

Command verbs

In tests and exams, you are given instructions as to what you should do. Below are the most common command verbs used in exams. Make sure you know what each word means, as it will help you to answer questions correctly.

<i>Calculate</i>	Perform a mathematical operation to find a numerical answer. You will usually need to show your working.
<i>Compare</i>	Say what is the same and what is different about two or more things.
<i>Complete</i>	Label a diagram or fill in gaps in a text or table.
<i>Deduce</i>	Give an answer based on information in the question.
<i>Define</i>	Give a precise description of the meaning of a term. Do not add any explanations.
<i>Describe</i>	Say what you can see in a graph, diagram or table. <i>or</i> Give the steps of what happens in a process. You do not need to give any explanation.
<i>Discuss</i>	Give two or more sides of an argument.
<i>Draw</i>	Provide a diagram, graph etc.
<i>Estimate</i>	State about how much or how many. This might involve a calculation using approximate values.
<i>Explain</i>	You need to give reasons in your answer. Often you will need to explain why something happens, or why a process is used.
<i>Find</i>	Calculate, measure or otherwise determine the answer.
<i>Interpret</i>	Use data to draw conclusions.
<i>List</i>	Give a number of (usually short) points. Often the number of points required is stated in the question.
<i>Measure</i>	Use a measuring instrument (for example ruler, calipers) to find a quantity.
<i>Name/label</i>	Add names or labels to a diagram
<i>Outline</i>	Give the main points of a topic or process as briefly as you can.
<i>Predict</i>	Say what you think will happen, based on the information in the question.
<i>Refer to</i>	Use information given as part of the question in your answer.
<i>Show that</i>	Give the steps of how you reached an answer.
<i>Sketch</i>	Provide a rough drawing; not a precise one.
<i>Solve</i>	Find the answer.
<i>State</i>	Give a short answer with no explanation, usually just simple facts. Sometimes you will be able to take the answer directly from the question.
<i>Suggest</i>	This could mean you need to give some of your own ideas, or to give one possible answer when there is more than one correct answer.