



Command words

Exam command words are the key to answering exam questions successfully. Whilst the content / topic part of the question will tell you **what** you need to write about, the command word will tell you **how** you need to answer the question.

Below are the most common exam command words.

Command Word	What they mean
Add/Label	Show information or name something on a graph, diagram or table.
Give/State/Name	Recall one or more pieces of information.
State what is meant by	Write down what the term in the question means.
Draw	Produce a diagram with or without a ruler. Simple line diagrams for scientific equipment and circuit symbols for a circuit diagram.
Write	When the questions ask for an equation e.g. a balanced symbol equation.
Plot	Produce a graph by marking points accurately on a grid from data that is provided and then drawing a line of best fit through these points. A suitable scale and appropriately labelled axes must be included if these are not provided in the question.
Sketch	Produce a drawing without a ruler e.g. sketch a rough graph with axes and a line.
Complete	Add values to a table or diagram.
Estimate	Find a rough number or amount from the information given in the question.
Identify	Choose key details from information given in the question.
Calculate	Work out your answer using the numbers in the question. Include units in your answer.
Show that	Prove the statement in the question is right.
Determine	Use information in the question and give a numerical answer or show how the answer can be reached quantitatively.
Deduce	Come to a decision based on information in the question.
Give a reason	Say why something happens; only write the number of reasons the question asks for.
Describe	Give an account of something, or link facts, information, events or processes in a logical order.
Explain	Say how or why something happens; 'because' will be an important part of your answer.
State and explain	Make a point and link ideas to justify that point.
Comment on	Look at data or information and decide what it shows.
Compare and contrast	Give similarities and differences between several things, not just one.

Predict	Say what you think will happen based on what you know.
Discuss	Pick out the situation or argument in the question, explore all aspects of it, investigate it and come to a conclusion.
Justify	Give evidence to support an answer.
Assess	Read the information in the question carefully and pick out the most important parts to help you answer the question or come to a conclusion.
Evaluate	Look at the information in the question and bring it together to make a decision and come to a conclusion with evidence from the question. To evaluate you should give: reasoned arguments in support of this statement; reasoned arguments to support a different point of view; refer to evidence; reach a justified conclusion.
Devise	Plan a method or experiment using your knowledge.
Suggest	Always used with another command word, e.g. Suggest an explanation. Suggest tells you that you need to apply your knowledge to a new situation, and in this case to give a possible explanation.

