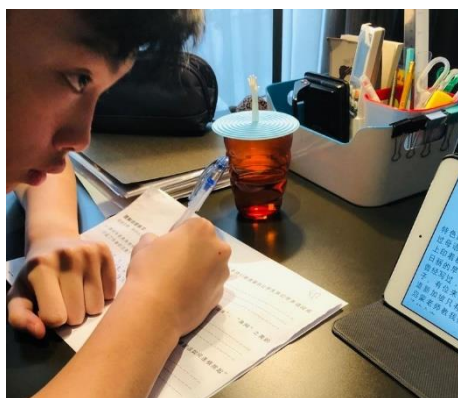
Hence, a good understanding of what the passage is talking about (often neglected) and which word would fit best in that particular sentence, would decide if the child selects the correct word. Of course, prior knowledge of the words (vocabulary) in the options, and a good grasp of grammar and sentence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



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

For the MCQ comprehension questions, students must always read the passages (usually 4) carefully, two times if necessary, so as not to be tricked by some options in the MCQ. A good way of doing so is to read the passage one time (ensure no disturbance or disruption), then read the questions, and read the passage again to find the correct answer.

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

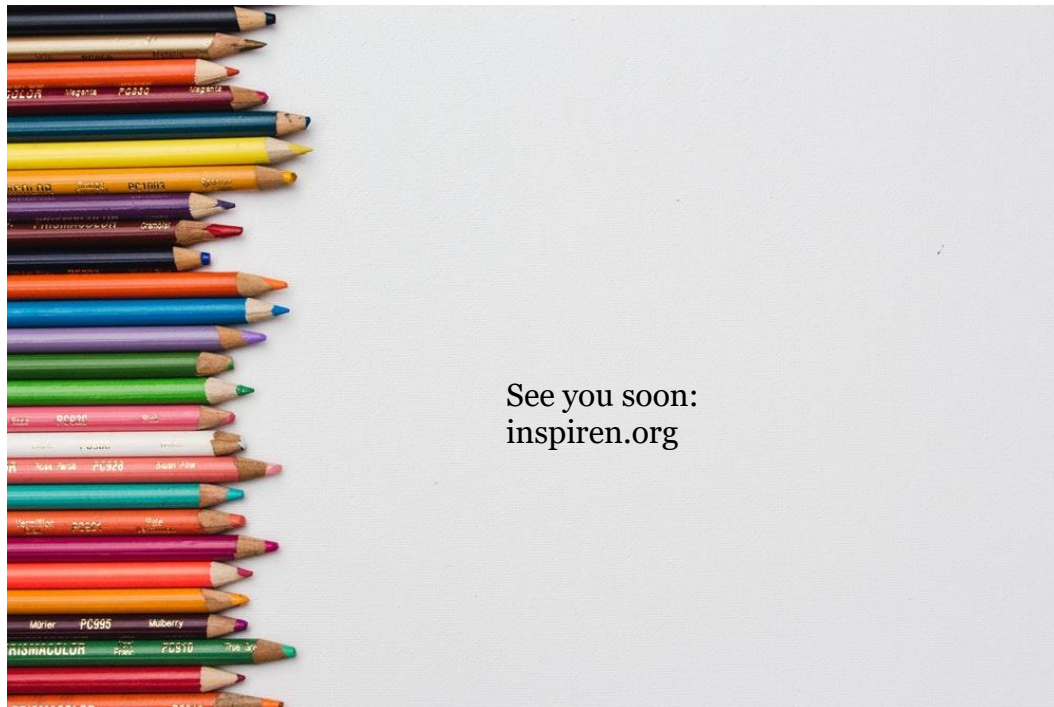


5 Open-ended Comprehension: Understanding the passage and comprehending the questions, then giving concise and intelligent answers

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 ask 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.



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