Paper 1 Examiner Secrets

This guide by **FutureLogic Education** reveals the exam technique secrets that help students gain more marks in IGCSE Computer Science Paper 1.

■ Secret 1 — The Biggest Secret

✔ Technical vocabulary earns marks.

✔ Developed explanations earn marks.

✗ Long waffle answers do not.

EXAM TIP: Quality beats quantity every time. One precise technical sentence beats three vague ones.

Teacher note: Write this on the board before every mock: "Technical vocabulary + developed explanation = marks."

■ Secret 2 — The 1 Mark = 1 Point Rule

Marks	What to write
1	One clear fact.
2	Two clear facts.
3	Developed explanation — what + why + effect.
6	Multiple linked explanations. Structure your answer.

EXAM TIP: Overwriting 1-mark questions wastes time needed for 3 and 6-mark questions.

Teacher note: Teach students to glance at the mark allocation before writing a single word.

■ Secret 3 — Command Words Control Marks

Command Word	What it means	Depth needed
IDENTIFY	Name something.	One word / short phrase.
STATE	Give a fact.	One sentence.
DESCRIBE	Say what happens.	Steps or features.
EXPLAIN	Say what + why.	Cause + effect.
COMPARE	Similarities/differences.	Link both sides.

EXAM TIP: Read the command word BEFORE reading the rest of the question. It tells you exactly how to answer.

Teacher note: Answering the wrong command word is the single most preventable cause of lost marks.

■ Secret 4 — Examiner Pet Hates

✗ Vague answers — "it is better / faster / more efficient."

✗ Repeating the question back as the answer.

✗ Missing technical terms — use Cambridge vocabulary.

✗ Incomplete definitions — always give the full meaning.

✗ Not showing working on calculate questions.

EXAM TIP: If your answer contains no technical terms, rewrite it before moving on.

Teacher note: Read the "pet hates" list aloud in class. Students often recognise their own habits immediately.

■ Secret 5 — The Technical Vocabulary Secret

volatile	**parity**
cache	**metadata**
encryption	**fetch-decode-execute**
bandwidth	**packet**
overflow	**hexadecimal**

EXAM TIP: Spot where these words fit in your answers — then use them every time.

Teacher note: Build a class glossary wall. Students who can define these terms precisely are exam-ready.

■ Secret 6 — How Top Students Answer

✔ Read the command word first.

✔ Answer directly — no warm-up sentences.

✔ Use technical vocabulary in every answer.

✔ Explain fully — always include the reason and effect.

✔ Move on — do not overwrite simple questions.

EXAM TIP: Top students answer like a machine: command word → technical fact → reason → effect.

Teacher note: Role-play this in class. Give a question, ask students to call out the command word before writing.

■ Secret 7 — The 6-Mark Strategy

Step	What to do	Example
POINT	Make a clear technical statement.	*Cache stores frequently used data.*
EXPLAIN	Give the reason using a power word.	*...because it is faster to access than RAM...*
LINK	State the effect or consequence.	*...therefore CPU performance improves.*

EXAM TIP: For 6-mark questions: aim for 3 Point → Explain → Link chains. Cover multiple angles.

Teacher note: Practise this structure under timed conditions. Students who write in chains consistently score higher.

■ Secret 8 — The Timing Secret

Total marks	Time allowed	Time per mark	Rule
75	105 minutes	~1.4 minutes	Never spend more than 2× the marks in minutes.

EXAM TIP: A 3-mark question should take no more than 4–5 minutes. A 1-mark question: 1–2 minutes maximum.

Teacher note: Run timed drills so students develop an instinct for pacing. Timing panic is one of the biggest performance killers.

■ Secret 9 — Binary & Hex Secret

✔ Always show working — method marks are awarded even if the final answer is wrong.
✔ Write carry digits above the column — never track them mentally.
✔ Pad answers to 8 bits — Cambridge expects leading zeros.
✔ Split binary into nibbles of 4 for hex conversions.

EXAM TIP: A correct method with a wrong answer can still earn 2 out of 3 marks. Always show working.

Teacher note: Reinforce this before every binary/hex question in class. Method marks are free marks — students just need to show the steps.

Final Examiner Checklist

Before moving on from any question:

■	Did I answer the command word correctly?
■	Did I use technical vocabulary?
■	Did I explain fully — what + why + effect?
■	Did I show working for any calculate question?
■	Did I give enough points for the marks available?
■	Did I avoid vague words like "better" or "faster"?