

EXAMINATION TECHNIQUES (1)

- However well you have learnt your work, you must write it down in a suitable way in an examination to gain credit. This means answering each question in the way that the examiner asks. The key to this is understanding the **command words**, making the right choice of optional questions and appreciating how your answer will be marked.
- Make sure that you are fully aware of the parts of the syllabus being tested in each question paper and the form the questions will take. Some questions may require one word or short paragraph answers, others may be multiple choice. Essays are not very common in GCSE Geography examinations but there will be opportunities to write in continuous prose. These are more common in Higher Tier papers targeted at Grades A*–D(E).
- If there is a choice of questions in a paper, make sure that you answer the correct number of questions from the right sections. Do not be unduly influenced by the stimulus material at the start of the question when choosing. Read the whole question. Most marks are allocated to the last part of a question. Decide whether you are happy with this section before choosing.
- Read the question very carefully. Underline the key words and phrases. Make sure that you understand how many examples or case studies you need to use. Be wary of scale. If a question asks for a named location, a country or a continent is too large an area. If you are asked to name a tourist development in a LEDC, Blackpool or Spain is wrong.
- Make the most of the sketch maps and diagrams provided. You will drop marks if you do not use maps and diagrams in a question when it specifically asks you to. Many questions, particularly those testing physical geography, can be answered with annotated diagrams. A simple diagram can save writing a long description.

EXAMINATION TECHNIQUES (2)

- Make sure that your examples are filled with facts, statistics and precise locations. When describing climate use appropriate figures. Do not use vague generalisations. You will not gain credit for using words like 'wet', 'dry' or 'fertile'. 'Deep, well-drained' or 'rich in nutrients' are creditworthy alternatives to 'fertile'.
- Make sure that you understand the meaning of command words:

Describe: What does a feature or place look like? You will get no credit for explanation or interpretation.

e.g. *A corrie is an armchair shaped circular depression on the side of a mountain. It has steep back walls on three sides with a rock lip at the front.*

Explain: Give reasons for the formation or location of geographical features.

e.g. *The rotational movement of glacier ice forms a corrie. Overdeepening occurs as a result of plucking and abrasion.*

State or List: Make a number of brief points. This is the only occasion where there is no need to write in complete sentences. Remember that there are 5% extra marks for correct spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG) in all geography examinations. This includes credit for the use of technical terms.

Compare: Point out the similarities and differences.

Contrast: Say what the differences are.

Annotate: Add notes to a diagram. These need to be more than simple labels.

To what extent: You need to come to a conclusion by giving different points of view.

- GCSE examinations are always positively marked. Marks are not deducted for giving a wrong answer. Try not to leave gaps. Attempt all the questions except those optional ones you have chosen not to answer. Even if you have to guess an answer you stand a better chance of getting marks. Do not think that by answering **all** the optional questions you will get a higher mark!

EXAMINATION TECHNIQUES (3)

- Try to complete the full number of questions required. Do not spend too much time on the first question, or those that you know best. If you do not finish the paper you will automatically lose marks. Pace yourself, spending time in proportion to the number of marks available. It is pointless writing a side of text on a question part worth just 2 or 3 marks.
- If you do run short of time, answer the last question in coherent note form. The examiner will try to give you credit for any relevant points. If you have written a plan for an answer, do not cross it out until you completed the question. If you run out of time the examiner may be able to award marks for the ideas in your plan.
- Write concisely and to the point. Do not waste time writing out the question before starting the answer. The number of marks will give you some indication of how long your answer should be. In many GCSE examinations you write answers on the question paper. The space for each answer is a useful guide too.
- Use maps and diagrams effectively as they can save you time. Do not repeat yourself by writing the answer in words and as a diagram. The text will be marked first and if there are still marks available, any additional points in the diagram will be considered.
- Remember it is not necessary to write a perfect answer to gain full marks. As soon as you have scored the maximum number of creditworthy points in a question the examiner will stop marking. The question may indicate how many points you have to make. If you are asked to state two disadvantages of the Green Revolution, you will gain no extra marks for a third.
- Never give a series of alternative answers, leaving the examiner to choose the correct one. The first answer is the one that will be marked.
- In some questions the examiner will give you a list of answers to choose from. Remember there may be some distractors, or wrong answers among them.

EXAMINATION TECHNIQUES (4)

- GCSE questions are marked in two ways. Sections of questions with 3 or fewer marks are likely to be **point marked**. There will be one mark for each correct, relevant point. In most cases the wording of a question will indicate whether a question is point marked. If there are three marks for a question asking for three features of an Equatorial ecosystem, the allocation of those marks is obvious.
- **Level-marked** questions will usually have four or more marks allocated to them. On Foundation Tier papers targeted at Grades C–G there are usually two levels. On Higher Tier papers three levels are more common. The question will be marked as a whole, and it is not necessary for your answer to go through all the levels. If the first sentence is of Level 3 standard then the minimum score will be at the bottom of the Level 3 range of marks. A typical mark scheme may be divided as follows: Level 1, 1–3 marks; Level 2, 4–6 marks and Level 3, 7–8 marks. There is a maximum number of marks for statements of a particular standard. For this mark scheme, only three Level 2 statements will be credited. If the whole answer consists of Level 1 statements, then the maximum score will be three. Two Level 3 statements will get full marks.
- Aim to answer the question at the highest possible level. Basic statements will not get beyond Level 1. Level 2 answers should contain clear statements with reference perhaps to a named example. Level 3 answers contain even more detailed information, often using case study material.
- Now look at the following questions and find out how they would be marked.

