

Cambridge A-Level – Command Words

What each command word asks you to do · 命令词: 每个词要求你做什么

State / Give / Name 说出

express in clear terms. One short sentence, no reasoning, no example. If the question says ‘state’, do not explain – you are spending time on marks that do not exist.

Define 定义

give the precise meaning. Use the syllabus wording, and include the quantities it relates: ‘work done per unit charge’, not ‘a kind of energy’.

Describe 描述

state the features of something, without saying why. For a graph: shape, direction, where it changes. For a process: the sequence of what happens.

Explain 解释

set out purposes or reasons – the mark is on the BECAUSE, not on the what. Every explain answer should contain a linking word: because, so, therefore, which means that.

Suggest 建议

apply knowledge to a situation the syllabus does not cover directly. There is no single right answer; there is a right kind of reasoning. Say what you would expect AND why.

Calculate 计算

work out a numerical answer, showing your working. Quote the formula, substitute with units, then evaluate.

Determine 确定

calculate, but the question expects you to extract the data yourself – from a graph, a table, or an earlier part.

Compare 比较

identify similarities AND differences. Both sides in one sentence: ‘X has ..., whereas Y has ...’. Two separate paragraphs describing X then Y usually scores half.

Discuss 论述

write about the issue from more than one side, and reach a position. An answer with only one side caps at partial marks whatever its quality.

Evaluate / Assess 评价

judge, with criteria and a conclusion. Say what the judgement depends on, then commit: ‘in the short run ..., but if demand is elastic ...’.

Justify 论证

support a statement with evidence. Name the evidence; do not gesture at it.

Sketch 画草图

a shaped, labelled drawing – not to scale, but the shape, intercepts and asymptotes must be right, because that is where the marks are.

Show that 证明

work FORWARD to the printed answer and write more steps than feel necessary. The printed answer earns nothing; the working earns everything.

The command word tells you how much to write. Answering a different command word is the fastest way to lose marks you had earned. 命令词决定答题的方式与长度。