

HIAS MOODLE OPEN RESOURCE

AQA GCSE Science Suite Command Words

Placemat and Individual Cards

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Overview

This document contains...

A one-page placemat for use in supporting students to answer GCSE exam questions from the AQA science suite. The resource focuses on the correct response to each command word.

Separate slides are provided with greater detail for each command word.

Points to consider when using this resource:

You may wish to print/laminate a set of the placemats to use every time students attempt a GCSE question. In the initial stages of the GCSE course, you can use the slide to focus on the specific command. As students transition into Year 11, the use of the placemat should be more limited, for example phasing to students requesting rather than being given the map and ultimately not having the map at all. You could also use the slides to create a classroom wall display.

AQA GCSE SCIENCE COMMAND WORDS

What does the examiner want to see?

COMMAND WORD LADDER

- ◆ Name/Give/State
- ▲
- ◆ Describe
- ▲
- ◆ Explain
- ▲
- ◆ Compare
- ▲
- ◆ Suggest/Predict
- ▲
- ◆ Justify
- ▲
- ◆ Evaluate

DESCRIBE

WHAT + DATA

Describe the relationship between light intensity and photosynthesis.

The graph shows...

EXPLAIN

CAUSE → EFFECT

Explain why reaction rate increases with temperature

This happens because...

COMPARE

SAME + DIFFERENT

Compare aerobic and anaerobic respiration.

Both... however...

SUGGEST

APPLY SCIENCE

Suggest why roadside plants grew less.

A possible reason...

JUSTIFY

ANSWER + EVIDENCE

Which result is most reliable? Justify your answer.

The evidence shows...

EVALUATE

GOOD + BAD + JUDGEMENT

Evaluate hydrogen fuel cells.

Overall...

QUICK GUIDE

● Recall
Name, State, Give, Define, Identify

● Application
Describe, Explain, Compare, Suggest, Predict

● Judgement
Justify, Evaluate

● Maths
Calculate, Determine, Estimate, Show

EXAMINER TRAPS

Describe ≠ Explain
Compare ≠ One thing
Evaluate ≠ Opinion only
Calculate ≠ Number only

POWER WORDS

Describe

- increases
- decreases
- remains constant

Explain

- because
- therefore
- causes

Compare

- both
- whereas
- however

Evaluate

- advantage
- disadvantage
- overall

FULL MARK CHECKLIST

- Answer the command word
- Use science vocabulary
- Use data/evidence
- Include units
- Make judgement if evaluating



DESCRIBE



MEANING

Give an accurate account of what is happening.

EXAMINER WANTS

- Trends
- Patterns
- Observations
- Data where appropriate

SUCCESS RECIPE: WHAT + DATA

DO

- ✓ Describe what you see
- ✓ Use figures from graphs and tables

DON'T

- ✗ Do not explain why it happens

EXPLAIN



MEANING

Give scientific reasons why something happens.

EXAMINER WANTS

- Cause and effect
- Scientific reasoning
- Scientific vocabulary

SUCCESS RECIPE: CAUSE → PROCESS → EFFECT

DO

- ✓ Use because, therefore, causes and results in
- ✓ Link ideas together

DON'T

- ✗ Do not simply describe what happens



COMPARE



MEANING

Identify similarities and differences.

EXAMINER WANTS

- Similarities
- Differences
- Comparative language

SUCCESS RECIPE: SIMILARITY + DIFFERENCE

DO

✓ both, whereas, however, similarly

DON'T

✗ Do not write about only one thing



SUGGEST



MEANING

Apply scientific knowledge to a new situation.

EXAMINER WANTS

- Plausible scientific idea
- Application of known science

SUCCESS RECIPE: KNOWN SCIENCE + NEW CONTEXT

DO

✓ What science do I already know that could explain this?



PREDICT



MEANING

State what will happen in the future and explain why.

EXAMINER WANTS

- Likely outcome
- Scientific justification

SUCCESS RECIPE: OUTCOME + REASON

DO

- ✓ Use evidence from the question
- ✓ Explain your prediction



JUSTIFY



MEANING

Support your answer with evidence.

EXAMINER WANTS

- Decision
- Supporting evidence

SUCCESS RECIPE: ANSWER + EVIDENCE

DO

- ✓ Refer to data
- ✓ Explain why your answer is best

DON'T

- ✗ Do not just repeat the question



EVALUATE



MEANING

Make a balanced judgement.

EXAMINER WANTS

- Advantages
- Disadvantages
- Overall judgement

SUCCESS RECIPE: GOOD + BAD + JUDGEMENT

DO

- ✓ Consider more than one viewpoint
- ✓ Reach a conclusion

DON'T

✗ Do not give only advantages or only disadvantages



CALCULATE



MEANING

Work out a numerical answer.

EXAMINER WANTS

- Correct method
- Correct answer
- Correct units

SUCCESS RECIPE: FORMULA → SUBSTITUTE → ANSWER → UNIT

DO

- ✓ Show your working
- ✓ Include units



DETERMINE



MEANING

Use information or data to obtain an answer.

EXAMINER WANTS

- Interpret data accurately
- Use evidence from the question

SUCCESS RECIPE: DATA → ANSWER

DO

- ✓ Use graphs, tables and calculations
- ✓ Show how you reached the answer

DEFINE



MEANING

Give the scientific meaning of a term.

EXAMINER WANTS

- Precise scientific language
- Accurate definition

SUCCESS RECIPE: DEFINITION MUST BE EXACT

DO

✓ Learn key definitions exactly

DON'T

✗ Do not use vague language

IDENTIFY



MEANING

Select or name the correct item.

EXAMINER WANTS

- Correct answer only

SUCCESS RECIPE: NAME THE ITEM

DO

- ✓ Be concise
- ✓ Learn key scientific terms

DON'T

- ✗ Do not add unnecessary explanations

PLAN



MEANING
Write a practical method.

EXAMINER WANTS

- Clear investigation
- Valid scientific procedure

SUCCESS RECIPE: EQUIPMENT → VARIABLES → METHOD → REPEATS → SAFETY

DO

- ✓ Be specific
- ✓ Include enough detail for someone to follow it

Additional supporting material, including a student workbook containing worked examples can be found in the HIAS Moodle+ area:

[All courses | Science Moodle](#)

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