

Biology Sixth Form Entrance Exam

Questions and Answers

Is there a specific textbook you would recommend in preparation for the Biology entrance exam?

Pupils from various countries and examination systems sit the entrance exam. Consequently, we do not recommend a specific textbook. We design the content of the exam to be accessible to pupils of GCSE or equivalent standard. The best responses to questions reveal an ability to apply knowledge of biology, often in unfamiliar contexts.

The Westminster Biology department encourages candidates to read regularly and to watch relevant documentaries or videos. Do you recommend any specific books, magazines, or videos?

This advice is given to encourage candidates to think more deeply about Biology - to forge connections between syllabus specification points for example. The book, 'What is Life?' by Paul Nurse can help in this respect but there are many others. YouTube channels like PBS Eons and New Scientist offer interesting insights into a wide variety of biological concepts. David Attenborough documentaries don't need any introduction. The point is for a pupil to discover what she or he finds interesting about Biology.

Are there any past papers or sample questions available for the Biology entrance exam?

An example of a Sixth Form entrance exam Biology question has been published on the Westminster website. However, it is important to understand that the format of the Biology exam will change from one year to the next. What we are looking for are pupils who are able to apply biology of a GCSE or equivalent standard to solve problems.

Could you provide any advice on effective study techniques?

The format of the exam changes from one year to the next. However, a common theme is 'problem solving'. A pupil should understand thoroughly what they have been taught to date and where possible to think about these concepts through their engagement with the types of resources mentioned above.

What strategy can a candidate use to answer exam questions that require application of biological knowledge, often in unfamiliar contexts?

Candidates should plan their written answers: identify biological keywords that should feature in an answer, recognise the interrelationships between these keywords and organise them into a logical narrative. Again, the standard expected is GCSE or equivalent, even when the context is unfamiliar to the pupil.