

# Command Words Explained

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## 1. Calculating and working with numbers

Command words are words used in GCSE Maths exam questions. They tell you exactly what you need to do to answer a question and get the marks.

| Command word       | What does it mean?                                                 |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Work out           | Find the answer by doing a calculation.                            |
| Calculate          | Use maths to find the answer.                                      |
| Evaluate           | Find the value of an expression.                                   |
| Estimate           | Find an answer that is close to the exact answer.                  |
| Use approximations | Round the numbers first, then calculate.                           |
| Convert            | Change a number or measurement into another form or unit.          |
| Change ... to      | Change from one unit to another.                                   |
| Compare            | Find what is similar or different. Say which is bigger or smaller. |
| Measure            | Use a ruler or protractor to find a length or angle.               |

## Test yourself

### Challenge A – Guess the Command Word

*Choose the correct command word from below.*

Word Bank: Calculate | Estimate | Convert | Compare | Measure

1. Find an answer that is close to the exact answer. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Change a measurement from one unit to another. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Find an answer using maths. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Identify similarities or differences between values. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Use a ruler or protractor to find a length or angle. \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Challenge B – Odd One Out**

*Which command word does NOT usually involve finding a numerical answer?*

A. Calculate    B. Evaluate    C. Compare

## **Challenge C – True or False?**

*Write T for True or F for False.*

1. "Work out" usually means you need to do a calculation. \_\_\_\_
2. "Estimate" means you must find the exact answer. \_\_\_\_
3. "Use approximations" means round numbers before calculating. \_\_\_\_
4. "Evaluate" means find the value of an expression. \_\_\_\_

## **Challenge D – Fill in the missing gaps.**

| Command word | What does it mean?                                                 |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
|              | Round the numbers first, then calculate.                           |
|              | Find the value of an expression.                                   |
|              | Find an answer that is close to the exact answer.                  |
|              | Find the answer by doing a calculation.                            |
|              | Use maths to find the answer.                                      |
|              | Find what is similar or different. Say which is bigger or smaller. |
|              | Use a ruler or protractor to find a length or angle.               |