



The Leaving Cert Maths Game Plan

Grades, CAO points, the 25 bonus, and a month-by-month plan for
Higher and Ordinary Level. Built for the current syllabus.

Grades, points and the 25 bonus

Leaving Cert Maths is two papers in early June, each 2 hours 30 minutes and each worth 300 marks. Your percentage across both papers decides your grade, and your grade decides your CAO points.

Grade	Percentage	Higher Level points	Ordinary Level points
1	90 to 100	100 (+25 = 125)	56
2	80 to 89	88 (+25 = 113)	46
3	70 to 79	77 (+25 = 102)	37
4	60 to 69	66 (+25 = 91)	28
5	50 to 59	56 (+25 = 81)	20
6	40 to 49	46 (+25 = 71)	12
7	30 to 39	37	0
8	under 30	0	0

The bonus, in one line: Higher Level Maths carries 25 extra CAO points for a H6 or better. A H6 is worth 46 + 25 = 71 points, which beats a perfect O1 at Ordinary (56). If you can pass Higher at all, Higher is usually the better points decision.

The five rules this plan runs on

1. **Practise daily, not weekly.** Twenty to thirty focused minutes every day beats one long weekend session. Maths skill decays fast; daily retrieval keeps every strand warm.
2. **Let your mistakes choose your homework.** Keep every wrong answer and return to those exact question types until they stop appearing. The marks live in what you avoid.
3. **Know your strand numbers.** You should be able to say which of the five strands is your weakest and roughly what percent you score in each. Measure first, then aim.
4. **Sit timed papers long before the mocks.** Timing is a trainable skill. The school mocks should never be your first experience of the clock.
5. **Show every step.** Leaving Cert Maths gives real partial credit for visible method. A sensible start earns marks; a blank earns nothing.

The five strands, and where marks go missing

The whole syllabus is five strands. Both papers mix them, so you cannot safely skip one. Here is what each covers and where students typically drop marks.

Strand	What it covers	Where marks go missing
Algebra	Expressions, factorising, equations and inequalities, and at Higher Level complex numbers.	Sloppy algebra is the number one mark leak in every other strand too. If factorising is not automatic, everything else is slower.
Functions	Graphs and transformations, exponentials and logs, and calculus at Higher Level.	Reading graphs too quickly, and calculus questions abandoned at the first unusual step instead of earning attempt marks.
Number	Arithmetic, percentages, financial maths, sequences and series, indices.	Financial maths wording. Students know the maths but answer the wrong question. Read the last line first.
Geometry and Trigonometry	Theorems and constructions, coordinate geometry, trigonometry, area and volume.	Formulae misremembered under pressure that are actually printed in the booklet, and degrees versus radians mode on the calculator.
Statistics and Probability	Counting, probability rules, distributions, analysing data.	Probability wording ("at least one", "given that"). Slow down and translate the sentence before touching numbers.

Do this now: write the five strands on paper and give each a score out of 10, honestly. Your next month of study belongs mostly to the lowest two numbers. Re-score yourself monthly; the numbers moving up is the whole game.

The plan, from September to the exam

When	Focus
Sept to Oct	Rebuild foundations. Score yourself on the five strands and live in your weakest one. Start the daily habit now: 20 to 30 minutes, every day, mixed questions.
Nov to Dec	Move to your second weakest strand while keeping daily mixed practice. Treat the Christmas tests as your first timed checkpoint, not a verdict.
January	First full timed paper at home, booklet and calculator only, phone in another room. Mark it honestly and list every gap it exposes.
Feb to Mar	The mocks. They are data, not destiny: most students sit them before finishing the course. Afterwards, spend two full weeks on your two worst topics from the paper.
Apr to May	Alternate weeks: one week timed papers, one week repairing what they expose. Get fluent in the formulae and tables booklet so exam day holds no surprises.
June	Taper. Light review only in the last three days, no new topics. Sleep properly. Walk in knowing your timing rule and your strand map.

The daily half hour

- **15 min:** mixed questions across strands, including yesterday's mistakes
- **10 min:** your current weakest strand
- **5 min:** redo one question you got wrong earlier in the week, from scratch

In fifth year? Same engine, lower stakes. Start the daily habit and the strand scores now and sixth year becomes maintenance instead of rescue.

The marks **most students leave behind**

The timing rule

Each paper is 300 marks in 150 minutes: **half a minute per mark**. A 25 mark question earns a budget of about 12 minutes. Over budget and stuck? Flag it, move on, come back. The exam rewards students who bank every easy mark first.

Six habits worth real marks

1. **Show your work in steps.** The marking scheme gives partial credit for visible method, even when the final answer is wrong. Never do two steps in your head at once.
2. **Read the last line of the question first.** Know what is being asked before you read the setup, especially in financial maths and probability.
3. **Never leave a blank.** A sensible first step, a labelled diagram, a substitution into the right formula: all of it can earn credit. A blank earns exactly zero.
4. **Learn the formulae and tables booklet.** It is provided in the exam. Knowing what is printed there, and where, saves both time and memory.
5. **Check your calculator mode.** Degrees versus radians has cost real grades. Check it at the start of each paper, and know your own calculator's quirks cold.
6. **Answer everything, review at the end.** Change an answer only when you can say why the new one is right.

Exam-day checklist

- ☐ Calculator you know well, plus spare batteries
- ☐ Pens, pencils, ruler, compass, protractor
- ☐ Exam number and ID sorted the night before
- ☐ Water and a normal breakfast; arrive early
- ☐ Timing rule written at the top of your rough work: marks divided by two equals minutes



Want this plan to run itself?

H1 Owl turns this exact system into five minute daily drills with streaks, mistakes that come back until they stick, and full timed mock exams with an indicative H1 to H8 grade estimate. Higher and Ordinary Level, all five strands, original questions written to the published syllabus.

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