

Command Words

Command words are the words and phrases used in exams and other assessment tasks that tell students how they should answer the question. Many of the 'command' words used in exam questions are the same across all subjects and require a similar response, even if the subject is different. Therefore, what follows is a glossary of the types of 'command' language you should expect to see in your GCSE exams. Those in bold all require the same sorts of analytical skill and are the types of question that require more depth and detail – more marks are awarded for these types of question.

Advise	Requires you to help somebody reach a decision through a mixture of facts, opinions, commands and options.
Analyse	Look closely at the detail; give reasons why or how something is done and the effect of this – use PEE/PEA/PEEL paragraphs, which help you to support your points with evidence and explain your thoughts.
Annotate	Add notation or labelling to a graph, diagram or other drawing that describe and/or explain features, rather than just identify them (which is labelling).
Apply	Put into effect in a recognised way.
Argue	Put forward a point of view in a structured and reasoned way – usually one sided but takes account of other points of view.
Assess	Consider several options or arguments and weigh them up so as to come to a conclusion about their effectiveness or validity. <i>For example, 'Assess how effective your presentation technique(s) were in representing the data collected in this enquiry.'</i>
Calculate	Work out the value of something. Marks are usually awarded for both the process and outcome. <i>For example, 'Using Figure 7, calculate the increase in retail sales value of Fairtrade bananas between 2000 and 2012.'</i>
Combine	Put together.
Comment on ...	This requires you to analyse and evaluate in a balanced way. Give your opinions or point of view, with reasons.
Compare	Look closely at two or more things which have something in common in order to see how they are the same and how they are different. This is looking for an analytical response – PEE/PEA/PEEL paragraphs could be used. <i>For example, 'Using Figure 4, compare HDI values in Africa and South America.'</i>
Complete	Finish a task by adding to the information. <i>For example, 'Complete the following sentences: The greatest number of category four tropical storms happen in the Ocean. Apart from very strong winds, one other associated weather feature of a category four storm is.....'</i>
Consider	Discuss from all angles/analyse.

<p>Contrast</p> <p>Describe...</p> <p>Describe in detail</p> <p>Describe the differences...</p>	<p>Often used with 'compare'; look at the differences of two or more things.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A detailed account. More simply – 'Write down...' Tell the examiner in your own words what/how/why something happens; must use words precisely (in scientific subjects this means using scientific terms). • Will often be linked to more marks and therefore you will be required to go into more depth in your answer and develop your key points using precise, clear language. • Structure around key points which you compare across the two points up for discussion – do not describe all the features of one and then all the features of the other – link ideas together.
<p>Critically</p>	<p>Often occurs before 'Assess' or 'Evaluate' inviting an examination of an issue from the point of view of a critic with a particular focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the points of view being expressed.</p>
<p>Criticise</p>	<p>Access worth against explicit expectations.</p>
<p>Debate</p>	<p>Present different perspectives on an issue.</p>
<p>Deduce</p>	<p>Draw conclusions from information provided.</p>
<p>Define</p>	<p>State the precise meaning of an idea or concept. There is usually a low tariff of marks for this.</p>
<p>Develop</p>	<p>Go beyond and expand something; take it forward; add detail; improve upon a basic idea.</p>
<p>Describe</p>	<p>Give an account in words. For example, 'Using Figure 9, describe the distribution of areas with existing licenses for fracking in the UK.'</p>
<p>Design</p>	<p>Set out how something will be done.</p>
<p>Determine</p>	<p>Use given data or information to obtain an answer.</p>
<p>Develop</p>	<p>Take forward or build upon given information.</p>
<p>Discuss</p>	<p>Also known as 'examine' and 'consider' – give the main reasons 'for' and 'against' and come to a conclusion. For example, 'Discuss the effects of urban sprawl on people and the environment. Use Figure 3 and a case study of a major city in the UK.'</p>
<p>Distinguish</p>	<p>List the differences between different items.</p>
<p>Draw</p>	<p>Produce a diagram.</p>
<p>Ensure</p>	<p>Make sure/make certain.</p>

Estimate	Guess or calculate approximately/give a rough idea with evidence.
Evaluate	Make a judgement about how good or bad, how successful or unsuccessful something is, usually against specific criteria. This is an opinion based response but it may require you to provide evidence for your points and clear explanations as to why you think the way you do. In Maths it means – work out/ calculate! For example, 'Evaluate the effectiveness of an urban transport scheme(s) you have studied.'
Examine	Look closely at something and discuss in a balanced and detached way in order to come to a decision and/or conclusion.
Explain	Give reasons for how or why something happens; you need to give examples. They are questions which normally carry a lot of marks and they require you to treat the subject analytically – often using a PEE/PEA/PEEL paragraph will help in certain subjects. For example, 'Using Figure 12 and your own knowledge, explain how different landforms may be created by the transport and deposition of sediment along the coast.'
Explore • Give • Give reasons	Investigate/look deeply at. Often this will require you to look at reasons. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These tend to be short, factual answers and normally they will specify how many points are to be made. • Say why or how something might happen. Normally they will specify how many reasons to give. For example, 'Give one condition that is needed for a tropical storm to form.'
Express	Work out or put a thought into words.
Find	Identify something.
• How • How far / successfully...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain something. • Requires you to explain, evaluate and make a judgement about the effectiveness of something – depending on the subject, use evidence and PEE/PEA/PEEL paragraphs.
Identify	Pick out/select/find/highlight. For example, 'Identify the glacial landform at grid reference 653532.'
Illustrate	Give examples that make your point clear (diagrams/figures/drawings).
Interpret	Explain the meaning in your own words. How do you 'see', 'read' or 'understand' something?

