Command words

Command words are the words and phrases used in exams and other assessment tasks that tell students how they should answer the question.

The following command words are taken from Ofqual's official list of command words and their meanings that are relevant to this subject. In addition, where necessary, we have included our own command words and their meanings to complement Ofqual's list.

Change…to

Change a value from one unit to another.

Circle

Circle the reason for your answer

Follows a question about congruence. The options will be the congruence conditions SSS, SAS, ASA and RHS.

Circle your answer

Compare…and/to/with

Work out or identify the values required and say which is smaller/larger, etc.

Where appropriate, consider the context when giving your answer.

Complete

Add the missing information to a table or diagram (often statistical).

Construct

Draw accurately.

If told to use compasses, all construction arcs and lines should be shown.

Convert …(in)to

Change a value from one numerical form to another or a measure from one unit to another.

Describe

Use mathematical terminology to define the given information.

Describe (fully) the single transformation that maps...

With enlargement, give the scale factor and centre of enlargement.

With reflection, give the equation of the line of reflection.

With rotation, give the angle, direction and centre of rotation.

With translation, give the translation vector.

This should always be done fully, even if that word is absent from the instruction.

Do not use a graphical method

Algebraic manipulation or interpretation is required.

Does the data support this statement?

Use calculations and/or statistical measures based on the given data to make a decision.

Draw

Give an accurate depiction of a graph, map, diagram, etc.

Draw a sketch of

Give a depiction of a graph, map, diagram, etc, where the important features are identified.

Estimate (a mean from grouped frequency)

Use class midpoints to work out an estimate of the mean.

Estimate (used when the exact or definitive answer cannot be obtained from the information given)

Use the given information to work out the answer.

In this case it is good practice to use/give the exact answer of any calculation and then round the final answer to a sensible degree of accuracy.

Estimate the value of (used with a calculation)

Use approximations to work out a value.

Unless told otherwise, students should round the given values to 1 significant figure.

Evaluate… method and/or claim (Higher Tier only)

Identify which part of the method, calculation or assertion is incorrect or explain why it must be correct.

Express… as (Higher Tier only)

Convert a number from one form to another

Factorise (fully)

Take out any common factors of an expression or convert a quadratic expression into two linear factors.

This should always be done fully, even if that word is absent from the instruction. Use of the word 'fully' is a hint that more than one factor can be taken out.

Give a reason for your answer/choice

Show a calculation and/or written evidence for your answer.

Give a reason why...

Show a calculation and/or written evidence to support the given statement.

Give one/an example to show…

Write one example to substantiate or disprove a given statement.

Give one/an example where…

Write one example that fits the given conditions.

Give working and a reason to support your answer

Both a calculation and a written explanation are needed.

Give your answer as a/in the form…

You may work with values in a different format, but give the answer in the format required.

Give your answer in its simplest form

Cancel any fractions and collect any like terms.

Give your answer in terms of… (Higher Tier only)

The given variable should be the only variable in your answer.

Give your answer in terms of π

Don't use a decimal value of pi, just do the working with the coefficients of pi.

Give your answer to… decimal places/significant figures

Show the full answer in your working, but give the rounded value on the answer line.

How does this affect…

Comment on how your answer to a previous question part is different due to a change to an assumption used.

Is… correct?

Tick a box if given or state 'yes' or 'no' in your answer.

Is your answer to part… sensible?

Use approximations to check if a previous answer makes sense in the context of the question.

Label

Identify required regions, lengths or axis labels.

List

Write down all qualifying values or items.

Make… (different) criticism(s) of…

Write down the required number of errors or omissions in the given method or diagram.

Mark

Show a position on a map or diagram with the letter or symbol required.

Match each… to…

Join corresponding items in two lists by straight lines.

Measure

Use a ruler to measure a length or a protractor to measure an angle.

Multiply out (and simplify)

Multiply out the bracket(s), collecting like terms where possible.

One has been done for you

The given example shows the format in which the rest of the answers are required.

Plot

Mark the points with a cross.

Practise on this diagram

Put your answer on this diagram (when two diagrams are given for the student to use)

The first diagram can be used for practise, but if both diagrams are attempted the second one will be marked.

Prove that… (Higher Tier only)

Give a formal algebraic proof with each step shown or a formal geometric proof with each step shown and justification for each step.

Rearrange… to make… the subject

Write the given formula with a different subject as specified.

Reflect

Draw the image in the correct position.

Rotate

Draw the image in the correct position.

Shade

Show a required region by dark colouring or cross-hatching, etc.

Show all your construction lines

The drawing should be done by standard constructions with all arcs shown.

Show how… could use the data to support her hypothesis (Higher Tier only)

Work with the given information to give calculations and/or statistical measures that support the given hypothesis.

Show that...

Give every step of a process that will lead to the required outcome.

Show working to check…

Show working that helps you decide whether or not the given working was correct and give your decision.

Show working to support your answer

If you have made a decision, give a calculation (and wording where it helps) that shows why you made it.

Simplify (fully)

Collect terms or cancel a fraction.

This should always be done fully, even if that word is absent from the instruction. Use of the word 'fully' is a hint that more than one simplification step will be required.

Simplify your answer

Cancel any fractions and collect any like terms.

Sketch

Give a depiction of a graph, map, diagram, etc, where the important features are identified.

Solve

Find the value(s) that satisfy a given equation or inequality.

State

Write the required information.

State the units of your answer

The correct units must be given to gain full marks (there may be a stand-alone) mark for giving the correct units

Tick a box

Tick the correct statement

Translate

Draw the image in the correct position.

Use

This may be a conversion or formula that will help the student.

Use approximations to...

Unless told otherwise, students should round the given values to one significant figure.

Use the data to...

You should use the given information in your calculation or reason

Use the graph to…

You should get your answer from the graph rather than from calculation.

Use your calculator to…

You are not expected to show the required calculations or how you worked them out

Using part… or otherwise... (Higher Tier only)

You can use a previous answer as part of your method here, but there are other methods where it is not used.

What does this mean/tell you about…

Explain in words the implication of the given information.

What error has… made? (Higher Tier only)

Identify which part of the method or calculation is incorrect.

What mistake has… made?

Identify which part of the method or calculation is incorrect.

Why

Give a calculation and/or written evidence to support the given statement.

Work out

One or more calculations will usually be necessary.

Write

Some work may be needed to fulfil the instruction.

Write down

The answer should be obtainable from the information given, so no work should be needed.

Write down a calculation to support your answer

If you have made a decision, give a calculation that shows why you made it.

Write down your full calculator display

Give your answer as a decimal and write all the digits shown on your calculator. However, as calculators can show many digits, at least 6 digits would be seen as sufficient here.

You may use… to help you

A diagram or table has been given that may be helpful in organising your working, but you do not have to use it.

You must show your working

A correct answer will not receive the marks unless working is given to show how the answer was arrived at.