

On the level

Getting to grips with levels of response at AS

At A Level, one of the core mark scheme ideas is **levels of response**. When marking your exam, the examiner will first of all place your answer into a particular level, before deciding on your mark. Fortunately, the mark schemes make it very clear what qualities are found in a top level answer.

The aim of this paper is to:

- introduce you to the concept of levels of response
- introduce you to the three aspects of a top level answer in an AS exam

The three main aspects a top level answer will be looking for you to cover are:

- **Knowledge and understanding** – this is what you are aiming to pick up through the content we study in class. Note that you are required to do more than build up a bank of **knowledge**; you will also be assessed on your **understanding** of your notes.
- **Skills** – you will be asked to apply your knowledge and understanding to previously unseen resource material, including graphs, maps, diagrams, extracts etc.
- **Quality of written communication** – you will be expected to be able to express yourself effectively in all your written answers.

Knowledge and understanding	Skills	Quality of written communication	Level
The candidate will show a wide-ranging and accurate knowledge and a clear understanding of the concepts/ideas relevant to the question. All or most of the knowledge and understanding that can be expected is given.	The candidate will display a high level of ability through insightful analysis and interpretation of the resource material with little or no gaps, errors or misapprehensions. All that is significant is extracted from the resource material.	The candidate will express complex subject matter using an appropriate form and style of writing. Material included in the answers will be relevant and clearly organised. It will involve the use of specialist vocabulary and be written legibly and with few, if any, errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation.	3
The candidate will display an adequate to good knowledge and understanding of many of the relevant concepts/ideas. Much of the body of knowledge that can be reasonably expected is given.	The candidate will display evidence of the ability to analyse and interpret the resource material but gaps, errors and/or misapprehensions may be in evidence.	The candidate will express ideas using an appropriate form and style of writing. Material included will be relevant and organised but arguments may stray from the main point. Some specialist terms will be used and there may be occasional errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation. Legibility is satisfactory.	2
The candidate will display some accurate knowledge and understanding but alongside errors and significant gaps. The relevance of the information to the question may be tenuous.	The candidate will be able to show only limited ability to analyse and interpret the resource material and gaps, errors and/or misapprehensions will be clearly evidenced.	The candidate will have a form and style of writing which is not fluent. Only relatively simple ideas can be dealt with competently. Material included may have dubious relevance. There will be noticeable errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation. Writing may be illegible in places.	1

You should be aiming for Level 3 every time! The next in the series of handouts will explore further the skills column and Quality of written communication column, helping you be clear on what is needed for level 3 and how you might be able to do these things.

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Improving your AS exam technique
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