Justify	Support a case with evidence and give reasons for the validity of a view or idea why some action should be undertaken. This might reasonably involve discussing and discounting alternative views or actions. Each of the views present or options available will have positives and negatives. For the outcome(s) chosen, the positives outweigh the negatives. Students should be able to explain all of this review process. For example, 'Transnational corporations (TNCs) only bring advantages to the host country.' Do you agree with this statement? Justify your decision.
Label	Provide appropriate names on a diagram.
List	Can require single words or phrases – sometimes the order will be important. Questions with this command word do not require any reasoning or explanation - simply select the information required and write it down.
Match	Place like things together.
Modify	Change or adapt a drawing or sketch.
Name	Identify using a recognised technical term.
Outline	Give only the most important details, give a brief overview, give a brief explanation – often carries fewer marks. For example, 'Outline one way that Fairtrade helps to deal with the problems of unequal development.'
Persuade	Aim to change your reader's mind about something using biased points and persuasive devices.
Predict	Say what you think or expect will happen – the second part of this question may require you to explain this and justify your ideas.
Present	Show or demonstrate your ideas (remember to look at how you are meant to be presenting them).
Produce	Create/make/construct/bring to life.
Recommend	Put forward something with approval as being suitable for a particular purpose or role.
Relate	Give a technical term or equivalent.
Select	Choose something as being the most suitable.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show the method • Show how ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate/illustrate/explain a way of doing something or a process. • Explain how...
Simplify	Make something simpler or easier to understand.
Sketch	Draw/draft/outline using a pencil. In Maths you need to use a ruler and a pencil.

State	Write briefly, the main point in clear terms. For example, 'State one characteristic of the course of the River Ouse in grid square 5754.'
Study	Look in detail at a picture, passage or drawing in order to access information necessary to answer the question.
Suggest	Offer ideas, put forward ideas, propose something. For example, 'Suggest how the sea defences shown in Figure 11 help to protect the coastline.'
Summarise	Draw your key ideas and points together. Review key points in one paragraph.
To what extent . . .	Judge the importance or success of (strategy, scheme, project). For example, 'To what extent do urban areas in lower income countries (LICs) or newly emerging economies (NEEs) provide social and economic opportunities for people?'
Translate	Express the words or text in another language.
Use . . .	This often means they are directing you to a specific passage, rule or drawing. For example, 'Weather in the UK is becoming more extreme.' Use evidence to support this statement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is meant by... • What are the disadvantages and advantages... • What do you need to consider... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are being asked for a definition of the word. • A simple form of discussion. • You are being asked to highlight key information appropriate to a process in your response. <p>'What' questions usually carry fewer marks.</p>
Which	Choose from a number of alternatives, providing the reasons for your choice.
Why	Involves you discussing and explaining a process, outcome or point of view using evidence to support your ideas. It will usually involve a balanced approach.
Work out...	Asks you to solve something – marks are usually awarded for you showing the process behind your thinking as well as the answer you come up with.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write down • Write about how 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could mean 'Describe' or require you to select relevant information. • This is more detailed and requires you to explain a process and/or how something happens.

Most frequent Command Words by Subject

Biology	Business	Computer Science
Describe Calculate Explain Compare Estimate Suggest	Why Which Identify Explain Show Analyse Recommend Evaluate	Outline Explain Convert Express State Describe Show
Design and Technology	Drama	Engineering
Evaluate Explain Complete Describe	Describe Explain	Describe Explain
English	Geography	Health & Social Care
Select Summarise Explore How... Compare Write Describe Evaluate Comment	Study Describe Outline Suggest Assess Complete	Identify Explain Describe Analyse Evaluate
History	Hospitality	Maths
Describe Explain	Match Complete Outline Discuss State Suggest Describe Identify	Simplify Estimate Explain Work out Express Find Calculate
Media Studies	Modern Foreign Languages	Music
Explain Analyse	Translate	State Describe Explain Identify Evaluate Compare Name
PE	Religious Studies	Science
Identify Outline Name Suggest Justify Discuss Complete Define State Plot Analyse Evaluate	Explain Evaluate	Describe Calculate Explain Determine