



CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Skills Exercises

AO1 Knowledge and understanding

**Cambridge International AS & A Level
Geography 9696**

For examination from 2027



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Introduction

Cambridge AS & A Level Geography attracts a variety of learners from many different backgrounds. For some learners Geography is a new subject and an opportunity to explore an area of study that interests them, while developing a set of transferable skills. Other learners have previously studied Geography and are looking to continue developing their knowledge of the subject. Either way, the study of Geography allows learners to experience the diverse and dynamic interactions between humans and the environment and gain the knowledge needed to understand how both physical and human systems work and apply this understanding to real world situations.

Skills and why they are important?

Skills are the key to success. The performance of candidates in Cambridge AS & A Level exams have shown a range of areas where improvement would be helpful. These areas of improvement tend to centre around the assessment objectives (AOs) of the course and we have addressed these AOs in a series of exercises and activities.

- AO1 Knowledge and understanding
- AO2 Skills and analysis
- AO3 Evaluation

Skills Exercises make use of examination questions and include exercises, activities and worksheets to help skills development and incorporate suggested teaching approaches, such as group work, discussion, structured support and writing in sequence. They do not attempt to cover all possible aspects of the examinations, only those problem areas which have presented consistently over time.

How will these skills be developed?

Skills Exercises aim to help learners develop skills in:

- Using geographical terminology confidently, and understanding, applying and interpreting geographical models.
- Describing and interpreting patterns in various forms of data.
- Understanding what a judgement is and how to construct an evaluative answer.

Skills Exercises provide suggestions so you can have confidence that the materials you prepare and use in the classroom are building skills and resilience in your learners. This document should be used alongside the other teaching and learning resources provided on the [School Support Hub](#).

AO1 Knowledge and understanding

Learners should be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- geographical terms, concepts and systems
- geographical principles, theories and models
- the location and character of places and environments
- the physical and human factors and processes which contribute to different environments, systems, spatial patterns and interactions
- the similarities and differences between environments, people and places
- the causes and consequences of change in physical and human environments
- the importance of spatial scale and time scale in the study of geography.

Exercise 1: Geographical terms and models

It is important that learners can use precise geographical terminology accurately. This will enable them to show examiners that they are comfortable using technical language. These can be easily learnt but will need to be placed within a geographical context. Within essays it is also helpful for learners to give short explanations of each term to demonstrate competence in use of geographical language.

Theories and models are important ways in which geographers can test hypotheses about how the world works and can be used to help simplify reality; to make sense of it.

Theories and models are important both in physical and human geography throughout both AS and A Level as learners could be asked questions directly about them. It is also very useful for learners to have a working knowledge of them and even be able to draw them in an answer. Examiners like to see diagrams and the ability to explain an answer that is based on a theory shows a good grasp of geographical knowledge.

Activity 1: Odd one out

Give learners **Worksheet 1: Odd one out**. Learners study the set of words and decide which one does not fit with the other two. They should then circle this word and write a justification for why they think this. Please note there may be more than one answer, depending on the justification given. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually, in pairs or groups.

Use **Worksheet 1: Odd one out answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Ensure justifications are accurate. Lead a class discussion and ask learners about alternative answers, if applicable.

Extension activity: learners add another word that would fit in with the words they have chosen. Ask learners to justify their choice of word. They could also, as a part of this, begin to build up their own glossary by researching precise definitions for these words.

Activity 2: : Fill in the blanks

Give learners **Worksheet 2: Fill in the blanks**. This is an activity where learners read the paragraph, and then use the words in the box to fill in the blanks. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually, in pairs or groups.

Use **Worksheet 2: Fill in the blanks answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. The answers are underlined. This is a good exercise to use at the end of a topic, to check learners have a sound working knowledge of terminology. Lead a class discussion to check answers.

Ensure any misconceptions are addressed.

