

7: USING LITERACY FOR SUCCESS IN TESTS AND EXAMS

Like it or not, at some point, you will have to take a test or an exam, but you don't need to worry about them. Examiners have regular ways of doing things when they write exams, they try to make it easier for you; you've just got to know what those ways are. Here are some tips for getting the most marks in your exams by using good literacy to your advantage.

Command words

These are the words that you will find at the start of a question. They let you know what it is the examiners want you to do.

If the command word is then this is what they want you to do ...
Account for	Explain why something is the way it is.
Give reasons for	Use words like <i>because</i> to make your reasons clear.
Describe	Say what something is like or give an account of events or a process.
Outline why	Give a general description that shows the essential features of something but not the detail.
Explain why or how	Give reasons why something is as it is or how it works.
Calculate	Show the method you used and your final answer.
State or give	Be brief and use your knowledge of key words and definitions.

Discuss	Consider or examine or comment on something. Be prepared to see things from more than one point of view.
Compare	Write about the differences and similarities.

WATCH OUT

These command words might mean something a bit different in other subjects.

TRY IT OUT

In the diagram below, sand is being removed from salty seawater. Answer the three different types of question below, taking note of the command word.



1 **State** the name of the process shown in the diagram.
