

## **Exam Skills**

Here is general advice on how to obtain good grades in the various kinds of testing and examination assignments.

### **Names and terms tests**

These are of the type which appear at the end of each chapter in the book. If examiners choose to use this type of test, you will need to obtain the following information from your instructor:

- Whether direct quotations from the text are acceptable;
- Whether a paraphrase of the text is acceptable;
- Whether evidence is being sought of further reading which enables you to provide an original form of wording in the answer. If this is the case, you will need to follow up the end-of-chapter or website recommendations for further reading before approaching this type of assessment.

### **Essay guidelines**

If your instructor has specified an essay-type assignment which you are expected to complete in your own time, the following suggestions may help you to maximize your grades:

- Write down the title of your essay at the beginning.
- Make sure that you are addressing the question rubric at all times throughout your writing.
- Do not write simply what you know or would like to write about the subject as though the question rubric did not exist.
- Respect the word limit, if applicable. Your institution or individual examiner is likely to apply penalties if it is not achieved or if it is considerably exceeded.
- Respect the deadline for submission. Your institution or individual examiner is likely to apply penalties ranging from absolute refusal to mark work submitted late to the imposition of graduated penalties which will adversely affect the final grade which you obtain.
- Ensure that the structure of your essay complies with any guidelines provided by the examiners. Normally, a clear structure consisting of an introduction, formal division into paragraphs or sections and a conclusion will be appropriate.
- The provision of a bibliography with evidence that the items listed have actually been consulted for the purposes of the preparation of the essay will normally be required.
- Observe the conventions specified by your institution for citing your sources and writing the bibliography.
- Do not collaborate with or copy from other students in the preparation of your essay.

### **Quoting and paraphrasing**

If you paraphrase, you rewrite the words of someone else into your own words. If you use a direct quote, make sure you put it in quotation marks. If you use a long quote (more than 30-40 words), you may instead indent the text. For more information, see:

Purdue University Online Writing Lab:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/1/>

Regardless whether you paraphrase or quote your source, you must always provide a citation.

### **Citing sources**

Check with your institution which citation style you ought to use in your essay since there are many different citation styles. Some use footnotes or endnote, others use in-text citations. All include a bibliography or a list of references after the essay.

Purdue University Online Writing Lab:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>

Harvard College:

<http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k70847&tabgroupid=icb.tabgroup112025>

### **Plagiarism**

If you do not cite your sources properly, you may be accused of plagiarism. You are strongly advised to consult the website of your own institution in order to find out how it defines plagiarism and what kind of penalties it imposes when plagiarism is detected.

If you are not sure what constitutes an offence of plagiarism, the following websites may be of help:

Purdue University Online Writing Lab:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/1/>

Harvard College:

<http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k70847&tabgroupid=icb.tabgroup106849>

The University of Bergen in Norway has made an informative and entertaining film about plagiarism: "Et Plagieringseventyr." The film is available on Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mwbw9KF-ACY>

It is in Norwegian, but if you click on the CC icon, there will be subtitles in English.

### **Multiple choice and computerized test guidelines**

In order to maximise your grades on this type of test, you are advised to follow these procedures:

- Study the material from the book and any other documents which have been specified as essential reading. You should read this material several times until you are familiar with it. If there are things which you do not understand, ask your instructor or discuss the issues with other students or with native speakers of English.
- Before starting any computerized test, make sure that you have identified yourself clearly on the terminal which you are using.
- Answer all the questions. If you only answer 50% of the questions and you get some answers wrong, you will certainly fail the assessment. Even if you do not know the

answer to a question, you should guess it. It is fairly unlikely that marks will be deducted for wrong answers so you might just obtain one or two additional marks.

- Do not attempt to guess the answers to all the questions or to select the same number for all questions in multiple choice tests. If you do, you will fail because the test will have been designed to ensure that you cannot pass it by doing this.
- Do not copy answers from the papers of other students or from the computer screens of the student(s) sitting next to you. If you do, you will probably fail the assignment because the software may detect what you have done. Your institution may apply severe penalties to your grades and may even take disciplinary action against you.
- Before you log off from any computerized test, make sure that the data from your answers have been recorded on your file. If you have any problems, consult the administrator.
- If you are permitted to see your score at the end of the assessment, do not assume that it will be the same as the final grade which you are allocated. Some institutions scale or adjust marks for purposes connected with the aims of the assessment. Sometimes, external examiners request modifications to raw scores if they consider that the test has been too easy or too difficult.

Some institutions have offered guidance to their students on how to approach multiple-choice tests. You may find useful advice on some of the following websites:

Simon Fraser University, Canada:

<http://www.lib.sfu.ca/about/branches-depts/slc/learning/exam-prep/multiple-choice-exams>

University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia:

<https://student.unsw.edu.au/multiple-choice-exams>

### **How do I interpret the result which I obtain for essay work?**

The following table is for general guidance only. Its levels and equivalences may be completely different from those in use in the institution in which you are studying.

<i>Level</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Grade</i>
1	80–100	A*
2	70–80	A
3	60–70	B
4	50–60	C
5	40–50	D
6	30–40	E
7	0–30	F

### **FAQs**

**Q** What does a Level 1 mark mean?

**A** It depends on your institution's marking practices. Some are more generous than others. Some institutions will only give a mark in this range to work which is of publication standard without editorial intervention. To get such a mark you will have read very widely about the subject. Your essay will be highly original and

demonstrate a good capacity to interpret data from your original research. It will be very well structured and referenced and expressed in virtually perfect English. If you receive a mark in this range you have no worries at all.

Q What does a Level 2 mark mean?

A Generally it means that you have produced a first-class piece of work which has more than satisfied the marker. Originality, your researching of the topic and your general level of presentation are excellent. If you receive a mark in this range you are heading for a good overall result.

Q What does a Level 3 mark mean?

A Usually that your work is of a very good standard – above the average of most of the students in your group. If you obtain a mark in this range you are performing well and should obtain a good overall result.

Q What does a Level 4 mark mean?

A It usually means that you are performing at an average level for the group you are in and that you should have no difficulty obtaining a good average pass mark at the end of your period of study. Marks in this range will probably be received by most of your group. If you work harder you should be able to obtain even higher grades in future assessments.

Q What does a Level 5 mark mean?

A Normally it means that you are performing below the level of the rest of your group. It may mean that you have only just succeeded in passing the assessment because in many institutions the pass mark is 40. Clearly you have not done very well. You need to obtain advice on how to improve your performance and obtain a higher grade next time.

Q What does a Level 6 mark mean?

A It means that you have failed this particular assessment. It also means that you may have a good chance of passing a repeat assessment if you do more work and seek guidance on how to improve your performance. You need to obtain advice quickly because often the work or another assessment may follow in a few weeks. You should also make a greater effort to read about the subject and to make sure that you are carefully following the essay guidelines.

Q What does a Level 7 mark mean?

A It means that you have failed the assessment quite badly and that you will have to do a great deal of work if you are to improve your performance. If the mark is in the range 0–10%, it suggests that you have very little hope of passing this kind of assessment in the near future. It might be best to study some other subject. Sometimes it may just be that your English is not yet good enough for you to do essay questions. What you may need to do is aim at improving your basic language skills.