Activity 3: Geographical concepts and models

Give learners **Worksheet 3: Geographical concepts and models**. The first activity allows learners to reflect on what they know about certain theories and models. It involves matching the correct words in the bullet point list to the theory that they relate specifically to in the table below the list. There are examples of 2 theories that are commonly found in the AS exams, both in Paper 1 Physical Geography and Paper 2 Human Geography. There are then blank diagrams of these models for learners to fill in.

Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. Learners should attempt this activity individually. Use **Worksheet 3: Geographical concepts and models answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to go through learners' work and ensure any misconceptions are addressed. This activity is a useful starter and introduction to physical and human models and theories and will be built upon in the next part of the activity. Learners could attempt this activity as individuals, pairs or groups. They could then peer assess each other's work.

Extension activity: learners add a further theory of their choice in the Model 3 blank box provided from any part of Paper 3 Global Environments or Paper 4 Global Themes.

Exercise 2: Knowledge and understanding of place

Geography is inherently about places. Being able to apply knowledge and understanding to both unfamiliar and familiar situations is important. Knowledge of processes and detailed specific examples are therefore fundamental parts of all facets of geography. The more processes and specific examples that learners can bring into an exam answer, the better that answer will be.

Some exam questions ask very specifically for a detailed specific example. As a general rule, when asked for detailed specific examples learners should ensure that they use real-life examples that they have learned in detail. This is a requirement for all sections of Papers 1 through to 4.

At AS Level, each topic in both Paper 1 and 2 asks for one large, detailed specific example. At A Level, in Paper 3 each topic also requires one large case study, but in Paper 4 the demands vary. There will be at least one detailed specific example required for each topic, but in some cases two are required for contrast.

This exercise focuses on the knowledge of detailed specific examples – the activities will act as good revision resources for learners, locating a global range of examples, and a place where they can build up detailed specific example 'fact file' summaries for each of the familiar examples they will use. This gives learners the opportunity to refine their detailed knowledge of place.

Activity 1: Mapping detailed specific examples

Give learners **Worksheet 4: Mapping detailed specific examples**. This worksheet is essentially two blank world maps for learners to annotate with the locations of each of their case studies, both at AS Level and A Level. Learners work individually to locate the case study, perhaps colour coding it to represent each part of the AS and A Level course. A one-line summary should also be given to remind learners what the case study illustrates. Go through the worksheet with learners to make sure they understand what is required of the task. For this activity, learners should work individually or in pairs.

Worksheet 4: Mapping detailed specific examples answers shows an example of how the maps could be laid out, but learners really have the freedom to set up the maps as they see fit, and case studies annotated will depend on the ones they have studied.

Ensure any misconceptions are addressed.

Extension activity: learners create several maps to locate all the examples they have in their notes (not just the compulsory ones).

Activity 2: Detailed specific physical examples fact files

Give learners **Worksheet 5: Detailed specific physical examples fact files**. This activity gives learners the opportunity to summarise and condense all the factual information about their compulsory detailed specific examples (as detailed in the syllabus) in one place. This could be completed as an individual activity, or as a discussion activity in pairs or groups. This worksheet can be duplicated for as many case studies as learners have. Go through the worksheet with learners to make sure they understand the task.

Worksheet 5: Detailed specific physical examples fact files answers shows an example of how the fact files could be laid out, but learners really have the freedom to set up the fact files as they see fit and case studies detailed will depend on the ones they have studied.

Ensure any misconceptions are addressed.

Extension activity: learners create separate, smaller fact files for the other case study examples they might want to use.

Activity 3: Detailed specific human examples fact files

Give learners **Worksheet 6: Detailed specific human examples fact files**. This activity gives learners the opportunity to summarise and condense all the information about their compulsory case studies (as detailed in the syllabus) in one place. This could be completed as an individual activity, or as a discussion activity in pairs or groups. This worksheet can be duplicated for as many case studies as learners have. Go through the worksheet with learners to make sure they understand the task.

