CIPS Command Words

For Constructed Response Exams

For CIPS Levels 4, 5 & 6

CIPS Command Words

Command words are used in exam questions to tell you how to answer the question. Some command words are more common than others, but it's important you understand the requirements of each command word to help you prepare for your upcoming exam. It's usually a good idea to highlight the command words when you're presented with them to keep you on the right track when answering the exam questions.

Level	Command word	Description	Use
All Levels	**Analyse**	**Scrutinise a topic** together with thoughts and judgements about it	Used at all levels where learners are required to look in detail at the specific elements and interpret the relationship between them
L5, L6	**Assess**	Study the **importance** of something for the relevance of achieving a desired outcome	Typically used at levels 5 and 6 when learners are required to consider options and arguments, for and against. Requires learners to look in detail at principles and theory
All Levels	**Calculate**	Work out the **value** of something	Used at all levels where the question focusses on price, costs, quantities, or financial aspects
L5, L6	**Compare**	Look at one thing/approach in relation to another, so that points of **similarity and difference** are evident	Typically used at levels 5 and 6 where two or more methods, theories or approaches can be used and may achieve the same or different outcomes
L5, L6	**Contrast**	Emphasise the **difference between** two opposite or dissimilar things/approaches	Typically used at levels 5 and 6 where two or more approaches achieve different outcomes
L4	**Describe**	Give details setting out the **key characteristics** of a topic and the potential impacts	Typically used for questions at level 4 - requires learners to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the topic by interpreting what and why and briefly setting out the potential impact on a given situation

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L5, L6	**Evaluate** (critically)	Judge the **quality or value** of something, include strengths and weaknesses	Typically used at levels 5 and 6. Learners should consider the benefits, advantages and disadvantages of something and make an informed judgement based on evidence
L5, L6	**Examine**	Investigate closely the **cause and effects** of something	Typically used at level 6 and requires that learners look in detail at the reasons for something, the sources, the implications and the impacts
L4, L5	**Explain**	**Give reasons for**/account for something so that it is clear and easy to understand in relation to a given situation	Used at all levels and requires that learners demonstrate understanding with some application of the topic. Set out purposes for, or reasons why, and/or how, and support with relevant evidence or examples
L4	**Identify**	**Itemise** separately, typically as a list	Typically used in part or composite questions
L5	**Justify**	Give good reasons for **decisions** or conclusions referencing other text or evidence	Typically used at levels 5 and 6 where learners are expected to interpret a scenario or problem and provide appropriate tools, models or theory to support an approach or resolution
L4	**Outline**	Briefly define the **main features**, facts, or general ideas of something omitting minor details	Typically used in part or composite questions
All Levels	**Propose**	Suggest the **most appropriate** answer (theory or model) for consideration or action in relation to a situation	Acknowledges that there may be more than one correct approach for the given situation. Used at all levels, can be used in combination e.g., propose and justify