

Command words

Command words are the verbs or verbal phrases used in questions and tasks to ask candidates to demonstrate specific skills, knowledge or understanding. Examples are 'calculate', 'simplify'.

To achieve clarity and consistency across courses and levels, the following command words should only be used when the skill, knowledge or understanding being assessed fits the explanation given.

When you intend to assess something that matches an explanation in the list, such as 'obtain a numerical answer from given facts, figures or information', you should use the corresponding command word if possible.

Command word	Explanation
...algebraically	using algebraic techniques rather than numerical or geometric
...in simplest form	writing in the most compact or efficient manner, without changing the value of the expression
Calculate	obtain a numerical answer from given facts, figures or information
Change the subject	Rearrange an algebraic equation
Choose	make a decision based on the statistical facts provided
Comment (on):	use statistics to describe and/or explain a statement or result
Decide	use mathematical language to make something clear
Determine	determine an answer from given facts, figures, or information
Estimate	use a mathematical model to determine an approximate answer
Evaluate	obtain a numerical answer from given facts, figures or information
Exact value	an answer which does not involve numerical approximation
Expand	multiply out an algebraic expression by making use of the distributive law or a compound trigonometric expression by making use of one of the addition formulae
Explain	make the meaning of something clear
Express	use given information to rewrite an expression in a specified form

Factorise	rewrite an expression as a product of linear and irreducible quadratic terms
Find	obtain an answer showing relevant stages of working
Give a reason	provide explanation which will justify a solution
Given ...	using the specific information provided ...
Hence	use the previous answer to proceed
Hence, or otherwise	use the previous answer to proceed; however, another method may alternatively be used
Identify	provide an answer from a number of possibilities
Interpret	explain the meaning or significance of something
Justify	show good reason(s) for the conclusion(s) reached
Make a valid comment	a true statement which relates to the context
Perform	carry out, conduct
Prove	use a sequence of logical steps to obtain a given result in a formal way
Show that	use mathematics to show that a statement or result is correct (without the formality of proof) — all steps, including the required conclusion, must be shown
Simplify	writing in the most compact or efficient manner, without changing the value of the expression
Sketch	give a general idea of the required shape or relationship and annotate with all relevant points and features
Solve	obtain the answer(s) using algebraic and/or numerical and/or graphical methods
State	use given information to obtain an answer without the use of working
State an assumption/condition	write down the assumption(s) or condition(s) which are built into the mathematical model being used
Taking ...	using the specific information provided ...
Test	use a statistical test to assess whether or not there is evidence in favour of a given claim or statement
Using/use the ...	by means of a specified mathematical technique
Write down	use given information to obtain an answer without the use of working