

Exam Words

The words below are often used in exams to ask questions or to tell you what to do. Most of these words are verbs; other parts of speech have been marked. It is important to know the spelling and understand the meanings of these words. Learn the spelling of these words and find them in your practice exam questions. Highlight these words during your practice exams to help you understand the questions.

analyse	Describe the main ideas, show how they are connected to each other and why they are important.
assess	Find the weak points and the strong points of the subject in the question.
average	(noun) the middle: In maths, the average (mean) is found by adding all the numbers together and dividing them by the amount of numbers added, e.g. $26 + 15 + 17 + 6 = 64 / 4 = 16$
calculate	Find the answer to a problem, usually in maths, using arithmetic or a calculator.
comment on	Say what you think about the subject.
compare	Write about similarities and differences in the subjects.
contrast	Show how the subjects are different.
criticise	Say what you think about the subject, giving your views for and against and backing them up with facts and theories.
define	Give the meaning. Give an example, if you know one, and if you have memorised the definition, then write it down.
describe	Give a detailed account of.
diagram	(Noun) a drawing, chart or graph.
differentiate	Say clearly the differences.
discuss	Describe the subject in detail and, if there are two sides to the question, give the points for and against.
distinguish	This word is usually followed by 'between'; say clearly what makes the difference between the subjects.
enumerate	List the main ideas by name and number.
essential	(Adjective) most important, must be there.