

Style and layout

Ref Pseudocode

Keywords and case

Pseudocode is the language Cambridge writes algorithms in. It is not a real programming language — no computer runs it — but the exam marks it as if it were, so the form matters.

Every keyword is written in **upper case**: IF, REPEAT, PROCEDURE, OUTPUT.

```
DECLARE Count : INTEGER
Count ← 3
IF Count > 0
    THEN
        OUTPUT "Ready"
    ENDIF
```

- Write IF, never if or If.
- A keyword can never be used as a name of your own: you may not call a variable FOR.

Common mistakes

- Lower-case keywords. The mark scheme expects upper case.
- Inventing keywords. Only the words in this handout are in the syllabus.

Identifiers

An **identifier** is the name you give a variable , a constant , a procedure or a function .

```
DECLARE NumberOfPlayers : INTEGER
NumberOfPlayers ← 4
OUTPUT NumberOfPlayers
```

Four rules, all from the syllabus:

- It must **start with a capital letter**: Count, not count.
- It may hold only letters and digits — no spaces, no punctuation.
- It is **not case-sensitive** , so Count and COUNT are the same name. Pick one spelling and keep it.

- Make it mean something. NumberOfPlayers earns the reader's time; N does not.

Common mistakes

- count ← 0 — a lower-case start. 0478 requires the capital.
- Number of players — spaces are not allowed inside a name.

Comments and indentation

A **comment** starts with // and runs to the end of the line. It is for the human reader; the algorithm ignores it.

```
// Swap the values of X and Y
DECLARE X, Y, Temp : INTEGER
X ← 1
Y ← 2
Temp ← X    // temporarily store X
X ← Y
Y ← Temp
OUTPUT X, " ", Y
```

Indentation shows which statements are **inside** a structure. The syllabus asks for four spaces per level, with one exception you must know:

```
DECLARE X, Y : INTEGER
X ← 7
Y ← 3
IF X > Y
    THEN
        OUTPUT "X is bigger"
    ELSE
        OUTPUT "Y is bigger or equal"
    ENDIF
```

- THEN and ELSE are indented **two** spaces from their IF.
- The statements under them are indented **four**.
- ENDIF lines up with its own IF.

Common mistakes

- Putting THEN on the IF line. That is the A-Level 9618 layout — see topic 11.
- No indentation at all. A marker has to see the structure to award the structure marks.