Worksheet 6: Detailed specific human examples fact files answers shows an example of how the fact files could be laid out, but learners really have the freedom to set up the fact files as they see fit and case studies detailed will depend on the ones they have studied.

Ensure any misconceptions are addressed.

Extension activity: learners create separate, smaller fact files for the other case study examples they might want to use.

Exercise 3: Understanding systems and scales in geography

Geography is all about systems and scales – the way in which different processes bring about changes in distributions and environments, and the temporal and spatial scales of these changes. The activities in this exercise will give learners the opportunity to identify what a system is, how the systems approach can be applied and an appreciation of scales in both physical and human geography.

Activity 1: Understanding the systems approach

Worksheet 7: The systems approach in geography first shows a systems diagram of the hydrological cycle. Go through the worksheet with learners to make sure they understand the task. Learners fill in the boxes using the word box provided. This activity could be completed individually or as a paired exercise.

The second diagram shows a migration system that can be defined as a 'set of places linked by flows and counter-flows of people, goods, services and information, which tend to facilitate further exchange, including migration, between the places'. The migration systems theory was established by A. Mabogunje considered rural-urban migration in Nigeria as a system of interrelated elements. Mabogunje stressed the importance of feedback mechanisms, through which information about the migrants' reception and progress at the destination is transmitted back to the place of origin. Favourable information would then encourage further migration.

Use **Worksheet 7: The systems approach in geography answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion and go through learners' answers.

Ensure any misconceptions are addressed.

Extension activities: Learners add further labels to the irregular transfer arrows. Under what conditions might these flows take place? Due to the complex nature of the hydrological cycle several of these terms are often misinterpreted, so it would be useful for teachers to embed definitions with each term used.

Activity 2: Understanding timescales in geography

Physical geography tends to work over very long time scales, usually in terms of decades to thousands or even millions of years and certainly much slower than in human geography in general. Therefore, it can be difficult for learners to appreciate the significance of time in the creation of landforms. Timescales in human geography tend to be shorter than in physical geography.

This first activity on **Worksheet 8: Understanding timescales in geography** gives a selection of processes and landforms, each of which has a different timescale in terms of their development. Go through the worksheet with learners to make sure they understand the task. Learners should attempt to place the process or landform in the correct place on the blank timeline. This activity would work best if learners were in small groups to create discussion.

The second activity gives a series of three population pyramids. The focus of this activity is for learners to understand the way in which countries at different levels of development may show different characteristics, and the fact that these may change over time.

Each pyramid represents a point along the demographic transition model (DTM) and shows how a country's population structure may change over time.

Learners should identify which stage of the DTM each pyramid is and describe and explain the patterns shown. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually or in pairs.

Use **Worksheet 8: Understanding timescales in geography answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion and go through learners' answers.

Ensure any misconceptions are addressed.

Extension activity: For the physical activity learners indicate how long the impacts of events may last, and also the time it may take some of the features to develop further. For the human activity learners could attempt to apply activity to specific countries and try to identify at what time they were (or will be) structured like that.

Note: the physical geography scale is set up to resemble a logarithmic scale – learners will need to appreciate the difference between this and a standard scale.

Activity 3: Changing spatial scales in geography

While timescales are important in geography, it is also important to appreciate that patterns change spatially as well. This activity, **Worksheet 9: Changing spatial scales in geography**, introduces patterns that change spatially, and patterns that combine both spatial and temporal elements.

The first graph shows how solar radiation varies across the globe. Learners should describe and explain the patterns shown, applying their geographical knowledge and understanding to an unfamiliar context to fill in the table. This focuses purely on spatial scales.

The second part of the activity combines elements of both time and space. The table shows the locations within an urban area, and the time periods leading up to today and in the future.

Learners should attempt to identify what patterns of retail are occurring within each area at the different times. Go through the worksheet with learners to make sure they understand the task.

Learners should complete this activity in small groups.

Extension activity: learners try and apply this to a specific area, perhaps through a combination of secondary research or even primary fieldwork, if time allowed.

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