

## Introduction

The purpose of exams are to test your knowledge and skills of a particular topic or subject area, and to check if you are able to apply that set of knowledge and skills. To demonstrate your knowledge or skills effectively in any exam situation, you need to be able to analyse, understand and interpret the questions properly and accurately.

Things sometimes go wrong in an exam when there is no proper understanding of what the questions require of you. Your answer could be completely irrelevant or off the point if you do not interpret the questions correctly.

It is important, therefore, to analyse every question carefully and to take note of the following aspects of questions: the instruction or task words; the content; the context; and the focus or scope of the question.

When you understand these, you are well on your way to doing well in the exams. It will be useful to take some time during your study break to practise analysing/ decoding and answering some questions.

## Tips for analysing and answering exam questions

When presented with a question, read, reread and analyse. Ensure that you know precisely what is being asked and what the instruction or task is that you have to perform.

Check the mark allocation to give you an idea of how much time to spend on the question. Follow the 'mark a minute' rule.

Once you have read the whole exam paper including the instructions, follow the RDP rule:

**R** is Read and reread

**D** is to Demonstrate your knowledge and Develop the content

**P** is to plan and present your work neatly

## What to do when you are sitting with exam questions in front of you:

Remember, every question has a task word, specific content and a scope.

1. Look for and circle the instruction or task word. The instruction/task word is the action the examiner expects you to take, what you actually have to do:

Examples are "Identify; explain; discuss; give examples; evaluate; compare and contrast; illustrate; justify; classify"

2. Once you are clear about the instruction or task, you need to clarify the content. The content relates to what exactly is being asked and what you need to know in order to perform the task. Underline the KEY WORDS to remind you what the focus is.
3. The scope is the limit set on the question. How much or how deep you need to go into the issue. The mark allocation will also guide you.

4. It might be necessary to read the question a second or third time to get the point so that you can plan and structure an accurate response.
5. Use the information given in the question to guide your answer.
6. If you are required to answer by way of an essay or paragraph, spend a few minutes to plan your answer. Planning will help to impose better structure on your answer.
7. Pay attention to formatting and numbering of your answers.
8. Stress or panic may cause you to misread the question. So, you need to ensure you are clear about what you are writing.
9. If panic or a freeze moment sets in, pause, put your pen down; breathe deeply and then sip some water. Pick up your pen and start again.

## Additional Resources

Go Conqr blog:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=69&v=O0HooEkcF4&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=69&v=O0HooEkcF4&feature=emb_logo)

Oxford learning: <https://www.oxfordlearning.com/>

## Summary

Examinations are stressful. Read your questions carefully and ensure that your answer is in line with the instructions – pay attention to the tasks, the content and the scope required. Time is of utmost importance. Be guided by the mark allocated.