

GCSE Geography

Specification A

Command Words and Key Terms

This list shows command words that have been used in past GCSE Geography Question Papers and which may be used in future examinations. While it shows the command words most likely to be used, it is not intended to be definitive and additional command words may be used in examinations where appropriate.

Command word	Definition
Account (for)	Give an explanation / reasons for. The matter being questioned may be complex and some clarification and description may be needed to reason why something happens in the way that it does
Analyse	Separate information into components and identify their characteristics
Annotate	Add labels, brief comments or notes to a diagram, photograph or map to aid description or explanation. Often used on landform formation questions, e.g. 'use only an annotated diagram or diagrams.'
Apply	Put into effect in a recognised way
Argue	Present a reasoned case
Assess	Consider the evidence presented and come to a reasoned judgement / make an informed judgement
By how much? (did X increase)	Give the required figure/amount usually by reading data from a graph/table/figure
Calculate	Work out a numerical answer / work out the value of something
Choose (correct word)	Select an option from one or more items
Comment	Present an informed opinion/say what you think about an issue.
Compare	Describe the similarities and differences of at least two things, e.g. by using comparative words such as 'it has similar height to', 'larger than', 'faster flowing than' or 'more vegetation than.' Identify similarities.
Complete (graph/sentence/table/Factfile/isoline...)	To fill in gaps or details in a diagram, table or cloze exercise to show understanding. Finish a task by adding to given information.
Consider	Review and respond to given information
Contrast (one thing with another)	Point out the differences between at least two phenomena. (Does not require coverage of similarities.) Identify differences.

Criticise	Use evidence to support your opinion or judgement about something / assess worth against explicit expectations
Debate	Present different perspectives on an issue
Deduce	Draw conclusions from information provided
Define	Give the meaning of a word, phrase or concept; sometimes framed as 'What is meant by / what is the meaning of...?' / specify meaning
Describe	Give the main characteristics of something or an account in words of a phenomenon which may be an entity, an event, a feature, a pattern, a distribution or a process. For example, if describing a landform say what it looks like, give some indication of size or scale, what it is made of, and where it is in relation to something else (field relationship). Set out characteristics /'what are the features of...''
Develop	Take forward or build upon given information
Discuss (using a case study)	Bring forward the important points of or set out both sides of an argument, for and against, and come to a conclusion. There should be some evidence of balance, though not necessarily of equal weighting. (Where use of a case study is expected, then specifics from the case study should be given to support the important points.) Present key points.
Distinguish between	Make clear the difference between two ideas/concepts (that perhaps can also relate to a choice, e.g. between hard or soft engineering)
Draw (a sketch/sketch map, labelled diagram, lines to link, best fit line, etc.)	Sketch a map or diagram/add lines to link words to definitions or statements/add a best fit line to graph
Estimate	Give an approximate value / assign an approximate value
Evaluate	Pick out good and bad points and make judgements / judge from available evidence
Examine	Investigate closely
Explain (how / why / advantages & disadvantages / difference between X & Y / reasons for a stated opinion, etc.)	Give reasons why something happens. Answers should set out the causes of a phenomenon and/or the factors which influence its form/nature. This usually requires an understanding of processes. Explanation is a higher-level skill than description and this is often reflected in its greater mark weighting. Set out purposes or reasons.
Explore	Investigate without preconceptions about the outcome
Give	An alternative to 'Identify/Name/State' usually requiring students to supply a basic straightforward, possibly single word, response, e.g. 'give the 4-figure grid reference for...'

	Produce an answer from recall.
Give your views	Equivalent to 'comment on' - say what you think about an issue/topic
How (many/does/much...)	Describe/what methods are involved
Identify	Similar to 'Give/Name/state', which require candidates to answer briefly and are usually only worth 1 mark, e.g. for a question asking candidates to select one item or idea from a range of information provided. Name or otherwise characterise.
Illustrate	Use specific examples or diagrams to clarify your points / present clarifying examples
Interpret	Translate information into recognisable form
Justify	Give reasons for offering an opinion or reaching a conclusion / support a case with evidence
Label	Add to a diagram, image or graphic word(s) or phrase(s) to identify or describe features shown
List	Give individual features/items (proper sentences or continuous prose not required)
Locate	Indicate or mark the position of something on a sketch, diagram or map
Mark position (on map)	Indicate with x or other appropriate label the required location/feature
Mark with an arrow & label	Draw an arrow pointing at feature and add appropriate word identifying feature. The arrow should clearly touch the feature identified.
Match	Link up connected items
Measure	Work out distance using given scale
Name	An alternative to 'Give/Identify/State' – answers are usually expected to give a specific example of something, e.g. 'Name one type of sea defence.'
Outline (one way/why)	Provide a brief account of relevant information/summarise the main points of something. (Intermediate term between 'State' and 'Describe'). Set out main characteristics.
Plot (data on graph)	Indicate as appropriate the location on a graph of specific data
Prove	Demonstrate validity on the basis of evidence
Recommend	Give advice on the best option, based on an evaluation of their respective merits
Relate	Demonstrate connections between items
Review	Survey information
Shade	Add appropriate colour/shading to graph or map according to the key
Show (using an example)	Give evidence to support a statement/opinion
Sketch	Provide a simple / outline drawing of the required feature/area
State	An alternative to 'Give/Identify/Name' usually requiring students to supply a basic straightforward, possibly single word, response. Express in clear terms.

Study	Examine carefully
Suggest (why/give reasons for)	Similar to 'Explain' but sometimes there are varying reasons why something happens and there is not necessarily a right or wrong answer. More than one reason should be given (e.g. a farmer will grow a crop for a number of reasons; these could be physical or human). Used in questions based on application of Knowledge & Understanding in unfamiliar contexts – asking students to indicate reasons for something based on data given but which they would not necessarily have studied. Present a possible case.
Summarise	Give the main points briefly / present principal points without detail
Tick	Indicate with a tick the true or false/correct statement(s) / box(es)
To what extent	Judge the importance of/success of
Use a case study/ies, an example, evidence to describe	Answers must use specific precise material and information from the student's case study
Using Figure(s) to complete, to describe, to explain, to give evidence to support, to suggest why, to label, to suggest a link between X & Y...	Candidates should be able to score full marks using only evidence or material from the resource
Use key phrases to write a description / explanation of process or phenomenon	Write a continuous prose answer incorporating the words or phrases listed
Use map evidence to describe, to explain, to complete table	Answers must use specific reference to features evident on map
Using Figure X and your own knowledge...	Candidates should use both evidence and material from the resource and their own knowledge
What is the meaning of (word/phrase) / What does (word/phrase) mean..?	State the precise meaning of a term or concept. There is usually a low tariff of marks for this.
What is the relationship between x and y?	Give example(s) of links between two resources (e.g. table and graph)/ two sets of data/two figures
With the help of a diagram	The answer should consist of both prose and a diagram to address the question
With the help of Figure X/case study	Answers should explicitly refer to specifics in the given figure or case study exemplar
Why is...?	Set out the causes of a phenomenon and/or the factors which influence its form/nature. This usually requires an understanding of processes. Explanation is a higher-level skill than description and this is often reflected in its greater mark weighting.
Write the correct (type/word/phrase) in the box	Add phrase to answer box from list provided