

AS Biology Exam Skills

Edexcel GCE Student Conference 2006

Exam Skills - 1

- Read the question carefully
- Look for the command word
 - Describe
 - Compare
 - Explain
 - Suggest

Exam skills - 2

- **Describe** - use the information provided to say exactly what is happening.
- Be **SCIENTIFIC** be **ACCURATE**.
- **Explain** - Use your biological knowledge and understanding to give reasons **WHY**.

Exam skills - 3

- COMPARE.
- Do not just list similarities or differences.
- Do always mention BOTH in ONE SENTENCE.
- Think of linking them with 'but'.

Exam skills - 4

- **Suggest** is like explain but often refers to material you may not have met before.
- You are expected to apply your biological knowledge and understanding to give a possible explanation of why.

Exam skills - 5

- Check the number of marks available.
- Filling the space does not mean you will get all the marks.
- If 3 marks are available, have you made 3 distinct points?
- Not just a longer account of one.

Exam skills - 6

- Practical questions.
- Practical exercises in italics in the specification can be tested in any unit test.
- Real practical details are often omitted.
- Easy marks are available.

Exam skills - 7

- Calculations
 - Are often poorly done.
- Can you
 - Calculate percentage increase and decrease.
 - Calculate magnifications or actual sizes?
(show your working)

Structured questions - Basics

- Check instruction words.
- Check number of marks available.
- Try to use all the data provided.
- Check titles, headings and units.
- Try to get a general understanding about what the data shows.

Structured questions

Trends and patterns (describe)

- Description needs manipulation and overview not repeat of data (c.f. coursework).
- Start with simple similarities and differences.
- Be accurate when describing important points.
- Consider rates but make sure you know what they mean.