

# Skills Exercises

AO3 Skills

## Cambridge International AS & A Level Geography 9696

For examination from 2023



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## Introduction

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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
- AO2 Understanding and application
- AO3 Skills
- AO4 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.
- 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](#).

## AO3 Skills

To demonstrate geographical skills, learners need to be able to do the following in their exam answers:

- interpret a variety of types of geographical data and sources and recognise their limitations
- use geographical data to identify trends and patterns
- use diagrams and sketch maps to illustrate geographical features
- demonstrate skills of analysis and synthesis of geographical information
- communicate geographical evidence, ideas and arguments.

### Exercise 1: Describing geographical patterns

Being able to describe patterns in geography is a key skill that learners need to know. The following activities look at a selection of different resources that learners may come across in their exams, such as maps, graphs and photographs. The activities provide learners with the opportunity to practice this skill when describing the resources.

#### Activity 1: Describing maps

Give learners **Worksheet 1: Describing maps**. The worksheet provides examples of two maps with different aspects being assessed – one physical and one human. Learners are asked to interpret the two maps and answer the questions. It may make sense for learners to try and describe as many patterns as possible as shown on the map. Usually, these types of questions will require learners either to give a broad overview of some data from the full map or to focus in on one aspect of the map. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work independently or in pairs.

Use **Worksheet 1: Describing maps answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion bringing together as many descriptive points about the maps as possible. Ensure any misconceptions are addressed. A key aspect when answering these types of questions is for learners to include figures from the map as much as possible and to use geographical language when describing patterns (compass directions and distances). Learners are not expected to know the names of specific countries on the map; however, accurate knowledge is always advantageous.

#### Activity 2: Describing graphs

Describing graphs may cover a number of different skills. The activity on **Worksheet 2: Describing graphs** gives learners the opportunity to practice these skills on two different graphs. The first activity shows a graph depicting a pattern over time, whereas the second graph simply gives data but in three different forms, using a key, colours and numbers. The second activity is perhaps the more difficult of the two, as it requires learners to consider more variables, and the task asks for the relationship which may be quite complex.

Some advice might be that when learners are assessing trends or patterns they should look at the overall pattern, the range of data from highest to lowest and when / where these occur. They should make note of any anomalies. Learners should always quote data from the graphs.

Go through the worksheet with learners to make sure they understand what is required of the task. For this activity, learners could work individually or as a group discussion, reporting back the trends / patterns / range / anomalies they have identified. Encourage learners to always quote data.

Use **Worksheet 2: Describing graphs answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to go through learners' responses, ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

### Activity 3: Describing photographs

Explain to learners that the skill of describing photographs is more than just being able to state what you can see in the photograph. It is best to give a descriptive point about the feature that they are identifying and where possible give a descriptive location for where the feature is found in the photograph.

Give learners **Worksheet 3: Describing photographs**. This activity gives learners examples of two photographs, but the activities are slightly different. The first photograph effectively structures the answer for the learner by getting them to annotate labels as shown. The second photograph gives learners the opportunity to put into practice the skills they tried out in the first activity by writing a full answer to a different question. Go through the worksheet with learners to make sure they understand what is required of the task. For this activity, learners may work individually or in pairs.

Use **Worksheet 3: Describing photographs answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to go through learners' responses. Ensure any misconceptions are addressed.

**Extension activity:** learners turn their annotations from the first photo into a full answer to answer the question: Describe the characteristics of the squatter settlements.

### Exercise 2: Comparing geographical resources

Many exam questions will ask learners to compare the patterns and trends found on a variety of different resources. The following activities give learners the opportunity to practice these comparative skills using different resources.

Explain to learners that comparison involves both differences and similarities, and that they should always use comparative language (higher, largest, on the other hand, however). Learners should also make sure they quote accurate data and figures from the resource as evidence, wherever possible.

#### Activity 1: Comparing diagrams

Diagrams of geographical processes are often used in exam questions, especially in the physical papers (Papers 1 and 3). **Worksheet 4: Comparing diagrams** provides two examples, asking learners to compare two diagrams.

The activity gives a selection of possible comparatives that could be used for one example, and a model answer for the other example. Learners should try to identify as many similarities and differences as possible in the first two diagrams (of two types of rainfall) and then do a similar activity for the second pair of diagrams (of two types of plate boundaries). Go through the worksheet with learners to make sure they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually in pairs or in groups.

