

Maths Exam Question Paper Terminology

What we say...	What we mean...
Estimate the value of .. Find an approximate answer to .. (non-cal)	Do not work out the exact answer. Round numbers to 1 significant figure and use these to obtain an answer.
Estimate	Estimate the mean of a grouped frequency table. Estimate an average speed.
Explain/Comment/Give a reason for your answer	Use words (or mathematical symbols) to explain an answer.
Explain your answer. You must show your working	You will be penalised if you do not show your working.
Simplify	Collect terms together or cancel down a fraction.
Simplify fully	Collect terms together and factorise the answer or cancel terms. This means that an extra numerical or algebraic step is needed.
Show that	Use words, numbers or algebra to show an answer.
Prove	A rigid algebraic or geometric proof is required.
Work out	Normally means a calculation is involved but it may be possible to do it mentally.
Calculate	Will need a calculation that requires a calculator or a formal (such as column) method.
Measure	Use a ruler or a protractor to measure a length or an angle.
Hence	Use the previous answer to proceed.
Hence, or otherwise	Use the previous answer but if you cannot see how to, you may use another method.
Describe fully	In transformations: Reflection – mirror line Translations – vector Rotations – centre, angle and direction Enlargement – scale factor and centre.

What we say...	What we mean...
Factorise	Take out the common factor or factorise into two brackets if a quadratic.
Factorise fully	This is a clue that there is more than one factorisation to be done, eg a common factor and then factorising a quadratic.
Use the graph	Do not calculate, read from the graph. Always worth putting lines on the graph to show where the answer came from.
Give an exact value	Give answer as a square root (paper 1).
Give your answer in terms of π	Give answer in terms of π (paper 1).
Give answer to a sensible degree of accuracy	Normally no more accurate than the values in the question. If question has values to 2 s.f. then give answer to 2 s.f. or 1 s.f. Trigonometrical answers accepted to 3 s.f. as this is what is taught.
Give answer to (2 d.p.)	Give answer to required accuracy. You will lose marks if you do not.
Not drawn accurately	Next to a diagram to discourage measuring.
Not to scale	Next to diagram (often circles) to discourage measuring.
Use an algebraic method	Do not use trial and improvement. Working will be expected.
Do an accurate drawing	Use compasses to draw lengths, protractors to measure angles (and a sharp pencil).
Do not use trial and improvement	An algebraic method is expected. Any sign of trial and improvement will be penalised.
Expand	Multiply out using distributive law.
Multiply out	Multiply out using distributive law.
Expand and simplify	Multiply out using distributive law and then collect terms.
Multiply out and simplify	Multiply out using distributive law and then collect terms.
Give a counter-example	Give a numerical or geometrical example that disproves a statement.
Solve	Find the value(s) of (x) that makes the equation true.

What we say...	What we mean...
Make (x) the subject	Rearrange a formula.
Express, in terms of	Use given information to write an expression using only the letter(s) given.
Write down	Answer is clear and does not need any working.
Use a ruler and compasses	A ruler may be needed to measure but more often than not we mean use a straight edge and compasses. Used in constructions and loci problems.
Deduce	Similar to write down but requires a little more thought.