Explain why long-term aid is better than short-term aid. (8 marks)

A typical mark scheme would look like this:

Level 1 Basic (1–2 marks)

Simple statements, e.g. Short-term aid gives food to the starving.
There is no long-term effect.

EXAMINATION TECHNIQUES (5)

Level 2 Clear (3–5 marks)

Long-term aid helps people to help themselves, so they are better prepared for the next food shortage, e.g. Band Aid.

Level 3 Detailed (6–8 marks)

Details are given of a particular aid scheme referring to the advantages of the long-term increase in food production, e.g. the former USSR part-funded the Aswan Dam. Previously, food production relied on flood water for irrigation, so farming was possible for only short periods. The dam allowed long-term irrigation and more than one crop of rice could be harvested each year. Farming became a year-round activity increasing financial stability.

Explain why the use of appropriate technology may become very important in reducing starvation in the world. (6 marks)

Level 1 Basic (1–2 marks)

Simple statements showing how the food supply will increase without saying how the appropriate technology will make it possible, e.g. The new hoe means that crops can be grown more easily.

Level 2 Clear (3–4 marks)

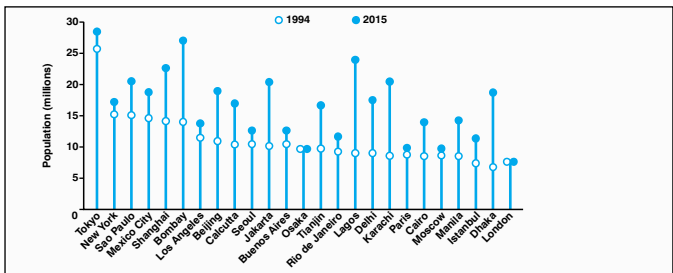
The detail is accurate and shows understanding, e.g. One person still needs to operate the improved hoe, but the larger blade is more effective. It allows the person to hoe a larger area in a shorter time.

Level 3 Detailed (5–6 marks)

Detailed understanding, possibly supported by case studies or exemplars. For example, wind pumps in Kenya allow a fresh supply of water to be brought to remote areas where it would be too expensive to build a larger system. This could serve up to 400 people a day. Local people can be trained to make and repair the pumps easily. The constant water supply will allow farming throughout the year and a greater range of crops to be grown.

Check yourself

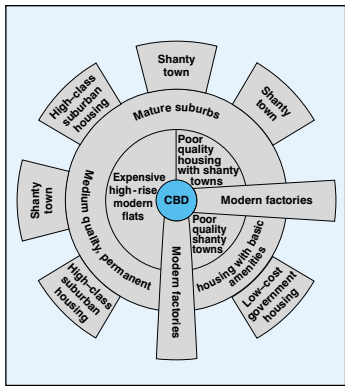
- 1** Study the following diagram, which shows the growth of the world's largest cities between 1994 and 2015.



- Which was the largest city in 1994? (1)
- How many of the cities are in MEDCs? (1)
- In which ways is the population growth in LEDCs different from those in MEDCs? (2)

- 2** Study the diagram of the urban zones in a typical city in a LEDC.

- State four characteristics of the Central Business District of this city. (4)
- Why are different types of housing found in different parts of the city? (4)
- Describe two ways in which the urban model for a city in a MEDC would differ from the one shown here. (2)



- 3** Describe the ways in which the problems faced by people living in shanty towns in LEDCs have been tackled (6)

- 1
 - i Tokyo. (1) The first question is usually very straightforward.
 - ii Seven. (1) Tokyo, New York, Los Angeles, Osaka, Paris, Moscow and London.
 - iii The population of cities in LEDCs has grown. (1) The population of cities in MEDCs has remained much the same. (1) Do not be afraid to state the obvious.
- 2
 - i There will be a concentration of commercial activities such as shops and offices (1). The cost of land will be very expensive. (1) There will be a concentration of multi-storey buildings. (1) People move around mainly on foot. (1) Four separate points are needed.
 - ii The expensive, modern high-rise flats are near to the city centre. The people who live in them will work in the CBD. The poor quality housing with basic amenities may be larger buildings, which are in multi-occupancy, often single males waiting for their families to join them from the countryside. The low cost government housing on the outer edge are former shanty towns which have been improved with the aid of government grants and foreign aid. The shanty towns on the edge of the city are low quality, unplanned houses occupied by recent migrants. (4) Four separate points needed. You are being asked to interpret the diagram. You may make use of case studies to answer this question.
 - iii The poorest quality housing will be near the city centre. There will be a steady improvement in the quality of the housing as you move outwards from the city centre. (2) Two separate points are needed. Other possible answers are: lack of shanty towns and larger areas of suburban housing.

3 Level 1 Basic (1–2 marks)

Simple statements such as new water supplies, sewerage systems, better built houses.

Level 2 Clear (3–4 marks)

There will be reference to a case study by name only, but without any detail, e.g. Nairobi. Only one solution may be considered. There will be some development of the points made. For example, improving the job prospects of the people living in shanty towns, so that there will be more money available. The answer will not say how more jobs are made available or what the benefits are of there being more money around.

Level 3 Detailed (5–6 marks)

More than one example used to show the different methods, such as those undertaken by the inhabitants themselves and those used by the government. For example:

Site and service schemes (Lusaka, Zambia). Authorities provide basic room and veranda with basic public utilities and infrastructure. Inhabitants are responsible for providing for the rest of their particular family's needs.

Kampungs (Djakarta, Indonesia).

Government takes over whole districts and improves the environment, i.e. houses, roads, water and sewerage system.

Notice that the question asks for more than one solution.

This is why you need to read questions very carefully.