UNDERSTANDING THE QUESTION

A GCSE Geography examination tests many skills – knowledge, understanding and skills! It is therefore incredibly important that you learn the most important skill of all – reading and understanding the question you are being asked before you put pen to paper!! Sounds obvious doesn’t it! You need to be able to ‘pick the question apart’ identify the COMMAND WORDS and know exactly what is required of you. Having this skill will improve your performance hugely and guarantee you many more marks.

Here are some of the command words that you may be given – it is as important that you revise and learn these as the work we have done in class!

**Annotate** - add notes or comments to a map or diagram to explain what it shows. These are more than labels e.g. you may label a meander but an annotation would say what one is and how it forms – possibly even including a diagram.

**Briefly** – if they say this then take some notice! They are giving you a clue that they don’t require much detail (and if you look at the marks for the question they will probably match this!)

**Case study** – These are the actual examples that you have learnt to go with the geographical theory. E.g you learn what causes volcanoes and then learn a case study example of an actual volcanic eruption to go with the theory. You must learn the facts and figures as these get you the marks.

**Compare** - look for ways in which features or places are similar, what do they have in common, how are they the same e.g. a city in an LEDC compared to a MEDC, effects of flooding, earthquakes etc

**Complete** - add to a map or graph or diagram to finish it off – look for what is missing from what you have been given.

**Contrast** - look for the differences between features or places. Often the question will ask you to compare and contrast – so make sure in this instance that you do both!

**Define** - explain what something means e.g. freeze-thaw.

**Develop** – Go into more detail, make a comment and then back it up with some evidence/information

**Describe** - give details about what a map or diagram shows – say what you see. Or give details about the effects of a flood, earthquake, migration etc. You usually don’t need to go into reasons why just what is actually there or what actually happened.

**Discuss** - usually wants a long answer, describing and giving reasons for or explaining arguments for and against.

**Draw** - a sketch map or diagram with labels to explain something.
**Explain or account for** - give reasons for the location or appearance of something or the causes of something that has happened. These are usually longer questions for more marks as they test your revision and understanding.

**Factors** - reasons for the location of or occurrence of something.

**Give your (or somebody else’s) views** - say what you or a particular group think about something, for example should limestone quarries be allowed in the Peak District. Make sure if it asks for your opinion that you give it! And if it asks for the views of particular groups think very carefully about what their opinion would be.

**Identify** - name, locate, recognise or select a particular feature or features, usually from a map, photo or diagram.

**Label** - add brief comments (usually one or two words) to features on a photo, map, diagram, graph etc.

**Mark** - put onto a map or diagram a dot, asterisk etc to usually identify where something is or might happen.

**Name, state, list** - give accurate details or features according to what the question asks for.

**Study** - look carefully at a map, photo, table, diagram etc. and say what it shows. Use whatever you have been given to look at in your answer – usually the answer is within the picture, map etc.

**With reference to /refer to examples you have studied** - give specific details about your case studies. These are the questions for which you are normally awarded lots of marks so you really do need to go into lots of specific details from the case study examples that we have learnt. Don’t try and make the information up – the examiner will know! Make sure you name the place if it asks you to.

**With the help of/using the information provided** - make sure you include examples from the information, including grid references if it is a map.

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Study the example below – look at all the command words and different aspects of this question!

"Refer to the eruption of a named volcano and describe the effects of the volcano on the surrounding area. How did people respond to this volcanic eruption?" (6)

- Refer = use a specific case study we have learnt together
- Name the volcano – so make sure you do!
- Describe the effects / surrounding area – what did the volcano do to both people and the environment
- Respond – how did the people cope, short and long term
- 6 marks so lots of facts, figure and detailed, developed points needed (at least 3)