Use **Worksheet 4: Comparing diagrams answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion going through learners' answers and ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

Common mistakes include learners writing two separate paragraphs describing each diagram in turn without actually comparing them. Responses should include some comparison in the second paragraph (higher, smaller, bigger, etc.). Learners will also often forget about identifying the similarities.

## Activity 2: Comparing graphs

Graphs showing different types of geographical data are often used in exam questions and learners may be asked to compare aspects of these graphs. **Worksheet 5: Comparing graphs** shows two examples of typical graphs that may be used in exams.

This activity requires learners to compare the patterns or trends found on the graphs, using the same principles of looking at similarities and differences, as well as using appropriate comparative language. Go through the worksheet with learners to make sure they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually or in pairs.

Use **Worksheet 5: Comparing graphs answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion going through learners' answers and ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

Common mistakes include learners writing two separate paragraphs describing each diagram in turn without actually comparing them. Responses should include some comparison in the second paragraph (higher, smaller, bigger, etc.). Learners will also often forget about identifying the similarities. The key with graphs is to use data as much as possible.

## Activity 3: Comparing maps

The final activity in the exercise looks at the final type of commonly found comparison, which is maps.

Give learners **Worksheet 6: Comparing maps**. Explain to learners that the same principles of similarities, differences and comparative language apply as in **Worksheet 4: Comparing diagrams** and **Worksheet 5: Comparing graphs**. Learners would not be expected to know specific locations of places that are not labelled, but it is expected that they will use geographical terminology, such as compass points, distances etc. when comparing the features found. It is expected that data should be lifted from the map to exemplify points where possible. Go through the worksheet with learners to make sure they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners could work independently or in small groups.

Use **Worksheet 6: Comparing maps answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to go through learners' answers and check the accuracy of statements made. Ensure any misconceptions are addressed.

## Exercise 3: Drawing diagrams

Diagrams are an important part of Geography. Many questions will ask learners to answer a question 'with the aid of a diagram'. This may involve sketching cross-sections and / or making sketches of photographs.

However, examiners are always keen to see actual diagrams in answers as they serve to illustrate points very effectively. These skills are often under-used in essays, and so **Activity 3: Drawing diagrams** gives learners the opportunity to practice their skills.

### Activity 1: Drawing cross sections

In some exam questions learners are asked to draw cross sections, this occurs in particular in Paper 1 Core Physical Geography: Topic 1 Hydrology and fluvial geomorphology. **Worksheet 7: Drawing cross sections** shows some typical questions found in exam papers. These are diagrams or photographs of rivers. Learners should draw a cross section of the indicated section of river. A cross section involves cutting down across the river and showing how the river looks as if you were looking from one side of the river bank to the other. Go through the worksheet with learners to make sure they understand the question. For this activity learners may work individually or in pairs.

Use **Worksheet 7: Drawing cross sections answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion going through learners' answers and ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

Common mistakes learners make is that they do not draw a cross section, instead learners might try to sketch the photo or will ignore the drawing command completely and just describe the photo. Cross section sketches will almost always demand annotations.

**Extension activity:** learners draw incorrect cross sections to show potential inaccuracies and ask other learners if they can identify the mistakes.

## Activity 2: Sketching photographs

Another skill that learners are required to apply is drawing a sketch of a photograph. These sketches do not have to exactly replicate what is in the photo as examiners are not looking for artistic ability. However, they do need to be identifiable as the photograph given, and not a generic diagram of a feature or landform.

The examiner is looking for learners to be able to identify features found on the photograph to demonstrate their geographical understanding.

Give learners **Worksheet 8: Sketching photographs**. Go through the worksheet with learners to make sure they understand what is required of the task. For this task learners should work individually.

Use **Worksheet 8: Sketching photographs answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion and go through learners' answers, ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

## Activity 3: Drawing diagrams

The previous two activities involved drawing diagrams based on a stimulus of a photograph. However, sometimes exam questions ask for a diagram to be included without a resource. On these occasions learners need to be able to draw sketches learnt from memory.

However, examiners like to see diagrams drawn in answers even when there are no prompts, so the two diagrams on **Worksheet 9: Drawing diagrams** give learners the opportunity to practice both asked for and also impromptu diagrams. Go through the worksheet with learners to make sure they understand the task. For this activity learners should work individually to produce the diagrams required. Annotations should always be used, and it is useful for learners to make reference to the diagram in written answers where appropriate.

Use **Worksheet 9: Drawing diagrams answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion going through learners' answers. Ensure any misconceptions are addressed.

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